



Parasha Vayelevh

October 5, 2019

Torah: Deuteronomy 31:1-31:30

Haftarah: Isaiah 55:6-56:8; Hosea 14:2-10, Micah 7:18-20, Joel 2:15-27

Sh'lichim: Romans 10:1-13

Shabbat Shalom Mishpocha! Our *parasha* today is one of the two shortest and of those, it actually has the least number of verses. But, it has a very impactful message. Before we begin with the message, I first need to explain about our *haftarah*. Today is traditionally known as *Shabbat Shuvah*, the Sabbath of Return, because it falls between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* in the Ten Days of Awe. Hosea 14, Micah 7 and Joel 2 are traditional for this *Shabbat*. The *haftarah* reading for this *parasha* when it does not fall on *Shabbat Shuvah* is Isaiah 55:6-56:8. I have chosen to use it today because it especially speaks to us as a congregation of Jews and non-Jews during this season. The other three readings also fit very well, but we have spoken about them several times in the past. So today, as we discuss *Parasha Vayelevh*, we will also draw from Isaiah.

Chapter 31 begins *Moshe's* farewell speech to Israel, a combination of a farewell and a pep talk, words to prepare them for what they are about to face when they enter the Land of Canaan, their future *Eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel for which they have been waiting. You know that I often like to consider parallels. Today, we will look at some of these words as *Moshe's* pep talk to us as we here in *Beit Shalom* face our own spiritual future. The modern battle for *Eretz Yisra'el*, spiritually, has been both inside and outside its physical borders. Even though we are not physically in Israel, we have been a part of the ongoing battle, as we have been an advocate for and in prayer focused for both the nation of Israel and for our brothers and sisters in Israel. The spiritual battle will continue as ADONAI's adjustments in Israel are made in preparation for *Yeshua's* return.

The political battles with regard to the present secular nature of Israel will continue. There will be struggles for political rule as long as Israel is a secular nation, and in my opinion, will continue until this prophecy of Zechariah takes place: 10 "Then I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication, when they will look toward Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10 TLV). This, again in my opinion, will occur before *Yeshua's* return. ADONAI will put this spirit of mourning into the heart of every Jew who does not know *Yeshua*, simultaneously. In their hearts, they will see *Yeshua*, whose sacrificed body they have rejected and they will repent. They will make *t'shuvah*. And, then all Israel will be saved. As *Sha'ul* prophesied, 26 "...", "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (Romans 11:26b TLV). I believe that it will be a national event with Jews who do not know Him repenting and mourning for *Yeshua*, even as they acknowledge in their hearts that He is *Mashiach*. This event will be with all of Israel just as the first *Pesach* was for all Israel, at least for those who were obedient to place the lamb's blood upon their doorposts. This event will also be a "passover, a passing from death to eternal life, for all Israel, that is, for those who are willing and able to repent.

There may be some who cannot or will not repent and thus, will be lost, but “all Israel,” the nation as a whole will be saved, just as they were saved from Pharaoh.

As a group, ADONAI has punished Israel for their sins numerous times and He has also forgiven them many times. In last week’s *parasha*, ADONAI made this promise to Israel: 5 “ADONAI your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, and you will possess it; and He will do you good and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 Also Adonai your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants—to love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live” (Deuteronomy 30:5-6 TLV). The circumcision of the heart means that one is being declared righteous by ADONAI. It is accomplished by repenting of sin and the acceptance of Yeshua’s sacrificial death as payment for sin. Exactly when this will occur for “all Israel,” we don’t know, but we are in the prophetic age of Messiah’s coming. One very strong possibility is that the salvation of all Israel could happen at the time when He comes for all who have trusted in Him at the resurrection of the dead: 14 “For if we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, so with Him God will also bring those who have fallen asleep in Yeshua. 15 For this we tell you, by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord shall in no way precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself shall come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the blast of God’s shofar, and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left behind, will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air—and so we shall always be with the Lord” (1Thessalonians 4:14-17 TLV). All Israel could mourn and repent even as Yeshua appears in the clouds.

Dispensationalism teaches that the saved will be raptured, but the unbelieving Jews on the earth will be left behind to be persecuted and killed during the Great Tribulation. But, we don’t believe Dispensationalism. As we know, the Great Tribulation occurred in the 1st century in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel in the year 70. At that time, the Roman army caused the deaths of over 1 million Jews and took hundreds of thousands more as slaves. That’s a great tribulation, but it was in Israel and not a world-wide future event. Yeshua made it very clear in the context of everything which He said to His disciples that day on the Mount of Olives. He said: 21 “For then there will be great trouble (**Great Tribulation**), such as has not happened since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will” (Matthew 24:21 TLV). Yeshua is coming soon, for all of us, both the living and the dead, who have trusted in Him and who will trust in Him. That is our great hope; the hope for which we are waiting.

Moses’ words to Israel in our *parasha* are his words to us today: 6 “Chazak! Be courageous! Do not be afraid or tremble before them. For Adonai your God—He is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or abandon you” (Deuteronomy 31:6 TLV). The TLV translates the first word of this verse in a way which is familiar to us, and has the correct meaning, but it is not technically correct. But, this makes no real difference to anyone, except that we know what the *Torah* says that *Moshe* was saying. The underlying Hebrew reads: *chizku v’imtsu*, which can also be translated, “be strong and of good courage,” *חִזְקוּ וְיִמְצְאוּ*. What is the difference between the “Chazak! Be courageous” of the TLV and the “Be strong and of good courage of the *Mechon Mamre* Hebrew Scriptures? Very little, except that by using *chazak*, the TLV immediately brings to our minds the phrase which we repeat together after each book of the *Torah* is completed: *Chazak, chazak, v’nitchazek!* Be strong, be strong and let us be strengthened.

Why do we do this? We do it because it is a Jewish custom of many years and to us, it is a good custom when we consider its possible meaning. According to the Orthodox Union, there are a number of authorities who are of the opinion that “*chazak, chazak, chazak*” is what really should be said upon completion of a book of the *Torah*. This is because the gematria of these three words totaled is the same as the total of the name “*Moshe*”. And, there are many other customs among the various branches of Judaism regarding these words. Some repeat this phrase after each individual *aliyah* to *Torah* as well as a number of other variations. That’s all interesting, but I think that we will stick with what we have been doing.

For us, these words solidify our relationship to *Torah*. In Messianic Judaism, we have many Jews who actually began their spiritual life as Christians and the same is true for most of us who are non-Jews in Messianic Judaism. But, in Messianic Judaism, our relationship to *Torah* is different than in Christianity. This statement is not intended to denigrate Christianity’s approach to Scripture, just to note that there is a difference in approaches. Theirs is characterized as anti-nomian, while ours is nomian; anti-*Torah* or *Torah* in approach. For us, the revelation of the truth of *Torah* initially was and continues to be mind-blowing, if I may use that term. For us, it is truth, long hidden, but now found. It incorporates for us what *Yochanan* said of *Yeshua*: 14 “*And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. We looked upon His glory, the glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14 TLV). *Yeshua* brought the grace gift of salvation to Israel. It is only through His shed blood that we can receive permanent atonement from our sins, covering our sins and shielding us from the wrath of ADONAI toward sin. He also brought us truth, the truth of *Torah*, which He kept perfectly during His life on earth. He did not do away with *Torah*, but correctly interpreted it for us (Matthew 5:17-18). And, that is our goal, to correctly interpret *Torah*, that we might be *talmidim*, disciples of *Yeshua*, who are rightly dividing *Torah*: 15 “*Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth*” 2Timothy 2:15 TLV). The “word of truth” is all Scripture, Genesis to Revelation.

We read from the first part of our *haftarah* portion today during our *Torah* service: 6 “*Seek Adonai while He may be found, call on Him while He is near. 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous one his thoughts, let him return to Adonai, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon*” (Isaiah 55:6-7 TLV). He is always ready to forgive us when we make *t’shuvah* and return to Him. We all sin and we all need forgiveness. We all fail from time to time. It’s our human nature. But, when we are obedient to ADONAI’s *Torah*, there are also rewards. Our *haftarah* also says: 1 “*Thus says Adonai: “Preserve justice, do righteousness. For My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed*” (Isaiah 56:1 TLV). Although Isaiah wrote this two thousand six hundred years ago, for us today it brings a sense of immediacy. We are called to not only be righteous in ADONAI’s eyes, but to also do right according to His wishes. His “righteousness” which is about to be revealed is *Yeshua*, Son of David, His only begotten Son.

There are many promises in the Five Books of Moses regarding the fulfillment of ADONAI’s promise to Abraham regarding *Eretz Yisra’el*, the physical Land of Israel, in Isaiah, in Ezekiel and in other places. When Messiah *Yeshua* returns, Abraham’s descendants who are not already in Israel, are promised a place in the land. In the age to come, they will take up residence there. These next verses in our *haftarah* also speak about that same privilege for some Gentiles. 2 “*Blessed is the one who does this, the son of man who takes hold of it, who keeps from profaning Shabbat, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. 3 Do not let a son*

of a foreigner who has joined himself to Adonai say, ‘Adonai will surely exclude me from His people.’ Nor let the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’” 4 For thus says Adonai, “To the eunuchs who keep My Shabbatot, who choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant: 5 I will give to them in My House and within My walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. 6 Also the foreigners who join themselves to Adonai, to minister to Him, and to love the Name of Adonai, and to be His servants— all who keep from profaning Shabbat, and hold fast to My covenant— 7 these I will bring to My holy mountain, and let them rejoice in My House of Prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My House will be called a House of Prayer for all nations.” 8 Adonai Elohim, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “I will gather still others to him, to those already gathered” (Isaiah 56:2-8 TLV). I don’t bring this up to say that I, as a Gentile, will be included. I don’t know if I will. But, ADONAI knows who these individuals are and will carry out His word regarding them when Yeshua returns. But, we also should understand that none of us, Jew or non-Jew, should base our obedience to ADONAI upon the hope of a reward. Our obedience is based upon our love for the Father and for Yeshua, loving them with all our hearts, all our soul and all our strength. And, upon the *Torah* to which the *Sh’mah* alludes. With regard to our theme of Moses’ admonition to us, just as the Israelites were about to enter Canaan, so also are we across the Jordan River getting ready to enter the eternal Kingdom of Yeshua. He encourages those of us today to be faithful to the truth of ADONAI’s Word as we walk as disciples of Yeshua.

Those of us whom ADONAI has called to be a part of Messianic Judaism are no better or more special than any other of Yeshua’s followers. But, we have been called to be different. Our calling is to exemplify the love that *Torah* teaches to all those around us, but to also be witnesses to the truth without judgment or condemnation of others. *Moshe*’s words are alive to us today, even as we see on the horizon that for which Yeshua’s followers have been waiting for centuries. We don’t know if His coming is tomorrow, next year, or when it may be. But, we do know that, relative to the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, it is soon. He has called us to be His witnesses to the truth which He taught two thousand years ago, a truth which was so misunderstood at that time by His own brothers and sisters in Israel, but also by His early Gentile followers less than one hundred years after He left the earth. *Moshe* said: *Chazak!* Be courageous! His admonition is true for any type of trial which we may face, but it is especially relevant to our understanding the words of Yeshua’s brother *Ya’acov*, when he said: 22 “*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves*” (James 1:22 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*