



Parasha Devarim

August 2, 2025

Torah: Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22
Haftarah: Isaiah 1:1-27
Ketuvim Shlichim: Ya'acov (James) 2

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! This *Shabbat*, we begin a new book of the *Torah*, Deuteronomy. The message is essentially the message given on July 24, 2004, the third year of our congregation's existence. Has *Beit Shalom's* message changed over the last twenty-one years? You be the judge. This *parasha* marks the beginning of the last of the Five Books of the *Torah*. In this portion, *Moshe* told the *Benei Yisra'el*, the children of Israel, what had occurred since they left Mount Sinai. He reviewed the *mitzvot*, the commandments, which ADONAI gave them, emphasizing the shift in lifestyle they were about to experience—from the miraculous, supernatural existence in the desert under His guidance to the natural way of life they would follow under Joshua's leadership in *Eretz Yisra'el*, the Land of Israel. The central theme of this week is the sin of the spies, specifically the ten who gave a negative report and influenced the people to rebel against Moses.

Our *parasha* begins with *Moshe* reflecting on the sins of the previous generation, who had died during the 40 years of wandering in the desert. He described to Israel what would have happened if they hadn't sinned by refusing to go into Canaan as ADONAI had initially commanded them. He itemized their sins, which kept increasing and eventually led up to the sin of the spies, which he reviewed at length. The result of the spies' sin and the sins of those who agreed with them was that the entire generation would die in the wilderness. Moses reminded them that their immediate reaction to ADONAI's order of punishment for the offenders was to want to 'go up and fight' to try and undo the sin. He said that they wouldn't listen when ADONAI told them not to go, because they no longer had His grace to defeat their enemies. They ignored Moses and suffered a massive defeat at the hands of the Amorites. Additionally, ADONAI revealed that Moses would not enter the land of Israel and that it would be Joshua who would lead them into it. As they continued forward, they were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esau, Moab, or Amon — ADONAI had promised these lands to Esau and Lot. Moses also told of the coming conquest of Canaan, which began with the defeat of the kings Sihon and Og, and he encouraged Joshua, telling him that ADONAI would do to the inhabitants of Canaan what he did to Sihon and Og.

The book of Deuteronomy is known by several different names among the rabbis. One is *אלה הדברים* *elah haDevarim*, with *elah* the Aramaic word for G-d, meaning, "the Words of G-d." Another name is *משנה תורה* *Mishnah HaTorah*, which means the repetition or the review of the *Torah*. The English name Deuteronomy also comes from this idea, meaning "second law." As we have discussed, some believers in Yeshua have made an incorrect comparison between the *Tanakh* and the *B'rit Chadasha*, claiming that the "Old Testament" is "Law" and the "New Testament" is "grace." Or that the Old Testament reflects ADONAI's judgments and the New Testament shows His love. Some of Yeshua's followers see the Law as just a set of legalisms, and they believe the Jewish people are trying to follow the letter of the law. But we have learned that the *Torah* is not a law code to be blindly followed; rather, it is Israel's national constitution — the constitution of biblical Israel, not the State of Israel. It is a formal legal

document that defines and outlines the relationship between ADONAI, the Great King, and Israel, his beloved. In this covenant, ADONAI promised to do certain things for Israel, and they agreed to be and do certain things for him. In a more personal sense, we also view the covenant as a *ketubah*, a marriage contract between ADONAI and Israel. But no legal system, including the *Torah*, can serve as a way of atonement. It can only function to condemn because it reveals our sin. We must have atonement, and ADONAI has always provided atonement through His grace via a sacrifice. Obedience to the *Torah* was never a way to be justified. It was a covenant relationship intended for those already redeemed, and its purpose was to indicate the characteristics and role of Messiah Yeshua. In part, this is illustrated by the sinner laying hands and confessing his sins over the Tabernacle sacrifices before they were slain. The offeror would place his hands on the head of the goat, ram, or calf and verbally confess the sins for which they were bringing the sacrifice.

In the Book of Luke, Yeshua told that he was depicted throughout the *Tanakh*. The day after He died on the cross, the first day of the week, Yeshua walked toward Emmaus with two of his *talmidim*. The two were talking among themselves about what had recently happened to Yeshua; however, they didn't recognize Him. **25** *He said to them, "Foolish people! So unwilling to put your trust in everything the prophets spoke! 26 Didn't the Messiah have to die like this before entering his glory?" 27 Then, starting with Moshe and all the prophets, he explained to them the things that can be found throughout the Tanakh concerning himself.* These verses are from the Complete Jewish Bible. We didn't have the Tree of Life Version back then. All the Scripture references today are CJB unless otherwise noted. In this, Yeshua confirmed to His two disciples and us that a purpose of the *Tanakh* was to portray Him and His coming in the Scriptures.

As a restatement of the four previous books of the *Torah*, Deuteronomy uses the word "covenant" 27 times. This might indicate that the *Torah* is truly a covenantal document rather than a legal one. However, even within covenantal documents, there is a need for guidelines to live happily in fellowship with ADONAI and each other. In this regard, there are specific legal sections of the covenant designed for that purpose, which have significant implications for everyone who identifies as Israel today. If ADONAI established a legally binding covenant with Israel that has never been revoked, then we are just as bound by its obligations today as ancient Israel was. The covenant remains in effect, even though it has been amended. Hebrews chapters 8-10 explain that the change involves the Tabernacle and the system of sacrifices passing away with the start of the New Covenant mediated by Yeshua. In Hebrews 8:13, we read: **13** *By using the term, "new," he has made the first covenant "old"; and something being made old, something in the process of aging, is on its way to vanishing altogether.* This is the verse I used in 2004 from the Complete Jewish Bible. They added the word "covenant," which is not in the Greek text. There are many things I like about the CJB, but I think they got this one wrong. The Tree of Life Version reads: **13** *In saying "new," He has treated the first as old; but what is being made old and aging is close to vanishing.* (Hebrews 8:13 TLV). The Greek text is rendered correctly. Moving to Hebrews 10:8-9, we read: **8** *In saying first, "You neither willed nor were pleased with animal sacrifices, meal offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings," things which are offered in accordance with the Torah; 9 and then, "Look, I have come to do your will"; he takes away the first system in order to set up the second.* The bolding in the verses is part of the CJB, but I have underlined the last phrase. The first system is the system of sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple. The second system is the New Covenant, where Yeshua serves as both the sacrifice and the mediator. The entire first covenant was not changed, just the

sacrificial and atonement parts of it. At the time the Book of Hebrews was written, there were still sacrifices being offered in the Temple. We know that *Sha'ul* paid for Temple sacrifices related to a Nazarite vow, showing that Yeshua's disciples continued to obey every part of the *Torah* before the Temple's destruction. According to Hebrews 8:13, the thing that was aging at the time of writing the Book of Hebrews, around 64-65 CE, the Temple sacrificial system, disappeared entirely, not many years later. After its destruction, the covenantal laws that do not require the Temple or Levitical priests remain in effect, and we are still bound by them.

ADONAI warned Israel before they entered Canaan, and chapters 28-30 of Deuteronomy show that their people would be scattered among the nations in the future. And after many years of rejecting ADONAI's covenant, Israel was dispersed. The sins that caused their dispersion are the focus of our *haftarah* reading for today, Isaiah 1:1-27. The time of this prophecy is around 701 BCE, near the time of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king's, invasion of Israel. This *haftarah* and its accompanying *Torah* portion, *Devarim*, are traditionally read on the *Shabbat* that comes before *Tisha B'Av*, the 9th of the Hebrew month of *Av*. Rabbinic tradition states that the 9th of *Av* marks the destruction of both the first and second temples, as well as several other major disasters for the Jewish people, including the "sin of the ten spies." The First Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, and the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. The *haftarot* read on the three *Shabbats* before *Tisha B'Av* are called the *Haftarot* of Rebuke by the rabbis. The one we are studying today is sometimes called "Isaiah's Great Arraignment of Judah." The reason this *haftarah* and the previous two were placed here by the rabbis was to rebuke Israel for her sins, the very sins that led to the destruction of both temples. The prophecy of Isaiah is referred to as a *chazon* in verse 1, meaning a vision. In this context, the *haftarah* read on the *Shabbat* before *Tisha B'Av* is also known as *Shabbat Chazon*. The 9th of *Av* begins tonight at sundown. It is a fast day for traditional Israel as they remember the pain caused by the destruction of the temples and Israel's exclusion from the Temple Mount.

As a *haftarah* of rebuke, Isaiah chapter one certainly accomplishes that. In its 27 verses, at least six actions mentioned are identified as violations of the covenant by the people of Judah. This unfaithfulness, Isaiah calls "rebellion," and he compares Israel to an ox and a donkey. Even these simple animals know who their master is and who supplies them with food and shelter. Isaiah states that Israel even lacks the intelligence of the ox and donkey and does not possess their sense of gratitude. The primary sin was that Israel forsook ADONAI. In verse 4, Isaiah says: **4** "Oh, sinful nation, a people weighed down by iniquity, descendants of evildoers, immoral children! They have abandoned ADONAI, spurned the Holy One of Isra'el, turned their backs on him!. Their sin is so great that they are called *goy choteh*, sinful nation, instead of being called *goy kadosh*, holy nation, as they were meant to be. This major difference between the *goy choteh*, sinful nation, and the holiness of ADONAI is highlighted when we see Him referred to in Isaiah 1:4 as the Holy One of Israel, a title found 39 times in Isaiah and only 5 times elsewhere in Scripture.

The second sin Israel and Judah committed was practicing a meaningless religion. In verses 11-14, ADONAI rebukes them. **11** "Why are all those sacrifices offered to me?" asks ADONAI. "I'm fed up with burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened animals! I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls, lambs and goats! **12** Yes, you come to appear in my presence; but who asked you to do this, to trample through my courtyards? **13** Stop bringing worthless grain offerings! They are like disgusting incense to me! Rosh-Hodesh, *Shabbat*, calling convocations - I can't stand evil together with your assemblies! **14** Everything in me hates your

Rosh-Hodesh and your festivals; they are a burden to me - I'm tired of putting up with them!" ADONAI was not implying that His sacrificial system would be abolished, as some suggest, but that the hearts of the people of Judah were distant from Him. The reference to "evil in their assemblies" criticized them for breaking the covenant, if they were even keeping it at all.

You may recall in 2 Kings 23 that shortly after Isaiah's era, King Josiah found out that the people had not celebrated Passover for many years, not since the days of the Judges, a period of about 400 years. So, it's very likely they had not been celebrating the other festivals properly either. We get this impression from verse 14 in which ADONAI refers to "*your new moons and your festivals, which I hate.*" These were not the New Moons and Festivals which He ordained. They were practicing the *mo'adim* in their own way, changing the very nature of ADONAI's appointed times.

The third sin of Israel was failing to deliver justice, particularly to the most vulnerable. In verse 17, we read: **17** ...*"learn to do good! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, defend orphans, plead for the widow."* The fourth sin was that of Israel's corrupt rulers. In verses 21-23, we read: **21** *How the faithful city has become a whore! Once she was filled with justice, righteousness lodged in her; but now murderers!* **22** *Your silver is no longer pure, your wine is watered down.* **23** *Your leaders are rebels, friends of thieves. They all love bribes and run after gifts. They give no justice to orphans, the widow's complaint doesn't catch their attention."*

The fifth sin, which is not mentioned in today's *haftarah*, but underlies all the other sins and is thoroughly addressed by Isaiah in the remaining chapters, is idol worship. It is described in verse 29, a verse left out of this *haftarah* portion. **29** *You will be ashamed of the sacred oaks you desired, you will blush at the gardens you chose;"* The people of Judah were worshipping the gods of other nations under sacred trees and hills they called holy.

ADONAI judged these sins with two types of judgment. The first was a physical judgment on the land. We see this in verse 7: **7** *"Your land is desolate, your cities are burned to the ground; foreigners devour your land in your presence; it's as desolate as if overwhelmed by floods."* In this verse, we observe that first, there was great desolation in the land; second, the cities are burned; and third, foreigners will occupy the fields. This had already happened during the lifetime of Isaiah. It was precisely what the *Torah* warned against in Leviticus 26: **31** *I will lay waste to your cities and make your sanctuaries desolate, so as not to smell your fragrant aromas.* **32** *I will desolate the land, so that your enemies living in it will be astounded by it.* **33** *You I will disperse among the nations, and I will draw out the sword in pursuit after you; your land will be a desolation and your cities a wasteland."* The second type of judgment was the destruction of the people themselves. This is found in verses 30 and 31, both of which are not a part of this *haftarah* portion. In addition to physical judgment, there is spiritual judgment as well. In verses 10-15, ADONAI refuses to hear Israel's prayers. Also, He did not accept their sacrifices, so there was no cleansing of sin occurring. According to verses 5 and 6, there would be rampant sickness among the nation.

What is the cure for Judah's rebellion? There is hope. It begins in verse 16, where Israel is told to cleanse themselves from the stain of sin. The verse says: **16** *"Wash yourselves clean! Get your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing evil."* The second step, *teshuvah*, repentance, is also found in verse 16. *"Stop doing evil."* Third, in verse 17, Isaiah tells them to: **17**.. *"learn to do good!!"* Finally, in verses 19 and 20, he reminds them of the benefits of covenant faithfulness. **19** *"If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the good of the land;*

20 but if you refuse and rebel, you will be eaten by the sword”; for the mouth of ADONAI has spoken.” And then, in verse 26, ADONAI says: **26** “I will restore your judges as at first and your advisers as at the beginning. After that, you will be called the City of Righteousness, Faithful City.” What can “judges and advisers” refer to but *Mashiach*, Messiah Yeshua? And Jerusalem will be called עִיר הַצְדָּקָה *Ir HaTzedakah*, the City of Righteousness, because Yeshua is reigning there. Then in verse 27, He declares that He will redeem Jerusalem with justice and put an end to all who go against Him. **27** “Tziyon will be redeemed by justice; and those in her who repent, by righteousness.” The word translated as redeemed is not the usual word, ‘ga’al.’ In this case, it is ‘*padah*,’ a word that emphasizes the reclaiming of property through ransom payment, which is its most common meaning. What is the only ransom that ADONAI could give that would reclaim His people from sin? *Sha’ul* told the Ephesians: *7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to his grace, which he lavished upon us.* (Ephesians 1:7 NASB). And this takes us back to Yeshua's statement to his disciples on the road to Emmaus, that throughout the *Tanakh*, there are writings about Him. And most of the Jews of today are still in need of His redemption. This is the *peshat*, the straightforward understanding of Isaiah chapter 1. And while Israel in the flesh of today primarily doesn't know it, we know that that ransom has already been paid. It has been paid because even though there is no Temple and Levitical priesthood today, we have been given a means of atonement, and there is no other path to redemption except through ADONAI's atonement. As we mentioned, atonement has always been provided by ADONAI through grace, achieved through sacrificial atonement. Only through faith in Yeshua can the restoration of the rebellious be fully completed.

Does this mean that we who already believe don't need to heed ADONAI's words in Isaiah 1? No indeed! In chapter 64, Isaiah says: **6** *All of us are like someone unclean, all our righteous deeds like menstrual rags;*” If we are in Messiah, are we still unclean with righteousness like menstrual cloths? No, we are not, because this refers to our promise of eternal life. Yeshua's righteousness received through faith covers us and takes away our sins. But afterward, we must not have unconfessed sin. Once we have trusted in Yeshua, we should regularly confess our sins and repent.

But all those sins attributed to Israel and Judah in Isaiah 1 can also be seen in some people in Yeshua's body today. ADONAI knows who they are. Israel's primary sin was that they forsook ADONAI. Haven't many believers turned away from Yeshua today? Israel's second sin was that they had the practice of an empty religion. For many today, it is the same. Many claim to follow Yeshua, but their hearts are far from Him. The third sin of Israel was the lack of justice, especially to those most vulnerable, and that's also true today. Those most in need often have the hardest time getting justice; think of the millions of unborn who were aborted and now in our present time, the thousands of young children having their sexual organs surgically mutilated. The fourth sin was that of Israel's corrupt rulers. We still have corrupt leaders today. It is not so surprising when it is our secular leaders, because we anticipate corruption among them. But when the corruption is among those who are supposed to be servants of ADONAI, his ministers to the people, then we are no better off than Israel in the time of Isaiah. And this is repeatedly proven today as pastors are forced to step down due to sexual or financial crimes. The fifth sin of Israel was idol worship, and we see a lot of that today. Mammon is a very popular god, and many worship him. These are all signs of our times which support *Shlomo's* words in Ecclesiastes 1, **9** “*What has been is what will be, what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the*

sun.” These things we must guard against. We must protect our hearts against all these sins.

The book of *Ya'acov*, James, poses a problem for some believers today. Often they ignore the words of Yeshua's brother, preferring to think that only faith in Yeshua is necessary. But in chapter 2, *Ya'acov* says: **14** *What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but has no actions to prove it? Is such “faith” able to save him?* Does this say what it appears to say—that we must have actions to prove our faith? Reading the Orthodox Jewish Bible in *Ya'acov* 2, it states: **14** *What is the revach (the gain or profit) my Achim b'Moshiach (brothers in Messiah) if anyone claims to have emunah (faith) but does not have ma'asim (deeds)? Surely not such emunah (faith) is able to bring him to Yeshu'at Eloheinu (the salvation of our G-d)?* **15** *If an Ach b'Moshiach or an Achot b'Moshiach (brother or sister in Messiah) is dressed in shmattes (rags or tatters) and lacking lechem chukeinu, (daily bread)* **16** *and anyone of you says to them, ‘Go in shalom! Be warmed and be fed, but you do not give to them the physical necessities, what is the revach (profit)?* **17** *So also Emunah (faith), if alongside it there is not in its company Ma'asim, (deeds) is by itself niftar (dead).* The Orthodox Jewish Bible, published by Philip Goble in 2002, was his ministry to the Orthodox, a Bible written in their usual language. We don't know how many have read it, but we pray that it will someday become their primary Bible.

What ADONAI has called us to is a faith that must be shared, and those in need with whom we share it are to be blessed physically. The idea of this as a ministry of *Beit Shalom* is something that many of you also sense in your spirits. We are not only meant to come together, praise and worship the Lord, and have fellowship. All those things are excellent and necessary, but for our service to be complete, we must carry out the ministry to others that ADONAI directs. Please continue to pray for His full revelation to us. The time is approaching. We are starting to grow as a congregation. We have experienced a brief period of teaching and growth, and we are approaching our launching point, the time when ADONAI will guide us forward in ministries, not only here but everywhere He leads, especially Israel.

I will end this message with an essay by Bruce Barton called “There Are Two Seas In Israel.” “There are two seas in Israel. One is fresh, and fish are in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Trees spread their branches over it and stretch out their thirsty roots to sip of its healing water. Along the shores, the children play as children played when the Messiah Jesus was there. He loved it. He could look across its silver surface when he spoke his parables. And on a rolling plain not far away, he fed five thousand people. The river Jordan makes this sea with sparkling water from the hills. So, it laughs in the sunshine. And men build their homes near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind of life is happier because it is there. The river Jordan flows on south into another sea. Here is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no song of birds, no children's laughter. Travelers choose another route, unless on urgent business. The air hangs heavy above its waters, and neither man, nor beast, nor fowl will drink. What makes this mighty difference in these neighboring seas? Not the river Jordan. It empties the same good water into both. Not the soil in which they lie; not the country round about. This is the difference. The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that flows into it, another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure. The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. It will not be tempted by any generous impulse. Every drop it gets, it keeps. The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. The other sea gives nothing. It is named the Dead Sea. There are two kinds of people in the world. There are two seas in Israel.”

That ended our message twenty-one years ago. There are still two kinds of people in the world: those who both receive and give, and those who only receive. This message from 21 years ago is essentially the same message we are bringing today. There was a movie years ago called “Love Story” with a famous quote, “Love means never having to say you’re sorry.” Some people believe that regarding ADONAI and Yeshua, “His grace” covers sin forever, and you never need to repent again after your initial repentance. However, the Book of Proverbs states: *13 One who covers up his transgressions will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them finds mercy.* (Proverbs 28:13 TLV). The saying, “Confession is good for the soul,” isn’t found in Scripture, but it is true. Confession and repentance are basic in our walk with Yeshua.

Yeshua’s disciple John has told us that disobeying ADONAI’s *Torah* is sin (1 John 3:4). In describing His coming New Covenant, ADONAI said: *32 “But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people.”* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). I have spoken about this, saying that I believe His *Torah* is written on the hearts of those who trust in Yeshua. In my car this past week, as I thought about this verse, I received a revelation. It suddenly came to me that these words of ADONAI are also idiomatic. By saying, “I will write it on their heart,” was He not saying, “that He will give us a heart’s desire to obey Him?” When we come to understand that His commands are meant for us today and recognize the importance of repenting daily, we HAVE received that heart’s desire from ADONAI. Our relationship with Yeshua is a covenantal relationship between redeemed people and their Messiah. Our following of the *Torah* is our duty and has nothing to do with salvation. We have already been saved by faith through ADONAI’s grace, after which we carry out our covenant responsibilities by being obedient to His commands. Let *Sha’ul* be our example by following his example of *Torah* righteousness. The principle of “*Torah* righteousness” was discussed in both of our last two messages for those unfamiliar with its meaning. But essentially it means that if we repent of our daily sins, which are the disobedience of ADONAI’s *Torah* relevant for us today, we can and will be blameless before ADONAI, righteous before Him, and our Messiah Yeshua. That is our goal.

Yeshua said: *23 “Woe to you, Torah scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites! You tithe mint and dill and cumin, yet you have neglected the weightier matters of Torah—justice and mercy and faithfulness. It is necessary to do these things without neglecting the others.”* (Matthew 23:23 TLV). While we are not Pharisees, Yeshua’s words to them also have meaning for us. The other matters He referred to are *Shabbat*, festivals, foods, and other commands. We must not neglect these. However, we especially must not neglect the weightier matters, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Micah wrote: *8 He has told you, humanity, what is good, and what Adonai is seeking from you: Only to practice justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8 TLV). We do all these things from our hearts because ADONAI has placed that desire in them. It’s not just a mechanical obedience, but a heartfelt desire to not only be obedient, but also pleasing to our G-d. *Shabbat shalom!*