



B'NAI CHAYIM

CHILDREN OF LIFE

25 Av 5780 (15 Aug/20) **You choose! Be Blessed or be Cursed** (M. Taber)

Torah Parashah: **Re'eh**- "See" Deuteronomy 11:26 -16:17

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:11- 55:5 (Third Sabbath of Consolation)

Shabbat Shalom everyone.

On the Messianic Calendar, today's shabbat is called **Shabbat Nachamu** or the *Sabbath of Comforting*. Shabbat Nachamu takes its name from the Book of Isaiah (Chap 40:1-26) that speaks of "comforting" the Jewish people for their suffering. This Shabbat is the third of seven haftarahs of consolation leading up to the holiday of Rosh Hashanah. Behind us is the fast of Tisha B'Av which commemorates the destruction of both Temples on the same date - the 9th of Av. The first Temple stood for 410 years and the second Temple stood for 420 years. After the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans in 70 AD, Judah disappeared from the world map and was relegated to the dustbin of ancient history. The Jews were reduced to a diaspora nation without a home country for about 2,000 years. On May 14, 1948 biblical prophecy kicked-in and Israel was re-created by the United Nations in 1 day - exactly as Isaiah prophesied (Isaiah 66:8). This has huge implications for the rest of the world because **there is an Israel in the End of Days** (Zech 12:3).

Today's parashah is rich in spiritual lessons so both the Torah Meditation and the Teaching will focus on this portion. In this Meditation I'll give you an over-view of Deuteronomy, and in the teaching, I'll go into the spiritual aspects of Moses' warnings and what they mean to us today as a wild branch of Israel (Romans 11:17, Ephesians 2:19).

Deuteronomy means "second law" and in this portion, Moses reviews the covenant laws *that were given* to that **first generation** in the desert. In this portion, all of that first generation have been gathered to their ancestors **and their children** are now standing before Moses. Moses continues with his 2nd of 3 sermons to this second generation. In these speeches, Moses reminds his people of all the blessings they had received from their God. He reminds them of the covenant requirements they must fulfill to continue receiving the promised blessings. During this time, they are camped

on the east side of the Jordan River across from the city of Jericho. The 12 tribes are on the verge of finally taking the Promised Land.

This Parashah is called “Re’eh” which is Hebrew for the word “see” but is also translated as “hear”. This parashah had significant implications to that faithful at Mount Sinai, to their children on the shores of the Jordan River **and equally to the faithful here in this shule**. In “Re’eh” God instructs us to “hear and see” the blessings He is offering. The word “See” is written in the **singular form** - which suggests a *personal struggle* that each person is faced with keeping the commandments. If you allow yourself to be lured away from the blessings by the gentile way of life - you willingly separate yourself from God. This is how God sees it and He makes it clear in the Scriptures. This separation will obscure or blind your spiritual vision and prevent you from seeing the blessings right in front of your face. For example, after the Children of Jacob left Egypt, they took only 11 days to reach the Land of Milk and Honey. They could see it across the river! But fear and lack of faith kept them from “*seeing*” that God was with them and the giants could not possibly stand against them. The land was already theirs. But because of their lack of faith, they spent another 40 years wandering the desert. And so, it is with us. God’s laws are blessings and they connect us to Him. *Don’t break that connection*. Mount Sinai and the Torah are kindergarten baby steps that lead to the gates of Heaven. Your spiritual vision gets clearer and clearer as you internalize God’s blessings. As I said in another teaching - the Holy Spirit can lead you to the waters of eternal life - but He can’t make you drink.

Moses told the people that when they crossed into the Holy Land led by Joshua - the blessings would be proclaimed on Mount Gerizim and the curses on Mount Ebal. When you accept the laws, you get the *blessings* and when you reject the laws you get the *curses*. I like to say: when you accept the laws you get the *blessings* and when you reject the laws you don’t get the blessings. *Don’t miss the spiritual implication here*. Each person must accept the consequences of their choices. Here, in this portion, as the Children of Jacob prepare to enter the promised land, it is in the context of the soon-to-be-fulfilled covenant. In *Re’eh* God is fulfilling His part of the Covenant and the people are now faced with the struggle to fulfill their part.

When the ten commandments were given on Mount Sinai, there was no talk of curses. But the people were still being reprimanded when they refused to listen. Remember Korach? The earth opened-up and swallowed him, his wife and tent (Nu 16:35). *Then*, his 250 followers were consumed by fire (Nu 16:35). When a mob tried to attack the Mishkan, a plague began to decimate the rebels (Nu 16:46, NIV). About 14,700 people were killed during this particular rebellion. And there are, unfortunately, many other examples when God had to remind His people of the covenant they agreed to keep. God had to put this **individual choice** into the form of “blessings and curses” so that His people *were more likely to understand the consequences* at the spiritual stage they were at.

Who in his right mind would choose the curses? And yet the Scriptures testify that Israel did - *time after time*. God requires you to **make a choice**". The spiritual foundation of the Torah is "**free will**". **Free will** is a cosmic foundation that spans the seen and unseen worlds. That's why one-third of the angels were free to make a choice and follow Lucifer instead of God. That's why Adam & Eve were free to believe Lucifer instead of God. I used to think "*what chance did Eve have trying to reason with a celestial being*". But God was not **testing** Adam & Eve's knowledge or wisdom or education. He was testing their "faith" in His instructions. We don't have to understand everything in the Scriptures. God just wants to know: "Who do you believe??" And *here we are, almost 6,000 years later- a more sophisticated society, some would even say an **advanced society** - and yet we are all guilty of choosing the curses*. And please don't think I'm pointing a finger at anyone. *That's what the Torah is for*. The Torah will tell you when you are wrong. It guides us to what God expects from us and - *just as important* - **what we can expect from God**. Remember that our divine parent is on our side. He is cheering and applauding us like a proud parent when His children do something right. The Scriptures tell us that our Father is: ⁶ **...compassionate and gracious ... slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth,** ⁷ **...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means leaving the guilty unpunished ...** (Ex 34:6-7, TLV). When you study the Torah, you have a happy divine parent, and a happy parent has happy children.

Yeshua said to Phillip "**...He who has seen Me has seen the Father ...** (John 14:19, NKJV). The meaning here is that the Law is a reflection of Yeshua's character. And if you keep the Law, then you reflect the Son who reflects the Father. Then you become a part of the Divine Family. This is a far cry from what people are teaching today. The Torah is nailed to the cross. The Torah has been fulfilled by the Messiah. The Torah is an ancient relic and no longer valid today in our modern society. I believe that in today's religious mayhem and delusion, the Torah is the only thing that will keep you on the straight path to righteousness.

When you think of it, we are in much the same situation that the Children of Jacob were in the desert. They were surrounded by pagan nations whose life-style some Hebrews found attractive. Similarly, we are subject to our gentile government that is passing laws **directly in opposition to God's laws**. And just like the people in the desert, some will wander away from the flock and embrace the gentile way. If a person repeatedly refuses to repent and accept the guidance of the Scriptures - their hearts and minds become hardened and eventually closed to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When that happens, a spiritual tipping point is reached and the individual will lose the option of repentance. An extreme example of this in the Scriptures was the Pharaoh of Egypt - who was given 10 chances to listen to God - and rejected each one. Eventually he lost the ability to repent.

Another example involves two cities called Sodom & Gomorrah. In the Genesis account, God reveals to Abraham that Sodom and Gomorrah are to be destroyed for their grave sins (Genesis 18:20). Abraham pleads for the lives of any righteous people living there and God agrees to spare the cities if 10 righteous people can be found (Genesis 18:23–32). But, in the end, God judged that their hearts and minds were closed to repentance and no righteous people could be found. Sodom & Gomorrah had reached that spiritual tipping point where judgment was imminent. Only Lot, his wife and his 2 daughters were found righteous enough to escape. After Lot's wife failed to follow the angel's instructions and was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen 19:26) the final number of survivors were 3 people – Lot and his 2 daughters.

By this time - Moses has been told several times by God that **he will not** be allowed to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land (Nu 27:13, 31:1, Deut 3:23-26). After pleading and begging for a reprieve, Moses finally understood **he was not** going to see the Promised Land. In reading Moses' warnings and rebuke to his people, I saw the love he had for them but I can also sense his anxiety and apprehension – and with good reason. A mere 40 days after receiving the Torah on Mount Sinai, the Children of Jacob created a golden idol.

In the Torah, God lays out the first baby steps we must follow to have a loving relationship with our spiritual parent. And like a parent Yeshua implores us: **If you love Me, keep My commandments** (John 14:15, NKJV).

Amen and Amen

Spiritual Teaching

Parashah Re'eh is generally interpreted in Hebrew as "See". But there is a spiritual side to the word "see". Let me give you an example. Have you ever had someone tell you something that you didn't understand? So, that person explained what he meant slowly until you finally say, "Oh, I get it. *I see what you mean.*" So, the word "see" can also mean "understand". The Torah is a material Book in a material world. The book is the visible body – made of a protective cover, a bunch of paper and the ink. But delve deeper into the material Torah and you discover the vibrant living spirit of its author - a reflection of the mind of God. If you are looking for the meaning of life - then look into the Torah. You will find a bunch of commandments, laws and ordinances. These are the material principles that begin the *growth and transformation* of your true spiritual personality. This is where you begin the process of sanctification. Don't forget that your physical body turns to dust at the end of its lifespan. And what's left, hopefully, is you as a spiritually mature soul personality.

Let's look at one simple commandment that God gave us to actually keep us connected to Him. And I'll use God's words, not mine. God tells Moses: ¹³ **Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that**

I am the LORD who sanctifies you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath for *it is holy to you* (Ex 12:13-14, NKJV). God is telling us that the Sabbath is a *material sign* and if you accept it and do it, then you will be spiritually sanctified and personally connected to Him. However, to follow the Law you need “faith” in your God and His Word. Here are some examples of this faith that the Scriptures continually ask of us in words, examples and deeds:

- By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous ... (Hebrews 11:4) But, what does that mean? Abel had faith in God’s instruction of what constituted an acceptable sacrifice. Cain followed God’s instructions. To put it another way, Cain was faithless because he offered a sacrifice that he knew was not his best. So, if you are faithful to keep God’s commandments you will be sanctified and commended as righteous in the eyes of God.
- By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ... for before his translation ... he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5).
- By faith Noah ... prepared an ark ... and became ... righteous which is by faith (Hebrews 11:7).
- By faith Abraham ... went out, not knowing whither he went (Hebrews 11:8-10). Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6).

Those that believed God’s word were sanctified or “set apart” and considered to be righteous because of their faith. But - **faith** is a personal choice of the material man that only **begins** the process of spiritual sanctification. It is through faith that you follow the Law and its divine purpose. But God cannot *and* will not - **give** you faith. The one divine principle that God maintains throughout the Scriptures is “free will”. You have to come to God because you want to and not because you have to.

But having said that – there is grace. Grace has its roots in the Old Testament but became synonymous in the New Testament with our Messiah Yeshua. Grace is defined as unmerited or undeserved mercy. God does intervene in our lives to support us in our everyday struggles - to strengthen our fragile faith and to reinforce our spiritual growth. Notice that our Messiah always healed the sick, even though they were sinners, and after the **grace** of healing He always said, “Go and sin no more”. So even if you are a sinner, the door is open to the help of the Holy Spirit. But - the prerequisite is an open heart and a willingness to repent.

In this world - truth is considered subjective and **your** truth may not be **someone else’s** truth. What is **wrong** for one person may **not be wrong** for another person. Creation has been taken away from God and replaced by evolution. The bible has been banned from our school system. Even churches no longer teach the bible and replaced it with a “feel-good message”. Many don’t know what is wrong, what is right or what is truth? The answer is found in the first 5 books of the bible that spell out the Laws of God.

And I should caution you – believing *in God* is not the same as *doing the will of God*. Many claim that the Old Testament has been fulfilled and nailed to the cross and no longer valid. Well – our Messiah doesn't think so. Here is what he said:

17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Mat 5:17-20, NKJV).

So according to Yeshua, if you do the Law you will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. That's a solid endorsement from the One who wrote the Law and sits on the throne of judgment.

During Temple days, *atonement* was all about the forgiveness of sins using animal sacrifices. But after Yeshua's atoning death on the cross the forgiveness of sins is granted after *heart-felt repentance*. Yeshua triumphed over sin and became the sacrificial lamb once and for all time. However, and it's a big however, the Law is still in place and still defines what sin is and what God expects from us. Having faith and receiving grace does not mean you are released from the Law. In a strange way grace can only exist if the Law exists because grace gives you the strength to follow the Law - which is the reflection of God's mind. Faith, grace, repentance and the forgiveness of sins are divine truths taught in the Torah *by the creator of the Torah* – your Messiah Yeshua.

In parashah Re'eh, I sense that Moses saw the future – and he seemed very afraid of what he saw. He continually emphasised God's commandments and how important it was to keep them close to your heart. This is bible speak for allowing the Torah to guide you through your everyday life. Moses continually warned against absorbing the lifestyle of the gentiles around us.

We all know the story of Yeshua's *Triumphal Entry* into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Jn 12:12-19) He was met by thousands of people yelling “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest”. But just moments before that He stood on the Mount of Olives and looked down at the Temple below Him. This was Herod's renovated Temple and it was one of the architectural wonders of the world. Flavius Josephus described how incredible the Temple looked. Here is how he described it:

Viewed from without, the Sanctuary had everything that could amaze either mind or eyes. Overlaid all round with stout plates of gold, the first rays of the sun it reflected so fierce a blaze of fire that those who endeavoured to look at it were forced to turn away as if they had looked straight at the sun. To strangers, as they approached, it seemed

in the distance like a mountain covered with snow; for any part not covered with gold was dazzling white... (Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, p. 304)

But Yeshua wasn't impressed and began to weep. He had dropped many hints about Jerusalem and the priesthood. Here is one of them:

⁸ 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth,

And honor Me with *their* lips,

But their heart is far from Me.

⁹ And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men (Mat 15:8, NKJV).

Harsh words. Yeshua was saying that this extravagant monument to God was devoid of God's presence. The elaborate rituals, the sacrifices and the lofty prayers were performed with an empty heart. The prophet Amos warned us:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD,

"That I will send a famine on the land,

Not a famine of bread,

Nor a thirst for water,

But of hearing the Words of the LORD (AMOS 8:11, NKJV).

It is my humble opinion that many ministers and religious teachers are slowly modifying and toning down the Scriptures in an attempt to make them more compatible with our so-called modern society. Scriptures are being replaced with a feel-good message with great success. Sin and repentance are replaced by an emotional uplifting experience that builds self-esteem in an entertainment style worship. Persuasive as it might be - the foundations of the scriptures are being eroded. The scriptures warn us about this widespread religious deception called the "great apostasy". This apostasy starts as a deception but soon turns into an all-out rebellion against the Scriptures and the God who gave them. The apostle Paul gives us a sequence of events that we should be aware of. He tells us: ³ ***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition ...*** (2 Thes 2:3, NKJV).

Let me clarify Paul's prophecy because he starts the sequence of events with the Day of the Lord - which is the return of the Messiah and the worldwide judgement. But there are 2 events that must happen first. The first event is the great falling away or the Great Apostasy. *I believe this is where we are right now.* At this point we can still find God, even though many around us refuse to acknowledge Him, Glorify Him or worship Him. God will allow this to go on because it is a spiritual choice that we are free to make. The second event happens when the "man of lawlessness", who we know as the Antichrist, will come on the scene. It is here that the final spiritual tipping point is reached. And finally, the last event is the Day of the Lord where Yeshua gathers the faithful.

So, in conclusion, let me leave you with these thoughts. The great standard of spiritual truth is the Torah. Whether man or angel – if they are saying something contrary to the Torah – run away from them. The Scriptures are a reflection of the mind of God. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8). This happens bit-by-bit, a little at a time each day. God’s truth is alive. It speaks to the deepest places in us, offering conviction and direction. You will find that *confession* and *repentance* draw the Holy Spirit into your heart. Confession acknowledges your sins and weaknesses. It’s like shining a bright light into the dark corners of your mind. Repentance is our affirmation to turn away from those sins and strengthens us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And finally, the fourth commandment was so important to God, that He made a **totally separate** Covenant concerning the seventh day Sabbath. The Sabbath is a “**perpetual sign**” between God and His people. And then God followed that up with another stunning statement. He said: ¹⁷ **It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever**’.

The Sabbath “connection” is a “line of communication”, between the Messiah and His faithful. The Sabbath Covenant is **perpetual** and it is a **spiritual sign** that **identifies** God’s people and **sets them apart**. And these “sanctified people” or these “set apart ones” know who their God is. Our God is that voice in the burning bush, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that voice on Mount Sinai, the God of Moses, the God of the Old Testament, the God of the New Testament - and the One that suffered and died on the cross. The seventh day Sabbath refreshes and re-confirms your personal connection to the Messiah every single week when you sit in these pews. So, according to the Scriptures you all made the right choice.

Amen and Amen