

Ex 21-1 to 24-18 Torah Reading (Parshat Mishpatim)
English version to be sung to the Torah tropes by Len Fellman
Latest version February 9, 2021

21:1 [God still speaking to Moses:] Now these are the regulations that you will set before the Israelites:

2 When you acquire a Hebrew slave, for six years he shall serve, [but in the seventh year] he will go free, [without payment].

3 If he was single (“by himself”) when he came, he shall be single when he leaves.

If the husband of a wife he was, then his wife shall go out [with him].

4 [If his master] [gave to him] a wife and she has borne to him sons or daughters, the woman and her children will belong to her master, [while he himself] will go out alone.

5 [But if he says], [speaking solemnly]—the slave: “I love my master, my wife, and my sons. I do not wish to go free,”

6 [he shall be brought] by his master to *haElohim*, [and have him brought over] to the door or to the doorpost (*mezuzah*), [where he will be pierced]: his master will pierce his ear with an awl, and he shall serve him for all time.

7 [If there is sold]—[if a man should sell]—his daughter as a maid, she shall not depart in the way of the release of the slaves.

8 [If she is not pleasing]—[if she should seem bad in the eyes] [of her master] [to whom she was intended], [he must let her be redeemed].

[To foreign people]—[to outsiders]—he has not the right to sell her, since he has betrayed her.

9 [If to his son] [he intended her], then by the rulings for young women [he must treat her].

10 [If another woman] [he should take for himself], [the first one’s food], her clothing, and her marital rights shall not be diminished.

11 [And if these three things] he fails to do for her, then she shall go free, without payment.

12 [He who strikes] [another man] [so that he dies] must be put to death.

13 But for one who did not [lie in wait], but *haElohim* let him fall into his hand, I shall provide for you a place, and he may find refuge there.

14 [If by intention] [a man should plot] [against his neighbor], and kills him with guile, then even from my altar [you must take him] to die.

15 [Anyone striking] [his own father] or his mother, must be put to death.

16 [One who abducts]—[one who kidnaps—a man], [whether the man has been sold] [or is found in his possession], must be put to death.

17 [One who curses] [his own father] or his mother must be put to death.

21:18 If there quarrel two men, [and one man strikes] his neighbor with a stone or with his fist, and he does not die, but takes to his bed,
19 [if he then gets up] [and he walks] [around outside] with his staff, then absolved is his assailant.
[Only for] [his idle time] [end aliyah] [must he make good], and for his full healing.
20 [If there is a beating]: a man strikes his slave or his maidservant with a rod, [and the person dies] at his hands,
[the victim must surely] be avenged.
21 But [if after a day] or two, [the servant still stands], he will not be avenged, since by right of purchase, [the servant is his].
22 [If there is a scuffle] [between two men] and one deals a blow to a woman who is pregnant, so that aborted is her child,
but there is no further injury, he [will surely be fined] [according to what] is assessed [upon him] by the husband of the woman;
[and he must pay it], [as it is reckoned by the courts].
23 [But if further harm] should occur, one shall award a life for a life.
24 [An eye] for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, [a hand] for a hand, a foot for a foot,
25 a burn for a burn, a wound for a wound, [a bruising blow] for [a bruising blow].
26 If a man should strike—[a man hits the eye] [of his slave] or the eye of his handmaid, [destroying the person's sight],
he must let the person go free, for the sake of the eye.
27 [If even a tooth] [of his slave] or a tooth of his handmaid [he knocks out], he must let the person go free, for the sake of the tooth.
28 If gored [by an ox] [should be a man] or a woman, [and the person dies],
then stoned to death [shall be that ox]. But not to be eaten [is its flesh]; the owner of the ox is not liable.
29 [But on the other hand], [as concerns this ox]: if a gorer he was for many yesterdays, [and this had been made known] to its owner,
but he [failed to guard it], and it kills a man or a woman, the ox must be stoned, and its owner must die.
30 [But if expiation] is laid [upon him], he must pay, as ransom for his life, the full fine that is laid [upon him].
31 If it is a boy that is gored, or a girl that is gored, by this same rule, it shall be done to him.
32 [If it is a slave] that is gored by the ox, or a handmaid,
[he shall pay in silver]: a full [thirty shekels] he must give to their master, and the ox must be stoned.

21:33 If opened up by a man [is a pit in the ground], [or in a similar vein] [there is dug one] [by a man]:

[he digs a pit], but fails to cover it, and their falls into it, an ox or a donkey,

34 the owner of the pit must pay: [its worth in silver] he must pay to its owner. [But the dead animal] will be his.

35 [If an injury is caused] [by the ox of a man] to the ox of his neighbor, and it dies,

then they shall sell the ox that is still alive, and divide up the proceeds. Also the dead one, they must share.

36 But [if it was known] [concerning the animal]—[about this ox]: a gorer it was in former days, and it had not been watched by its owner, he must surely pay: an ox for an ox; [and the dead one] shall be his.

37 [If stolen by a man] is an ox or a sheep, and he slaughters it or if he sells it,

then five [head of cattle] he must pay for the ox, [and four sheep] for the sheep.

22:1 [If in the act of breaking in] one discovers the thief, and he is beaten to death, there is in his case no bloodguilt.

2 [If the sun has risen]—[the sun fully shines] upon him, there is bloodguilt for the killer

And the thief [must surely pay]. [But if he has not] the means, he shall be sold for his theft.

3 [If it is found]—he is found red-handed—[with the thing that he stole], [whether it be an ox] [or it be a donkey], or a sheep—[and is still alive], [end aliyah] [then double the price] he must pay.

4 [If animals are put out] [to graze by a man] in a field or a vineyard, and he lets loose his livestock, which graze in the field of another, [from the best] [of his own field], or the best of his vineyard, [he must make compensation].

5 If there breaks out a fire and it spreads to weeds, and it consumes stacks of grain or grain that is standing, or grain in the field, he must make restitution—the one who started the fire.

6 [If one should give]—a man to his neighbor—money or goods for safekeeping, and they are stolen from the house of the man: if the thief is then found, he must pay double.

7 But if he is not found—the thief, they must bring the owner of the house to *haElohim*, [to swear that he did] [not stretch out] his hands into the belongings of his neighbor.

8 [In every matter involving a breach of trust], [whether it involves an ox], [an ass or a donkey], a sheep, or a garment, [or any lost thing], [about which] someone says, “There it is!” [Then before] *haElohim* must be brought [the claims of both of them].

[The one who is] [found guilty] by *Elohim* must pay double, to his neighbor.

22:9 [If there is given] by a man to his neighbor a donkey, an ox, [a lamb or a sheep], [or any other beast] for safekeeping, [if the animal dies] or is injured or carried off, and no one sees it,
10 an oath [before YHWH] must be made between [the two of them], [to say that he] [has not put out] his hand over the effects of his neighbor. [This must be accepted by the owner], and the neighbor need not pay.
11 But if it was truly stolen from the caretaker, he must pay the owner.
12 If it was torn to pieces, he shall bring it as evidence. [For that torn animal], the man need not pay.
13 [If an animal is borrowed] [by a man] from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies, its owner not being with it, he shall surely pay.
14 If its owner is with it, he need not pay. If it was rented—the animal—he has coming to him, [the fee for his rental].
15 If seduced [by a man] [is a virgin] who has not been spoken for, and he lies with her, [he must pay the bride-price], thus taking her to himself as a wife.
16 [If consent is denied]—[there is refusal] by her father, to give her to him, then money [he must still pay]: [equal to the bride-price] for virgins.
17 A sorceress you shall not let live.
18 One who lies with an animal will be put to death.
19 One who sacrifices to the gods [shall be proscribed]—except to YHWH alone.
20 A stranger—you must not mistreat, and you must not oppress, since strangers you were in the land of Egypt.
21 Any widow or orphan you must not afflict.
22 If indeed you afflict [any of them], [if they should] cry out [aloud to Me], I will surely hear their outcry.
23 Then will flare up My anger, and I will kill you, by the sword, which will turn your wives into widows and your children into orphans.
24 [If you would lend money]—making a loan [to my people], [to a poor person] among you, do not act toward him like a creditor. Do not demand from him interest.
25 If you take as pledge the cloak of your neighbor, then before nightfall, you must return it to him.
26 [For indeed] this is all the covering he has: it is his clothing, for his skin. In what will he sleep? It will be, [if he cries out] to me, [end aliyah] I will listen, since gracious am I.
27 Elohim you shall not revile. A leader of your people, you must not curse.

22:28 From the fullness of your harvest, your offerings [do not withhold]. The first-born of your sons, [you must give to Me].

29 The same you must do with your ox [and with your sheep]:

[for seven] days it will be with its mother. But on the eighth day [you will give it to Me].

30 [A people sanctified] you shall be to Me. Flesh from the field that is torn you must not eat. To the dogs you must throw it.

23:1 Do not accept a report [void of truth]. [Do not join] your hand [with a wicked man], so as to become a witness for wrongdoing.

2 Do not go after the crowd to do evil. [Do not testify] [in a dispute] [in that you incline] toward the majority [to pervert justice].

3 [Even a poor man] you must not favor regarding his quarrel.

4 If [you should come across] [the ox belonging] [to your enemy]—or his donkey—going astray, lead it back and return it [to him].

5 [And when you see] the donkey [of one you hate] lying under its burden, [and you would refrain] from helping him,

[end aliyah] you must help him unbind it, [working with him].

6 You [must not subvert] the rights of your needy in their disputes.

7 [From a word that is false], [keep your distance]. The innocent and the righteous, [do not kill], for I do not exonerate the wicked.

8 A bribe [you must not] take, indeed the bribe blinds the clear-sighted, and it twists the words of the just ones.

9 A stranger you must not oppress. [For you yourselves] do know the feelings of a stranger, for strangers were you in the land of Egypt.

10 For six years you must sow your land, and gather its produce.

11 [But in the seventh] [you must let it go] [and leave it alone], [so they might eat]—the needy of your people.

[And what remains] may be eaten by the beasts of the field. Thus must you do with your vineyard [and with your olive grove].

12 [For six] days you must do your work, but on day number seven you must stop,

in order [that you may give rest] to your ox and to your donkey, and to refresh the son of your handmaid [as well as the stranger].

13 [In everything] that I am speaking to you, take heed. Of the name of other gods make no mention. It shall not be heard in your mouth.

23:14 Three pilgrimage-festivals you will celebrate for me, each year.

15 The feast [of unleavened bread] you will keep: for [seven days] you will eat *matzahs*, [just as] [I commanded you], [at the set time] in the month of Aviv, [for in it] [you went out] from Egypt; let no one appear before me empty-handed.

16 And the feast of the harvest (Shavuot), first fruits of your labor, produce you sowed in the field.

And the feast of ingathering (Sukkot), at the close of the year, when you gather in your produce from the field.

17 At three times in the year must appear all of your men in the presence of the Lord | YHWH.

18 Do not offer with unleavened bread [the blood of My (Passover) offering].

Do not leave overnight the fat of My festive offering, until morning.

19 [The very first] fruits of your soil [you must bring] to the house of YHWH your God. [end aliyah] Do not boil a kid in the milk of its mother.

20 Behold: I Myself will send an angel [before you] to guard you on the way, and bring you to the place that I have prepared.

21 [You must be careful] [in his presence] and hearken to his voice. [Do not rebel] against him.

[For indeed] [he is not able] to bear your transgressions, because My name [is with him].

22 [But if] [you obey and you] listen [to his voice], [and if you do] all that [I say here],

[I will be an enemy] to your enemies and I will persecute [those who persecute you].

23 [When there goes] [My angel—when My own messenger] [goes before you], [He will bring you] [to the Amorites] to the Hittites, the Perizzites and the Canaanites, to the Hivites and the Yebusites, [and I will wreak havoc among them],

24 [do not bow] to their gods and do not [serve them], and do not follow their ways.

[But rather] you [must tear down their images] and smash their sacred pillars.

25 [You are to serve] only YHWH your God, Who will bless your bread and your water. [end aliyah] I will banish sickness [from among you].

26 [There will be no women] who miscarry or are barren in your land. The number of your days, [I will make full].

27 [Terror of Me] I will send before you. [I will cause confusion] [among all the people] when you come [into their midst].

[And I will give all] [of your enemies] [over to you]—[you'll see only their backs].

23:28 I will send hornets [ahead of you], [and they will drive out] [the Hivites as well as] [the Canaanites], and the Hittites, [from before you].
 29 [However, I will not] [drive them away] [from before you] all in one year,
 [lest it should be] [that the land] becomes desolate, and too numerous for you, be the beasts of the field.
 30 [And so], [little by little], [I will drive them out] [from before you] until your [numbers grow], so you can inherit the land.
 31 I [shall set your borders] [from the Red Sea] to the Sea of the Philistines [and from the desert] to the river.
 [Because, in fact] I will deliver [into your hand] [the settled] inhabitants [of the land]. [I will drive them out] [from before you].
 32 [You must not make] [a pact with them] [or with their gods]—[make no covenant].
 33 [They must not] remain [in your land], lest they cause you to sin [against Me].
 [You would come] to worship their gods, which would be for you, a trap.

24:1 To Moses, God said, “Climb up [to YHWH]: you and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy elders of Israel, and bow low [from a distance].
 2 Then will approach Moses alone to YHWH, while they will not come near. [As for the people], they may not even go up [with him].”
 3 [After this], [Moses came] and recounted to the people all the words of YHWH and all the regulations.
 And responded all the people, speaking in one voice, saying this: “[All of the words] spoken by YHWH, we will obey.”
 4 And [Moses wrote down] all the words of YHWH. [He arose early] in the morning and set up an altar, at the foot of the mountain,
 [and he set up twelve] pillars [or standing stones], for the twelve tribes of Israel.
 5 [He then assigned] [young men] of the children of Israel, to bring burnt-offerings,
 [and to sacrifice] [offerings of peace]—[promoting well-being], to YHWH: [an offering of bulls].
 6 [Then took] Moses half of the blood and put it into basins, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.
 7 He then took [the *sepher* or record] of the covenant, and read it in the ears of the people,
 who [then replied], “[All of the words] spoken by YHWH, we will do and obey.”
 8 [Then took] Moses the blood and sprinkled it [on the people], [and he said these words]:
 “Behold: [the blood of the covenant] being made by YHWH [with you], over all the words [you have heard].”

24:19 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadav and Avihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.

10 [And there they saw] [before them], the God of Israel.

And [under His feet], the likeness of a tile made of sapphire, like the very heaven for purity.

11 [But against the great men] of *B'nei Yisrael* God did not raise His hand. They gazed at *haElohim*, and they ate and drank.

12 Then said YHWH to Moses, “[Now climb] [up here to Me], on the mountain, [and remain there]. I will give to you the tablets [made out of stone], the *Torah* and the *mitzvah* (the instructions and the commandment) that I have written, [to teach them].

13 [And so he set out]—Moses, with Joshua his attendant, and he went up: Moses climbed, the mountain of God.

14 To the elders he had* said, “[Wait for us] here until we return to you, and see! Aaron and Hur [are with you]. Anyone possessed by some matter, go over to them.

*For the past perfect, cf. Orlinsky, 'Notes on the New Translation of the Torah'

15 He went up: Moses climbed up, on the mountain. And covered by a cloud, was the mountain.

16 There dwelt [the glory of YHWH] on Mount Sinai. It was covered by a cloud, for all of six days.

[And then God called]—[summoning Moses] on day the seventh, from within the cloud.

17 The sight of the glory of YHWH was like a consuming fire, on top of the mountain, in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 Then [entered Moses] the midst of the cloud, and he climbed up the mountain.

[And remained] Moses on the mountain for forty days, [end aliyah] and [for forty nights].

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh *or* yetiv kadma *or* pashta geresht gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, geresht, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha (Renew our days)	kadma/geresh (<i>or</i> : azla, etc.) (She weeps bitterly).	mercha siluk (a fire-offering to God)
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Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalshelet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “*God*” or “*Adonai*”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)