



# B'NAI CHAYIM

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## CHILDREN OF LIFE

18 Av, 5789 (08/08/20)

**G-d Has Never Abandoned His People and Never Will** J. M. Terrett

**Eikev** As a Result Life is Too Short to Play Games With G-d  
**Torah:** Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25  
**Haftarah:** Isaiah 49:14-51:3  
**Brit Chadashah:** Hebrews 11:8-13

This portion contains many warnings and promises and also reviews some of the good history of our people, as well as some of the bad. G-d made a promise to our forefathers to never quit bugging their kids and He has been doing an excellent job for thousands of years. Sometimes when our kids wander from the faith, as part of Him not giving up on them, they may see their own kids return to the faith which they have abandoned.

Since the WWII, church and synagogue attendance has dropped drastically and as the whole world acquires greater and greater wealth, people seem to have less and less time and energy for faith and spirituality. But as long as the righteous core in Israel, in the church and among the nations, seeks the face of our Redeemer, this darkening world will not get a death grip on the nations and generations of mankind. How much of a grip does it have on you, or better yet, how is your grip on the things of the L-RD doing? Let's examine the words of Moses as He encourages the people to keep a firm grip of YHVH and His Word.

As the people are again becoming a covenant people, Moses reminds them of the great state of blessedness; which results from walking with the L-RD according to His Word. Their crops will be blessed and there will be no sterility among the people or their livestock. They will be more blessed than any of the other peoples of the earth, and YHVH will keep away all sickness and never let the plagues from Egypt erupt in their midst.

He will strike down all those who hate them, but when they conquer the Holy-Land; He will drive out the Canaanites little by little, so the animals of the fields do not multiply against them. He always has our best interests at heart and never pushes us too far, too quickly.

Moses goes on to warn that during the conquest of Canaan, everyone and everything has to be devoted to destruction because they had become such a wicked people and unfortunately, wickedness can be contagious. Nothing abominable was to be taken into their homes. Their gold and silver idols had to be destroyed and melted down, not taken home. It was to be devoted to the service of YHVH and become nobody's personal property.

Moses goes on to remind them that they were fed manna in the wilderness for 40 years, so that they would learn not to live by bread alone, but by every word which comes out of the mouth of G-d. At times, YHVH has to chastise them like a father chastises their children, but He was taking them into a well-watered, fertile land with abundant mineral resources. But once they had completed the conquest, they were to give thanks to YHVH and not claim that their own hands had gotten them these resources. Thank Him, do not forget Him.

The land may be fortified to the heavens and they may encounter the giant children of Anak, but YHVH will pass like a devouring fire and Israel must kill the surviving remnants to prevent them from infecting the people with their criminal paganism. They are reminded that the Canaanites were being driven out because of their wickedness and not because of Israel's righteousness and as a confirmation of the promises which were given to the patriarchs. In a few places in this passage, Moses reminds the people that they have been a rebellious, stiff necked people, from the time they left Egypt, until they arrived on the plains of Moab. Moses mentions the sin of the golden calf and how he smashed the first set of tablets, even though they were written by the finger of G-d. He goes on to mention four of the major rebellions during their journeying: Tabera (where fire fell on the murmurers), Massa (when they whined for water – out of sequence), Kibroth Hattava (when they lusted after meat) and Kadesh Barnea (when they first refused to go in and then refused to not to go in).

Moses interceded for them after the incident of the golden calf and two new tablets were hewn and kept in a special box until the ark was built. He also reminds them about the choice of the Levites. Both of these reminders are out of sequence, but Moses is using them to build a powerful case for repentance and obedience. The passage mentions that G-d never wants to destroy His people – He wants them to repent and to return to Him (Ezek.33:11). As well, we could say that G-d's choice of Israel, shows us that we have to choose Him.

What follows immediately is an amazing description of the mighty uniqueness of G-d which we will discover if we learn to circumcise our hearts. The L-RD (YHVH) alone is G-d of gods (Elohim), and L-RD of lords (Adonai). Three names one G-d – three persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), one G-d. G-d is ***echad*** (composite singularity), never ***yichad*** (only one).

He shows no favoritism in His judgments and because we were once strangers, we are to love the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. We are to fear Him, serve Him, and swear by His name because He is our glory. From 70 souls, we were multiplied as the stars of the Heavens and even though at times our road was bumpy, He was going to bring us into a land of milk and honey. It is not like Egypt where the water comes from a mighty river, it is a land that drinks the pure rain water of Heaven, which will be cut off if they fall into disobedience.

We are told to surround ourselves with symbolic reminders of G-d and His Word, as we teach our children to stay focused on YHVH and His Word in every area of our lives. He said previously that we had become as numerous as the stars of the Heavens, now He says that our time in the land will be as numerous as the days of Heaven above the earth. Amazing!

Every place our foot touches shall be ours, within the limits of the Holy Land. He will cause great terror and fear to fall upon the entire country so that neither they nor their false gods would be able to stand before YHVH and His people. As long as we are obedient we are both unstoppable and irresistible. If we lose our grip on His Word, He will treat us the way He is going to treat the Canaanites. Such is our potential for blessing and for punishment. Life is too short for playing games with G-d. Get serious with G-d and He will get serious with you.

I am truly saddened by the lost potential of our Jewish people. From the time of the Maccabees until the destruction of the temple, they made so many converts that they were poised to take over the Roman World and could have taken the Gospel to the ends of the Earth, before the fall of the Roman Empire. There were more of them alive then than there are today. G-d is still blessing them and the enemy is still seeking their annihilation and when they turn in mass, back to our Messiah, it will be one of the most joyful events in human history. Life is too short to play games with G-d. He will not move from His Word, ever. Will you let His Word move you? It is beginning to move His people more and more. Let us pray that they are set free from the chains of their traditions and fully embrace the wonder and the marvel of the Torah and G-d's Messiah of promise. It is always exciting to walk with G-d!

### **Sermon: YHVH Has Never Abandoned His People and Never Will.**

With all that is going on in our world, it is too easy to feel that things are out of control and that the world is becoming more and more a dangerous place to live. Instead, as believers, we need to look at the promises in the Scriptures and understand that the purposes of G-d are being fulfilled, despite all the nonsense that continues to amaze and trouble people across the globe. When you look at the book of Revelation, you see that the author alternates between heavenly realities and earthly happenstances. We should be looking at the heavenly realities and trust in the One whose hand still guides the course of human history.

You all know that I enjoy going on Facebook and besides posting humorous and insightful offerings, there are two more activities which I indulge in very frequently. I delete any post which contains vulgarity and I delete many posts that are delusional, spiteful and so far out in left field, they are worse than silly. People say the strangest things and along with the informational posts I enjoy, they serve as a warning not to be taken in by people who are just talking nonsense. I can usually only take it for so long, before I go off line and read a book!

In the wake of the explosion in Lebanon, someone posted it was just one of six explosions which occurred around the globe in a 24-hour period and they suggested that something dire was going on in the world. They forget that Israel is G-d's time piece, and as the coming of the Kingdom draws near, we should be praying for our Jewish people to come to faith in their Messiah, and for the global progress of the Gospel among the nations.

Many of Israel's troubles happened during the summer because it was the time kings went to war while the crops were growing. But as the captivity discouraged many Jewish people who missed their homeland, Isaiah comforted them and spoke of the enduring love of G-d for each of them and all of them.

I am currently rereading several books of Jewish history and I am amazed at how many times our people were nearly annihilated, as they were chased from one nation to another over the centuries. Many people have asked why G-d let this happen to His people even as they were dispersed across the globe. Frequently, temporary sanctuary was found for them as they continued to make a positive contribution to the nations among whom they dwelt.

It is not very well documented, but over the years, a steady stream of Jews came to believe in the Messiah voluntarily. Forced conversions were cruel and ineffective. They were a sinful violation of the Gospel and never had G-d's blessing nor His permission. Jewish people were also quite good at converting Gentiles, especially those who were only marginally Christian. This is why, eventually Jewish people began to look like the people they lived among.

I do not claim to fathom how all the purposes of G-d are going to unfold, but I believe in the ultimate victory of the Gospel over the forces of darkness; which are repeatedly lining up against it. It was this belief in the ultimate victory of G-d that the prophet spoke about, as he encouraged the captives not to lose hope. G-d has never abandoned His people and never will.

Let's look at several verses in this week's prophetic portion which speak of G-d's great love for His people. They are specifically directed to His Jewish people, but His love also extends to all the nations, for Israel is both a light and an example, both of what to do and what not to do. In response to some of the Jewish people feeling that G-d had abandoned them, in verse 15 of chapter 49, G-d answers that it would be impossible for this to happen. He likens himself to a mother who would never forget a child that she has breast fed and would also never forget the child she bore in her womb. Just because Israel went into captivity, because of their folly, does not mean that G-d has forgotten them.

Many people who were part of the righteous core of Israel shared the fate of the guilty ones who went into captivity because of their sinfulness. G-d will always protect His people through their trials and He will not always deliver them from their trials. The blood-stained pages of history are full of horrific persecutions that the Jewish people have endured far too often. G-d did not abandon them and He never will. He is right there with them, protecting them and comforting them, even to the very moment of their death.

He wants us to understand that His love and care will never leave us, and we are guaranteed His presence in both the worst-case scenario and in the best-case scenario. I often struggle when I consider the horror which our people endured while they were being slaughtered during the holocaust. Three things give me comfort and these same truths are scattered through many portions of Isaiah's prophecy. First, we have the promise of eternal life, once the heavenly kingdom comes to overthrow the darkening universe, and set up the eternal reign of our blessed Messiah. Even in our death, we rest in His presence because this life is only temporary, but our life in the next world is permanent.

Next, G-d will always place a limit on the troubles which come our way, and He will never let them completely destroy all of us. He is harvesting the righteous core in all the nations and generations of our world, to the Jew first and also to the gentiles. Whatever we are suffering; are both the attacks of the enemy who hates us and the birth pangs of the Messianic Kingdom, where our true citizenship lies.

Lastly, I firmly believe in the final judgment of G-d where the righteous shall be rewarded and the wicked shall be punished. No matter if we are slaughtered like so many sheep, all who have committed any crimes against the Word of G-d, will be judged and condemned. Even as the world is sagging under the combined weight of countless atrocities, the eternal weight of glory, which the righteous will receive, is poised to break forth once judgment arrives. I weep and I rage as all over the world, millions of innocent people are murdered, raped and victimized by monsters who think they have really gotten away with murder. I would always want to place my trust in the Judge of the ages, rather than to take things into my own hands.

Our call, both as Jews and as Gentiles is to be light and salt and to help in the healing of the world and never join the ranks of those who are bent on its destruction. The prophet goes on to remind us G-d has engraved us on His hands and even the ruined walls of Jerusalem are always in front of His eyes. The prophet goes on to describe the wonder that will be the return as an encouragement to those who had lost nearly everything. Their population would recover and even exceed what it was before the captivity and wonder of wonders, those who have been the oppressors, would become their benefactors.

They would even bow down and lick the dust off their feet – a very colorful image because the prophet reminds us that those who trust in the L-rd will never be confounded. He can help us to blossom and bloom in even the most dire of circumstances. He always has our eternal interests at heart.

In a strange set of imagery which goes beyond Israel's then current circumstances and speaks of the end of the world, the horrible future state of Israel's enemies is described. G-d says that Israel's oppressors will eat their own flesh and become drunk with their own blood as if it were wine. It is a graphic description which would have been strangely comforting to people who had witnessed similar horrors as they were carried into captivity.

In their messages to the people, the prophets always bounced between explaining the reasons for the people's punishment and promising them a future deliverance. Frequently, this deliverance also contained descriptions of the end of the world, where all troubles would cease and eternal comfort would be poured out on the people.

In the interim, YHVH reminds the people why they have been stricken unnecessarily when they were unfaithful to YHVH. Did they not realize His power to deliver and redeem them? He has power to dry up the sea and turn mighty rivers into a desert where the rotting fish perish of thirst. He even covers the skies with a cloak, so why don't they return to Him and quit fooling around with their useless idols and evil pagan gods?

In the middle of the comforting descriptions we find a reference to the Messiah in what is called Isaiah's servant songs which describe various aspects of our Messiah and how He will accomplish His ministry. Some commentators feel that these descriptions refer to Israel's suffering in exile, but the servant is always described in the singular and is not suffering because He has sinned. He is suffering for the people.

The servant song in chapter 50 starts with a description of the powerful voice the servant has to uphold the downtrodden. He listens daily to the voice Adonai; YHVH and does not recoil from His calling to suffer without offering any resistance. He is going to be beaten, spat on and have his beard ripped out. Through all this redemptive suffering, He knows that He is going to be rescued by the L-rd, so He perseveres as if His face was made of stone.

It is evident from the description of His suffering that He is being put to death, but He will not be abandoned or confounded, even in death. The One who is going to justify Him is close and the assumption is that YHVH will bring the suffering servant back to life. No enemy shall be able to hold Him back and when the L-RD shall rescue Him, who will condemn Him? His enemies will fall down like a bunch of rags and be eaten by moths.

Just before the end of the servant song, the prophets say that whoever fears the L-RD will listen to the voice of His servant, who we know is the Messiah. And also, let those who walk in darkness without any light, trust in the name of YHVH and learn to lean on G-d for their support. This is both a reference to Israel's current condition in exile and to our own exile as we wander through the dark of this world towards the Kingdom of G-d's great light.

The end of the servant song makes a reference to those who light their own fire and are armed with their own burning torches, instead of trusting in the light of G-d and His servant. They are told to go into the midst of their fire and their torches and be burned. They will suffer greatly by holding onto to their false fire and the hand of the L-RD will bring this about and cause them to lie down in great suffering. It is a reference to those who will not listen to the voice of the suffering servant and warns them that they will certainly self-destruct. Those in the captivity were being given various pictures of the coming Messiah who will not just deliver them from their current troubles, but will also usher in the eternal kingdom.

The portion swings back to a discussion of the deliverance of Israel from captivity and describes G-d's people as those who have been hewn from the rock. They are called to gaze upon this rock and at the cleft of the rock from which they were taken.

This is a powerful image of how precious Israel is and how durable their destiny is. G-d brought them into being as His people and by association, He will never abandon them or let them far out of His sight.

Next the passage calls upon the languishing captives to consider their first ancestor, father Abraham and upon Sarah who gave them birth. The image portrays collective Israel as a single child of these two amazing parents. Just as G-d blessed and protected Abraham and Sarah and multiplied their children as the stars of the heavens, so He will bless and protect captive Israel and, by association, bring them back to the land which He promised to the descendants of Abraham and Sarah.

The captives are both remembered and are also under the generational protection of YHVH. They have been given a mission to be salt and light and act as a beacon to bring the darkness dwelling nations back to the light of G-d and His Word. Their destiny will always be greater than their suffering and they will never be put on the back burner or be consigned to a dark corner to be forgotten and neglected.

They have gotten where they are because of their own folly and can get back to where they need to be, if they have faith and practice both repentance and obedience. They are reminded that they have a greater destiny even beyond merely returning to the land and having their fortunes restored. They have a global mission to spread the good news of the suffering servant to the ends of the earth, so that the scattered sons and daughters of Adam and Eve can return to the light of their Creator and Redeemer.

While they wait for their double redemption, first from the captivity and next from the stifling power of this fading world, they are to remember that YHVH has His eyes on Zion and upon all of her ruins. She will be restored to act like a beacon so that the nation of Israel could lead all other nations back to G-d and to His Word.

When YHVH returns His people to their land which was ravaged by their conquerors and captors, it will flower like Eden as the arid land is turned into a Garden of the L-rd. When the people are returned and when the land is restored, joy and happiness shall be in the midst of it, along with the giving of thanks and the singing of songs.

As we move through the Sabbaths of Consolation and prepare for our annual observance of the Fall Feasts, we need to heed the words of the prophets. First, this will mean not allowing any of this world's encroaching paganism to infect our hearts and lives. Next it means that we understand that G-d will never leave us, nor forsake us, as He guides us through this life, no matter what we have to wander through, be it ever so joyful or ever so painful.

Lastly; we must always have our eyes focused on the eternal kingdom because the suffering Servant has now become the interceding Saviour and one Day He will return as the conquering King. In Messiah, Jew and Gentile stand as one new man whom YHVH has never abandoned and never will. Rejoice and be glad because we are heaven bound pilgrims only passing through this fading world. Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.