

Re'eh! See! It is All About Choices
 Torah: Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17
 Haftarah: Isaiah 54:11-55:5
 Brit Chadashah: John 7:37-52

It is now only four more weeks until the Fall Feasts. It will soon be the end of this festival cycle and the beginning of another year in the Messiah. This is a fairly long portion and one of its main themes is the blessings which will come upon those who obey the Word and who make their lives revolve around the festival cycle. The festival cycle is really a schedule of rejoicing which follows the annual harvests (first barley, which ripens first, then wheat and finally as second grain harvest followed by harvesting the fruit).

Our Canadian harvests do not follow those of Canaan, but both the provision and the protection of our Messiah comes upon those who have faith in His promises and who exercise obedience to His Word. The coming end of the Festival cycle is a reminder that one day, the Messiah will return to inaugurate His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind. The end of the world is coming, right on schedule.

Moses wants to review the major stipulations of the Law as a means of preparing the second generation to become a covenant people, now that the last of the former generation were no longer living. He begins this portion by saying that his discourse offers two potential outcomes: blessing for those who observe the commandments of YHVH and cursing for those who violate them.

He mentions the blessing and cursing ceremony which is to occur once the people have entered the land. Blessings are to be pronounced on Mount Gerizim and the cursing is to be pronounced upon Mount Ebal. The two peaks are effectively in the middle of the Promised Land and will mark the final transition from being a wandering people to becoming a settled people – former shepherds who are now to also become farmers.

The two biggest challenges facing the people will be to cultivate a flawless obedience to the commandments of YHVH and avoid becoming re-infected with the paganism YHVH is going to purge from the land. We face the same challenge in our lost and darkening world. Virulent forms of paganism are re-inventing themselves with the idolatry of evolution and the fornication of the supposed sexual revolution (which is truly very revolting).

In between the call for faithfulness and obedience, the portion also deals with: the Sabbath and the Festival Cycle, the various offerings and tithes which will contribute to the people's rejoicing, and the care they are to exercise with the less fortunate among them.

The vicious paganism of the land with their grotesque gods is to be violently suppressed and once the people have entered the land, their faithful obedience will be a place of rest for them. They are to practice tabernacle worship as they bring their sacrifices and their tithes to the place where YHVH will set up His dwelling place. Until the construction of Solomon's temple, the tabernacle was set up in various locations and there was even some kind of temple structure in the days of Eli and Samuel. Obedience is described in various ways as a perpetual source of blessing, because in YHVH, the people will always have a good reason to rejoice.

The people are to especially avoid three abominable Canaanite practises. They are not to eat animals alive. Life is in the blood, so you have to release the life from the blood before you eat the animal. You are trying to eat its flesh, not its life. Carnivores often begin to eat their prey

before the animals are dead, but they are not trying to somehow also devour the animal's life force. This is what the Canaanites were trying to do.

Israel is also forbidden to boil a young goat in its mother's milk. The Canaanites did this to absorb the sexual power of the mother and the life force of the young goat. Spiritual power comes from obedience, not from trying to steal it from the animals you are eating.

They were also to avoid an abominable practise which has resurfaced in our paganizing world. The Canaanites burnt their sons and daughters as a form of worship to their gods. People are starting to talk about our aging population and it is not just because we are living longer lives. Our birth rate is much lower because of abortion. When last I checked, in Canada, annually, the natural dead rate is about 80,000 higher than our natural birth rate, so if we did not get at least that many immigrants, our population would start to shrink.

I am not opposed to most forms of birth control which prevent conception. But once conception occurs, a new life has begun and to end it artificially is a form of murder. Instead of burning our kids to get favours from Moloch, we are killing them because of our irresponsible sexual behaviour. Sexual immorality has got such a hold on our popular culture, that we consider unwanted or unexpected pregnancies an acceptable form of birth control. There are so many ways to avoid conception, that sexual immorality could occur without slaughtering the preborn. You should not murder the children for their parent's mistakes.

Those who survive their time in the womb are born into an aging community of sexually immoral people who are quickly being replaced by new immigrants. It is unfortunate that these newcomers are also being persuaded that murder in the womb is socially acceptable behaviour. Abominable sexual practises will never be acceptable in the eyes of the L-RD.

Our more subtle modern paganism has just as many abominable practices as what the Canaanites practised, but instead of killing modern pagans and burning down their temples to abortion we need to reach out with love and boldness without allowing any of their paganism to take root in our midst. G-d's Word and not society, determines what is really right or wrong.

The portion goes on to discuss kosher animals. Did you know that Giraffes ruminate? So do camels, but they do not have split hooves. No carnivorous or scavenger birds are kosher. In Leviticus it also says that no flightless bird is kosher. Chickens can fly, it is just that most domesticated chickens are too fat and lazy to fly more than a few feet. Did you also know that the ancients considered bats to be furry birds with no feathers?

The passage also assigns every third year's tithes to the less fortunate in Israel and three times a year, the people are to gather and rejoice in all the harvest goodness which the L-rd will have brought their way each year. He is still our source of every blessing.

The festival cycle begins with the week of unleavened bread and ends with the eight days of Sukkoth, where we are to have nothing but joy. Faithful obedience is never meant to cramp your style or to deprive you of any joy. It is designed to show you how to rejoice in ways which will do you no harm. Obedience will always be much more fun than sin could ever be.

Sermon: Ephesians 5:15-21: Spiritual Wisdom in a Foolish World

Passage: *Take heed to conduct yourselves with prudence like wise people and not like fools. Redeem the time, for the days are evil. This is why, do not act thoughtlessly, but understand what the will of G-d is for you. Do not be drunk with wine, on the contrary,*

be filled with the Spirit. Talk among yourselves using Psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit, while you sing and celebrate the praises of the L-rd with all of your heart. Give thanks continually to G-d the Father for everything in the name of our L-rd, Yeshua Hamashiach. Submit yourselves to each other in the fear of our Messiah. (Eph. 5:15-21).

We have to be out of hear by 1:00, so I will not keep you long, but I do not want to rush through the preaching of the Word. When we understand that the whole of the New Testament is a Messianic Jewish commentary on the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings, when there is an apparent conflict between the two portions of G-d's Word, it is likely the result of misunderstanding one of the sections or both of them.

I find it amusing that most Gentile believers love the Psalms and the Proverbs, along with the Prophet Isaiah, but rarely explore the rest of what is called the Old Testament. However, unless you have an intimate knowledge of the entire Torah, your grasp of the New Testament will always be deficient.

The first thing you should notice about our passage is that it is openly trinitarian, mentioning first the Spirit, then the Father and finally the Messiah. At first you may found it surprising that our mutual submission should be based on our fear of the Messiah. His mission was at least twofold. He first came to die on the cross for the sins of the world, He then rose from the dead and ascended back into Heaven where He currently intercedes with the Father on our behalf. However, all Judgment has been placed into His capable hands and as every soul which has drawn breath stands before Him, He will reward and punish according to the principles of righteousness outlined in His Word.

He is not gentle Jesus meek and mild who pleads with us to repent and not to continue in sin. He warns us. He empowers us and one day He will judge us. This is why we need to conduct ourselves with prudence and not thoughtlessly. This is also why we need to avoid any carnal indulgences. The Talmud correctly says that every deed carries with it the signature of the one who has done the deed.

In Heaven there are two sets of books. The first set is the book of our deeds and the second is the book of life. Who we really are will be revealed when we are judged, so we had better get busy and fill our lives with wisdom and prudence, so we do not see it all burned up and destroyed on the day of judgment. Repentance removes guilt and shame, but only obedience actually builds on the foundation which the divine Architect has placed in our hearts and lives.

Spiritual carelessness can have fatal consequences, both in this life and in the one which is still to come. The problem with sowing wild oats is that they have to be uprooted before any decent crops can be grown. Doing what we know is wrong is like collecting firewood so that we can watch our lives burned up when it is our turn to be judged. Ephesians has always been considered a feel good book full of promises and comfort with little or no mention of judgment. You can only feel good if you do good and should feel bad when what you do is bad. If you do not deal with your sin in this life, Messiah will deal with it in the life to come.

Rather than quake with fear and trembling because some portray G-d as the unforgiving, severe judge, we need to understand that it is our Messiah who is the judge and He has never bent the rules or ignored the Law and He never will. He has both spoken with great kindness and with great severity, because our lives are too short to be wasted on foolishness and meaningless debauchery. In our world, the days are evil as the adversary runs rampant, seeking new victims to devour. He is the real driving force behind abortion and the idolatrous immorality which has such a strong choke hold on our darkening society.

We need to be at least as severe with our secular modern world as the House of Israel was called to be as they took possession of Canaan. However, we are to act like ambassadors and live by the rules of the coming kingdom and never adopt any of the carnal darkness which is spiralling out of control, year by year. Our faith never calls us to be violent.

We need to see all and any applications of evolution as forms of pernicious idolatry and we need to see all and any forms of sexual immorality as forms of pernicious fornication. Homosexuality and the LGBT agenda are forms of criminal fornication and should never become acceptable in our eyes. Our religious convictions mean that we will never accept what the Bible calls unacceptable, no matter how much pressure is placed on us.

We live in times where evil is called good and where good is called evil. Liberal theology which rejects the authority of the Bible, has slipped into a form of criminal idolatry which we must have nothing to do with. Without biblical authority, our spirituality has no authority and we are assimilating into the world which hates our G-d and His Word.

Again, I am not calling for any form of violence against those who oppose the Word of G-d, but I am calling us to never to accept the unacceptable, just because it is now politically correct to do so. The righteous core of our world is shrinking as the days of Noah are upon us once again. Biblical morality is now considered to be atavistic (primitive, out dated, no longer relevant, belonging to the past and not to the present or the future).

Our reaction should be at least threefold. First we should understand what the will of G-d is for us in whatever situation we find ourselves passing through. If we indulge any violations of His Word, we can never say that this kind of spiritual misbehaviour has anything to do with His Will. I know of several believers who feel that monogamous homosexuality is not a sin. In their understanding, it is only sin to have more than one sexual partner at a time. The Bible clearly teaches that sexual behaviour must not violate kinship, gender or species. It is also an abomination for heterosexual people to engage in any form of sexual behaviour outside the bounds of marriage. Sex of any kind outside the bounds of a monogamous heterosexual marriage is unacceptable sexual misconduct which the Bible clearly condemns.

Debauchery or any kind of recreational substance abuse is also condemned by the Bible because being under the influence of stimulants prevents you from being under the control of G-d and His Word. Being filled with the Spirit doesn't mean you act like you are drunk or that you yell and scream at the top of your lungs or that you roll around on the floor like you are having some kind of seizure. Drunk behaviour is used as the opposite of Spirit filled behaviour. We can get very excited and dance around and sing joyfully, but it never involves any loss of control, like you are slipping into some kind of trance.

Worship is a kind of community conversation we have with each other as we celebrate the goodness of G-d as He provides for us and protects us. Psalm 23 is a peacefully violent Psalm because whatever the sheep are passing through, it is as if they were lying down in a quiet, green pasture wherever they wander. We will go through all kinds of trials and tribulations and even too frequently experience great loss and sorrow.

But instead of getting all bent out of shape about it, we need to look for the ways of escape He will always provide for us and express our gratitude to Him for His abiding presence in our hearts and lives. Praise and worship fills our lives and our hearts with the abiding truths of His

Word and helps to know that we are never forsaken or abandoned, not matter what else is going on in our lives. Being Kingdom bound is what our lives should all be about.

Persistent praise and worship will never blind us to the horrors and the folly of this life, it just allows us to have a foretaste of the live which is to come and because that is where we really live even as we wander through this fading, darkening world. We should be thankful to Him in all things, even if we are persecuted and suffer great hardship because of our faith or because of the fickle happenstances of this life. Maintaining a positive, biblical focus is not as easy as it seems, but it is what we will experience as we are filled with the Spirit and give thanks to our Father in the name of our Messiah.

I often feel rage at the foolish violence which is raging through our world. I think racism of any kind is heinous and especially diabolical. The murder of preborn children overwhelms my soul and I cannot understand why they are receiving so much government funding. Killing children at any stage of their development should be illegal and be punished by the full force of the Law. I am deeply troubled that the world finds terrorism and the murderous attacks on peaceful Israel by thugs and other monsters, acceptable and morally defensible. It is not!

I hate it that so many people go to bed hungry and succumb to horrible diseases in unhygienic conditions. Sexual violence against women and children deserves a return of the death penalty. But all of these horrible abuses are only symptoms of the real causes behind all the suffering and folly of this world.

The enemy of our souls and those who have invited him into the door of their hearts and lives, cause relentless pain and damage and often openly target believers who take a strong biblical stance. It saddens me when believers are duped by all kinds of conspiracy theories and are theologically victimized by such foolishness as the flat earth theory and replacement theology. I have met antisemitic believers who claim it is fine to be anti-zionist. I have even met believers who are functional white supremacists who think native people are lazy and stupid and should get over what was done to them. Don't get me started on holocaust deniers and the religious extremism of some Muslim, Hindu and even Christian groups.

We need a lot of spiritual wisdom because we live in such a dangerous, foolish world. Our faith and our morality is being increasingly targeted and we are too often portrayed as mindless bigots who follow cult leaders who cheat and abuse us. It is what G-d's Word says that we should base our life and our perspective on. The harder it gets to walk with our King, the closer we need to draw to Him through His Word. We know what is really going on in our world – it is a battle ground for people's souls. How is the battle for yours doing?