

We Shall Judge Angels

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

I often hear people say, "it's not for me to judge another person," even when they know they are acting sinfully. They cite the words of Yeshua, where He said, *"Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?"* (Matthew 7:3, NKJV).¹

But Paul said this, *"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?"* (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). Was Paul contradicting Yeshua? I do not believe so.

Yeshua was telling us that if we have sin in our lives, we will not see clearly or discern other people's actions. Notice He said, *"First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye"* (Matthew 7:5). In other words, once we remove the sin from our lives, we will be in a rightful place to help others remove theirs also.

Yeshua also said, *"Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother"* (Matthew 18:15). He never said that we should ignore the sin in our brother's life, exceedingly if he has sinned against us. As Christians, we are to live, to the best of our abilities, a blameless life that avoids sinning, and we are to help others do the same.

Paul addresses the issue of sexual sin even more seriously. He said, *"I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person"* (1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

Wow! Harsh words. I do not believe Paul would have said anything like, "It's not for me to judge another person," especially one in the church living a sexually immoral life. No, I think Paul would have gone to that person, in love, and quoted Yeshua, saying, "Let me help remove the speck from my brother's eye."

Maybe because of the abuse of power, but somehow the church has primarily absolved itself of the God-given responsibility to govern its affairs and the conduct of fellow Christians. And yet,

Yeshua said to His disciples, *"You who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"* (Matthew 19:28). We see a shadow, a type of this prophecy in the Old Testament where we read, *"Then they [Israel] came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters"* (Exodus 15:27). We will expound in a moment on the significance of the number "seventy."

Yeshua is not only our Lord and Savior, but He is also the supreme judge of all humanity, as it is written, *"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead"* (Acts 10:42). And yet, Yeshua said, *"But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father"* (Matthew 20:23). *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"* (Revelation 3:21). While God is sovereign, Yeshua is inferring a portion of delegated authority to His church.

We see another type with Moses and the seventy elders he later gathered before the Lord. We read, *"I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone"* (Numbers 11:17). Israel's judges and court system were later formalized in the *Sanhedrin* (Council) or *Sanhedrin ha-Gadol* (the Great Council). It consisted of seventy judges following the seventy elders, plus one additional judge representing Moses.ⁱⁱ

The anti-type of this court system is fulfilled in Christ and His church, as it is written, *"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go"* (Luke 10:1).

The sages tell us that seventy is a unique number that correlates with leadership.ⁱⁱⁱ They explain that the natural order, the creation, is represented by the number seven. Ten is also a complete number because we begin counting again with one after ten (ten plus one is eleven). Thus, seven times ten represents the completion of the natural order. In Christ, the natural order is complete, and we who are in Christ are completed in Him. So, it is logical that Christ would have appointed seventy leaders to represent Him and share the gospel.

The idea that all humanity was to set up righteous courts is believed, by the rabbis, to be God-ordained. Per the covenant that God made with Noah, called the Noahide Covenant,^{iv} and during the Talmudic period (200-600 BC), the sages derived seven universal laws of morality:^v

1. The positive injunction to establish just laws and courts.
2. Prohibition of blasphemy against the one God of the universe.
3. Prohibition of idolatry.
4. Prohibitions of grave sexual immorality.
5. Prohibition of murder.
6. Prohibition of theft.
7. Prohibition against animal cruelty.

There are similarities to these Noahide laws listed in the letter of the Jewish council sent to the Gentile community. It is written, *"But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood"* (Acts 15:20).

The point here is that the church is not without any Law, and such laws are explicitly called out by the Apostle Paul to be enforced by Christian judges appointed within the church. As we just read, the Lord appointed judges over Israel to enforce His Law, and as Israel is a type for the church, we also are to do the same.

To be clear, however, I am not suggesting the church adopt the papal and religious hierarchy of the Catholic church. Sadly, that system has been corrupted. But I am inferring that from scripture, Christians have a God-given responsibility to establish proper governance. And we will be individually judged by the Lord for how we have used the delegated authority that Christ has given us. As it is written, *"For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey"* (Matthew 25:14-15).

Yeshua referred to this system of delegated authority in speaking with the leaders of Israel. He said, *"Is it not written in your law, I said, You are gods?"* (John 10:34). He was *not* saying that Jews are gods. He was affirming the delegated ruling and judging authority that God had given to the leaders of Israel. Yeshua was quoting the Psalms, which reads in part: *"I said, You are gods [Elohim—אֱלֹהִים], and all of you are children of the Most High. But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes. Arise, O God, judge the earth; For You shall inherit all nations"* (Psalm 82:6-8). While *Elohim* is often translated as "god," in Hebrew, it also means "judge."^{vi}

Yeshua also told His disciples to honor the leaders of Israel, saying, *"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat [of authority]. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works"* (Matthew 23:2-3). Honoring the God-given seat of authority does not absolve that person from being held accountable by the Lord for abusing power He has given them. The Apostle James said, *"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment"* (James 3:1).

Yeshua is returning sooner than anyone realizes, as He said, *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work"* (Revelation 22:12). We are called to labor until then, and I believe we are also being tested. As it is written, *"For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance"* (Matthew 25:29).

Salvation is a gift from God, but to serve Christ and follow Him is a calling, for it is written, *"And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons"* (Mark 3:13-15). *"For many are called, but few are chosen"* (Matthew 22:14).

The be selected as a judge for Israel's high court, the *Sanhedrin*, a person was required to have seven attributes that included wisdom, humility, the awe of heaven, a loathing for money, a love for truth, love of the people, and a good reputation. Many of these same qualities are in the New Testament for those who desire to be overseers of God's church: blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, one who rules his own house well, and has a good testimony.^{vii}

When the Lord returns, He will establish His eternal court in Jerusalem, as it is written, "*I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated*" (Daniel 7:9). These thrones are set apart for the church, "*A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*" (1 Peter 2:9). Indeed, for those of us who have been tested, refined, and qualified by the Lord, we will judge angels, and more so, we will judge the things that pertain to this world.

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Shurpin, Yehuda. *The Sanhedrin: The Jewish Court System*. Chabad.org.

ⁱⁱⁱ Shurpin, Yehuda, *Why is 70 Special?* Chabad.org.

^{iv} Genesis 9:8-17.

^v Noahide Covenant: Theology and Jewish Law. Boston College Center for Christian and Jewish Learning.

^{vi} Rabbi Nosson Scherman & Rabbi Gedaliah Zlotowitz, general editors. *Teachings of the Abir Yaakov: Collected from the writings of Rabbi Yaakov, Volume One*. Artscroll Sephardic Heritage Series. 2021.

^{vii} 1 Timothy 3:1-7.