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Tsiyon News

Tsiyon Messianic Radio Newsletter - Vol 9.02 - 11/14/6013 TAM - 01/15/14 AD



Coming Soon!



Covenant Concluded

Exodus 23+24

Covenant Concluded



Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Look, this is the blood of the covenant, which YHWH has made with you concerning all these words." Exodus 24:8

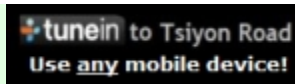
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From Eliyahu

YHWH was thorough. His Covenant-making process with Israel involved full disclosure of all of His terms, with the central terms of that Covenant audibly stated by YHWH Himself from the top of Mount Sinai. Further details were stated to Moses as mediator, who repeated all of this to the people - twice - and also preserved a complete record in writing. Only after this detailed full disclosure was the Covenant officially ratified. This was a process involving the free will of all parties to adopt the Covenant. Our latest Midrash details the ceremony and its meaning by which the Covenant was ratified with Israel at Mount Sinai. As you consider this with us you will be struck with the realization of the uniqueness of the nation of Israel. Truly, no other nation in the history of the world has enjoyed such an intimate closeness with our Grand Creator, nor the high privileges extended by that Covenant to the one and only chosen nation of YHWH. This lesson is key to understanding the unique role of Israel in Yah's eternal plan.

Central to the character of the Covenant is the righteousness, justice and goodness of Elohim. As we continue looking into the Ordinances of YHWH in this lesson we find YHWH insisting that the courts of Israel operate free of prejudice and bribes, preserving equal justice for all, rich and poor alike. YHWH defends the rights of the poor in court with these words:

“You shall not deny justice to your poor people in court.” Exodus 23:6

The poor are the politically weakest group in any culture. For that reason the poor are often the scapegoats of society, and the so-called "justice system" (more accurately, legal system) of the Gentile nations. It is not unusual for laws to exist on the books that put burdens upon the poor which do not fall upon the more affluent members of society (see article below for an example). It even gets worse. Sometimes the poor are abused and even murdered by officers of the system with no justice whatsoever (See <http://www.prisonplanet.com/kelly-thomas-verdict-cops-now-have-license-to-murder.html> - WARNING: Contains images of graphic violence).

By contrast, the Ordinances of the Covenant protect the poor from discrimination and make provisions to help lift them out of poverty. Further, the law must apply equally to all persons. Indeed, the Law of God is far advanced past anything this world has to offer. This becomes ever clearer as we advance in our Midrash through the Torah. Stick with us from week to week in this study, and be amazed by the justice, wisdom and love of our Father!

Blessings and Shalom!

Eliyahu ben David
www.tsiyon.org

The new debtors' prisons

If you are poor, don't get caught speeding

Source: The Economist | Nov 16th 2013 | ATLANTA



IN LATE 2010 police in Childersburg, Alabama ticketed both Kristy and Timothy Fugatt for driving with expired licence tags. They were fined \$148 each, plus another \$198 for Mrs Fugatt, whose license had expired. They could not afford to pay, so they were placed on probation under the supervision of Judicial Correction Services (JCS), a private company that manages probationers for roughly 200 misdemeanor courts in the south-eastern United States.

JCS also charged each of them a \$45 monthly service fee. When they fell behind on their payments, they were charged more fees and threatened with jail. In February 2012 they claim that a Childersburg policeman arrested them at their home, threatened them with a Taser, told them their children would be placed in state care and took them to prison. They were released only after relatives brought \$900 to the Childersburg jail. (Robert McMichael, the head of JCS, refused to comment on any of these allegations.)

Monthly charges to private-probation companies are just one of a growing array of fees levied by America's criminal-justice system. Such fees are distinct from fines, imposed to punish or deter. Their aim is to make wrongdoers cover some of the costs of the system that punishes them.

Another law for the poor

For example, a 2010 report by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) found that fees and fines covered two-thirds of the operating budget of the Orleans Parish criminal court in Louisiana. That is the appeal of private-probation firms: small fines often go unpaid because local governments cannot afford to chase every speeding ticket. JCS claims that without officers overseeing probation, only 30% of offenders complete it; with JCS's services that rises to 70%. Even more appealing to cash-strapped municipalities, private-probation companies offer their services at no cost to the taxpayer. Instead, boasts JCS, "Supervision is completely offender-funded."

Defendants who cannot pay fees upfront are put on payment plans, which often come with start-up and monthly administrative fees. Many of these fees are small, but for poor Americans they impose an additional burden that can last long after a judicially-imposed sentence has ended. A 2010 study by the Brennan Centre for Justice, a law and public-policy institute, found that at least 13 of the 15 states with the largest prison populations

allowed probation to be extended beyond the judicially-imposed terms for non-payment of criminal-justice debt. A judgment handed down in July 2012 against the town of Harpersville, Alabama, which hired JCS to manage its misdemeanor probation, found that fees could turn a \$200 fine into a 41-month-long, \$2,100 ordeal.

That same judgment accused Harpersville of operating a “debtors’ prison”, though the judge noted that “a more accurate description of the Harpersville Municipal Court practices might be that of a judicially sanctioned extortion racket.” Harpersville, like many other places, jailed people who failed to pay probation fines and fees—although the cost of imprisonment often exceeds the costs for which they are liable. In 2010 North Carolina’s Mecklenburg County spent over \$40,000 jailing people for non-payment of criminal-justice debt, and collected just \$33,476 from them. Courts in Orleans Parish routinely offered defendants the choice of 30 days in prison or \$100 in fines, even though the city had to pay the parish sheriff \$22 per day for each inmate it sentenced, and the federal appellate court for the circuit that includes Louisiana found such “fine or time” sentences illegal.

That Brennan Centre study found that nine of the 15 American states with the largest prison populations permit “collection fees” on criminal-justice debt, which are often payable to private firms. Only one of the 15 (Texas) exempts penniless defendants from additional collection fees.

All this occurs routinely, though the Supreme Court ruled in 1983 that before a court jails someone for failing to pay a fine or fee, it must first ensure that his failure to pay was willful—that he could have paid but chose not to. Jailing someone because he cannot pay violates the 14th Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause. Similarly, 13 of the 15 states studied by the Brennan Centre charge defendants public-defender fees (\$50 for a misdemeanor and \$100 for a felony defense in Florida; in Virginia, as much as \$1,235 for some felonies), even though the Supreme Court ruled in 1963 that the Sixth Amendment required courts to provide lawyers at no charge for indigent defendants.

In some states people with outstanding criminal-justice debt cannot vote. In others they lose public benefits such as food stamps and housing assistance. Some states suspend driving licenses, making it harder for people to get to the jobs they need to do to pay off their debt. And beyond that, as Eric Balaban of the ACLU notes, such fees create “a two-tiered system of justice, in which the wealthy can satisfy the system quickly, while a poor person charged with the same offence can face years of penalties.”

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