



Parasha Re'eh

August 7, 2021

Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17

Isaiah 54:11-55:5

1John 4:1-6

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Re'eh*, “See.” In it Moses is continuing his review of everything which happened during Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. It seems that because the first generation that died in the wilderness failed so miserably, that ADONAI has now instructed Moses to tell the people what will happen to them if they disobey. 26 “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— 27 the blessing, if you listen to the *mitzvot* of Adonai your God that I am commanding you today, 28 but the curse, if you do not listen to the *mitzvot* of Adonai your God, but turn from the way I am commanding you today, to go after other gods you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:2-28 TLV). Moses then repeated many of the *mitzvot* which were given in the wilderness. Before they entered Canaan, ADONAI set before Israel a *b'rachah* and a *k'lalah*, a blessing and a curse, a choice. If Israel does not obey the *mitzvot*, the commandments, of ADONAI, but turns aside from the “way” He has directed and goes after *acharei elohim*, “other gods,” which they have not known, then He will cause a curse, a *k'lalah*, to come upon them. But if Israel obeys His *mitzvot* and does not follow after other gods, He will cause a blessing to come upon them. Several curses came upon Israel after many years of disobeying ADONAI's commands.

Are these words still active and for us today? I believe so. All of us have had misfortune in our lives. Is it possible that some of it was because of our disobedience? Just because there is smooth sailing most of the time, that doesn't mean that it will always be that way. We've all heard the phrase “You reap what you sow.” That's a paraphrase of *Sha'ul's* words: 7 “Do not be deceived—God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, that he also shall reap” (Galatians 6:7 TLV). We may not reap it right away, but we will eventually. *Sha'ul* continues: 8 “For the one who sows in the flesh will reap corruption from the flesh. But the one who sows in the Ruach will reap from the Ruach eternal life” (Galatians 6:8 TLV). That brings up another question. Can a person sow both in the flesh and in the Spirit? If so, can one who sows both in the flesh and the Spirit reap both corruption and eternal life? I believe we can. We can have a relationship with *Yeshua* yielding eternal life but can also sow into our flesh the things of the flesh. This can cause us to reap corruption, negative things in our lives. But, not every negative thing is from ADONAI. There are just so many things that we don't understand. *Yeshua* said (Matthew 5:45) that ADONAI causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends the rain on the righteous and unrighteous. As wise as Solomon was, he couldn't understand it either. He said: 15 “During my fleeting days I have seen both of these things: sometimes a righteous one perishes in his righteousness and sometimes a wicked one lives long in his wickedness” (Ecclesiastes 7:15 TLV). We don't know why the wicked sometimes prosper, but ADONAI does. We just have to do something about the one that we can do something about, ourselves!

We have been commanded to follow ADONAI's *mitzvot*. Two weeks ago, we read in our *parasha* about the most important mitzvah. In Deuteronomy 6 we read: *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad: 4 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. 7 You are to teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, they are to be as frontlets between your eyes, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates"* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 TLV). This is the way that ADONAI has commanded us to walk; that we should love Him with all our heart, soul, and strength, and these words which He commanded us should be in our hearts. Yeshua said (Matthew 22, Mark 12 and Luke 10) that loving the L-rd our G-d is the most important commandment and that loving our neighbor as ourselves is number two. But, if we really love ADONAI as we should, we don't need number two because it will happen automatically. We can't love ADONAI and walk in His commandments and not love our neighbor as ourselves.

In Judaism, we have been given have symbols to remind us that we are to walk in ADONAI's ways. *Tefillin* are a physical reminder on the head and the hand that our minds are to be focused on ADONAI's *mitzvot* and that our hands are to be used for His *mitzvot* and not to serve only ourselves or for evil. We have *mezuzot* on our doorposts to remind us that within our gates and walls we will follow ADONAI's *mitzvot*.. And, we have *tzitzit* to remind us of His commands, that we will be careful to do them and not sin.

Sin is what separates us from ADONAI. If you have trusted Yeshua, His blood covers you. ADONAI cannot look upon sin. But, even though we are covered by His blood, we still sin. We are covered, but continued and unrepented sin causes problems. It damages our relationship with Yeshua in many ways and our closeness to ADONAI suffers. John said: 6 "*If we say we have fellowship with Him and keep walking in the darkness, we are lying and do not practice the truth*" (1John 1:6 TLV). Repeated sins hinder our spiritual relationship with ADONAI. Our capacity to witness Yeshua to others suffers and our confidence in prayer decreases. And, it is noticed by our *mishpacha* and it is definitely noticed by ADONAI: 5 "*Have you forgotten the warning addressed to you as sons? "My son, do not take lightly the discipline of Adonai or lose heart when you are corrected by Him, 6 because Adonai disciplines the one He loves and punishes every son He accepts"* (Hebrews 12:5-6 TLV). John explained what happens when we sin. He said: 4 "*Everyone practicing sin also practices lawlessness—indeed, sin is lawlessness*" (1John 3:4 TLV). The Greek word translated as lawlessness is *anomia*. It means: lawlessness, iniquity, disobedience or sin. John said that a person who sins is "violating G-d's Law." And, it applies to any of His *mitzvot* which we have been commanded to follow, omission as well as commission.

John looks upon us as "his children" and he speaks to us gently as children many times. But, when necessary, his words are powerful and direct. About Yeshua, he said: 3 "*Now we know that we have come to know Him by this—if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him*" (1John 2:3-4 TLV). We are not to play games and rationalize which commandments we have to obey and which we don't. We know that all commandments are His and we can't choose which we want to obey. The commandments are Yeshua's. He is the author of *Torah*. John said that if we say that we have trusted in His sacrifice and don't keep His commandments, we are liars. How many in Yeshua's body

are liars? John continues: 5 *“But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God is truly made perfect. We know that we are in Him by this— 6 whoever claims to abide in Him must walk just as He walked”* (1John 2:5-6 TLV). If we do this, we are walking in obedience to *Torah*, Yeshua’s *Torah*. If we keep Yeshua’s *Torah* we are loving ADONAI in the way that we are commanded in the Shema! There’s no room for deviation. There is no middle ground. We can’t sit on the fence. If we say that we are in Him, we must walk as He walked. That’s walking perfectly, keeping all ADONAI’s *mitzvot*, all which are active for us today. That’s our goal! *Sha’ul* said: 17. *“for the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but righteousness and shalom and joy in the Ruach ha-Kodesh. 18 For the one who serves Messiah in this manner is pleasing to God and approved by men”* (Romans 14:17 TLV). The kingdom of G-d is being in a right relationship with ADONAI, having a heart toward Him and striving to follow his precepts.

Deuteronomy 11:27 tells us that we are “to listen to the *mitzvot* of ADONAI.” If we listen, we will get blessing rather than cursing. Listen, in this verse is a form of the word “*shema*,” hear, which means “listen or hear,” but also means to obey. As Messianic followers of Yeshua we understand that and we try to the best of our ability to obey the *mitzvot* which are possible today. But some people don’t understand why we do this and they bring up the question of the “curse of the law.” Maybe, everyone that I’m speaking to doesn’t understand it. Galatians 3 says: 10 *For all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse—for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah.” 11 It is clear that no one is set right before God by Torah, for “the righteous shall live by emunah”* (Galatians 3:10-11 TLV). *Emunah* is faith. The righteous shall live by faith and not by *Torah* keeping. That’s what *Sha’ul* said. And we know that, but that other person interprets what *Sha’ul* is saying in these verses much differently than we do. That person says that those of us who have trusted Yeshua and who try to follow *Torah*, but fail in keeping it, are under a curse because we have not perfectly kept it. We know why we have not perfectly kept it, it’s because we all sin. If he is correct, each of us in this room is under G-d’s curse because we try to follow *Torah* and we fail. We can’t perfectly keep *Torah* because we’re human. But that person is wrong. He has not correctly understood Galatians 3:10. The Complete Jewish Bible makes this verse much easier to understand: 10 *For everyone who depends on legalistic observance of Torah commands lives under a curse, since it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the Scroll of the Torah”* (Galatians 3:10 CJB). The legalistic observance of *Torah*; that’s the key. “Legalistic observance” is depending upon our being able to obey all the commands to obtain righteousness, our salvation. *Sha’ul* understood that and went even further to make it clear to us that righteousness cannot be found in *Torah* keeping. He said: 21 *But now God’s righteousness apart from the Torah has been revealed, to which the Torah and the Prophets bear witness— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah Yeshua, to all who keep on trusting. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:21-23 TLV). I have underlined “apart from Torah” because that’s where righteousness can be found. “Apart from Torah” is faith in Yeshua. We might get some brownie points in the hereafter, crowns and stars in our crown, for keeping *Torah*, but it won’t get us to the hereafter. We must seek His righteousness, trust in Yeshua, because “all have sinned.” This translation helps us to understand and makes it very clear that G-d’s righteousness comes through trusting Yeshua and not from keeping *Torah*. We are not putting ourselves under the Law by doing our best to follow *Torah*.

So, when this other person says that he doesn't keep the Law and "is free from the curse of the law," what is he saying? Essentially, he is saying that he does not believe that Law keeping is commanded by G-d. He would also say that we must not try to keep the Law. Many of Jesus's followers believe that trying to "keep the law" after salvation places that person back under the law. There is no Scripture which says this, but you hear it frequently. What they believe is that a person who accepts Yeshua and seeks to follow Him through the keeping of *Torah* commandments, has placed himself under the curse of the law.

Here is how I understand Scripture. Yeshua's words in Matthew 5:17-18 stating that "the law has not passed away" are true for me. I try my best to eat only those things which ADONAI has told us in His *Torah* that we can eat. Moses also repeated the kosher laws in this *parasha*. One day I ate something thinking that it was kosher, but found out later that it had some pork in it. According to that other person's belief, that caused me to be under the curse of the Law. But is that true? Definitely not; you know that and I know that, but many followers of Yeshua don't. They've been taught that keeping law is bad. This antinomian, anti-*Torah*, anti-law theology, arises from an ancient Judaic bias, actually original anti-semitism, which has been perpetuated through the centuries. I was guilty of a sin when I ate pork even though I didn't know it was there. And *Torah* also tells me that I must repent when I sin. I repented of the sin of eating something I was not supposed to eat and was forgiven. Accepting Yeshua as our Messiah does not make us perfect. We are still going to sin even after our salvation. We are human and as *Sha'ul* said, "all have sinned." But, because Yeshua is perfect, His sacrifice has opened the door for us to be His disciples, even in our failures.

What is "the curse?" Deuteronomy 27 speaks of pronouncing the curses on *Har Eval*, Mount Ebal, after Israel has crossed over into the Land of Promise. There are a number of them. We will get there in a couple of weeks. This is one of them: 26 '*Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.*' Then all the people are to say, 'Amen' (Deuteronomy 27:26 TLV). Was this what *Sha'ul* referred to in Galatians 3:10 when he said: *For all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse—for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah?"* According to Deuteronomy, a person is cursed if he does not do the words of *Torah*. According to Galatians, a person is cursed if he does not keep doing everything in *Torah*. How are we to understand the difference? Clearly, in these two different Scriptures, Deuteronomy and Galatians, we are seeing the two different approaches of ADONAI in people's lives. Deuteronomy was the time before the coming of Yeshua and Galatians is the time after the coming of Yeshua. In the time before Yeshua, Israel had the Levitical priesthood, with the High Priest being the mediator between G-d and man. And the High Priest's sacrifices on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, in accordance with ADONAI's instructions covered the sins of the people for another year. But even with G-d's plan made available to them, the people of Israel turned away. Then Yeshua came to live on the earth as a man. He didn't come as a Levitical High Priest, He was from the Tribe of Judah. He came as a High Priest after the order of *Malkitzedek*, an everlasting priesthood not based on human ancestry. And through the giving of His life, He fulfilled the sacrifice of the lamb on Passover and also the goat on *Yom Kippur*. Through His death, He made it possible for us to receive what *Sha'ul* told us about in Romans 3:22: *the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah Yeshua*. And the choice is still in the hands of man. There is no curse for being obedient to ADONAI's word.

The words which can lead us to conviction in this *parasha* are very appropriate right now. We are about to enter a season of prayer and introspection; looking inward and searching our hearts to see if we, individually, line up with ADONAI's word. The month of *Elul* begins tomorrow night at sundown. In Jewish tradition, this sixth month of the Hebrew year, the 29 days which immediately precede the month of *Tishrei* is a time to begin searching our hearts in preparation for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. For us, the Month of *Elul*, *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are not a matter of being written in the book of life. Our names are already in the Lamb's Book of Life because we have trusted in Yeshua's sacrifice as eternal payment for our sins. The month of *Elul* is different for us. It is to identify any ways in which we are not carrying out the essence of the *Shema* and for us to consider how we are following Yeshua. Are we ignoring any of the *mitzvot* in *Torah* or *Ketuvim Sh'lichim* in a high handed manner? Under the Levitical Priesthood and Tabernacle worship, there were unintentional sins and intentional sins, high-handed sins. Certain sacrifices were offered for unintentional sins. But, if a person sinned high-handedly, that is, defiantly, there was only one punishment for him. ADONAI said: 30 "*But the person who sins defiantly, whether native or outsider, reviles Adonai and that person is to be cut off from his people.* 31 *Because he has despised the word of Adonai and has broken His commandment, that person will certainly be cut off—his guilt will remain on him*" Numbers 15:30-31 TLV). I am not suggesting that this applies to us today if we purposefully ignore certain *mitzvot*, but I am suggesting that the principle behind it should motivate us. Are we ignoring certain *mitzvot* just because we don't want to do them? The next 29 days will give us an opportunity to search our hearts about this question and others.

In our *Torah* readings to this point, ancient Israel has come through the wilderness and is about to enter the Land of Promise. This is also where we, Yeshua's followers, are today. We have been on a long journey through the wilderness. It has taken us about 3,500 years since Moses spoke these words about blessing and curse to reach where we are today. We are very near to entering our promised land, life in Yeshua's earthly kingdom. Yeshua said, "When you see all these signs happening in the world, your redemption is near" (Luke 21:28). We are seeing these signs. He taught us to pray that our Father's kingdom and His will would come upon the earth: 9 "*Therefore, pray in this way: 'Our Father in heaven, sanctified be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'*" (Matthew 6:9-10 TLV). We can't be complacent. We are in the season of His coming and we must be regularly praying for Him to come. During this period of time before He comes, keeping *Torah* won't make us any more saved. But, it will provide the reward which ADONAI has planned for us in Yeshua's kingdom, stars in our crowns. We will hear Yeshua say: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:23). We should not fear the curse of disobedience. It cannot come upon us unless we allow it. The eternal curse of disobedience is ignoring the eternal life which Yeshua paid for us by His death on the stake. *Shabbat shalom!*