

'Handing over the reins.'



Deuteronomy 31

31 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said. 4 And the Lord will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land, when He destroyed them. 5 The Lord will give them over to you, that you may do to them according to every commandment which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." NKJ

TORAH: DEUTERONOMY 31:1-30 - VAYELECH: 'HE WENT'

HAFTARAH: HOSEA 14:2-10, MICAH 7:18, JOEL 2:15-17

BRIT CHADASHAH: MATT 18:21-35

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim.
I pray you are well.

This week's portion is number 52 in the cycle of this year's study of the Torah. We are nearly at the end of a whole year's study.

In the opening passage we are privy to a little bit of bad news. The narrative tells us that Moses speaks to all Israel. I wonder if you can imagine the scene.

In last week's study 'Nitzavim' (standing) we see that Moses had convened a meeting with all the tribal leaders in their various offices and roles to ratify the covenant among the people.

So the meeting is drawn for what purpose? Deut 29:11

"The purpose is that you should enter into the covenant of Adonai your God and into his oath which Adonai your God is making with you today, ⁽¹³⁾ so that he can establish you today for himself as a people, and so that for you, he will be God — as he said to you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Avraham, Yitz'chak and Ya'akov.

Moses' discourse throughout Deuteronomy is to reinforce the covenant of YHVH, highlighting its benefits and the repercussion of turning away from it. The land must be cleansed and the people must desist from worshiping idols.

Over the forty year period, YHVH took the people through the process of removing any vestige of Egypt out of them. The old school had to abolish forms of Egyptian cultic practices, including the mixed cult worship of all the assimilated nations within the empire. They had to learn the culture of YHVH, and thus become a unique and peculiar people. We have to realize that these changes did not take place over night. We do not have the whole story of course, as the book of Exodus is an account of the overall events that took place. It would be impossible to chronicle a forty year narrative in such a short book.

However, the cultic practices of the Hebrews were not completely wiped out, as we see through the accounts that the propensity to fall back into the old ways, was forever present.

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians that Israel, and their trial in the wilderness, serves us as an example:

1CorinthianII These things happened to them as examples and were written for our instruction, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 So let the one who thinks he is standing be careful that he does not fall. 13 No trial has overtaken you that is not faced by others. And God is faithful: He will not let you be tried beyond what you are able to bear, but with the trial will also provide a way out so that you may be able to endure it.

In this passage we are admonished to watch, lest we too fall as they did. We are grateful that YHVH does not put upon us more than we can bear.

We can only surmise about what transpired in those 40 years, and of course those years that Moses spent in Midian, where he married, had children and learned to be a shepherd, are not spoken about at all.

My thoughts roam to the personal conversations Moses had with YHVH in the tent of meeting.

We also see that the same amount of time that Moses spent out of Egypt was the same amount of time that the people spent in the wilderness. Can we not see that YHVH does not make arbitrary decisions but that all things work together and in accordance to YHVH's divine patterns.

YHVH's plan for us is that we live a healthy and abundant life. He is laying out a survival plan for His people which reflects an eternal plan for His family and the restoration of His house.

On a side note, studies show that if we change our life and dietary habits from an unhealthy style to a healthier one, we can change the outcome of our lives and that we can actually live longer. We are told that we have a birth age and a body age, and often through an unhealthy stressful life, our body age far exceeds the birth age. But it is possible with discipline and education to reverse the process and indeed look younger than our birth age.

Deuteronomy 34:7

Although Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eyesight was not dim, nor his natural strength abated.

This health plan is written within the scriptures and comes as part of the promises of God.

In the text Moses emphasises to the gathering his age, and that he will not be crossing into the land with the people. I wonder how many of those gathered were shocked and saddened at the prospect of not having their great leader them.

Having established Moses' vitality in Deut 34:7 it seems a contradiction in the rendering of some translations, where Moses' demeanour was somehow flagging and that he no longer had the strength to go on. This is simply not the case. YHVH had already told him that he would not enter the land.

The opening verse from the CJB, tells us:

²*"I am 120 years old today. I can't get around any longer; moreover, Adonai has said to me, 'You will not cross this Yarden.'*

The Orthodox Jewish Bible and the Amplified give the following translation, which I feel reflects Moses' rather coy excuse.

OJB:

2 And he said unto them, I am me'ab v'esrim shanab today; I can no more go out and come in; also Hasbem bath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Yarden.

AMP: 2 So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come in and go out [as your spiritual and military leader]...

Neither of these verses, indicates the state of his physiological demeanour.

Moses, the King chief, priest and prophet, now has to hand over the reigns to Joshua. Joshua is now the messenger of YHVH and the mantle of leadership is firmly upon his shoulders.

The time will come when Joshua and the people he is leading, will soon have to cross their own river as Moses did his. Joshua, according to Jewish scriptures took over the leadership at around 80 -82 years of age and lived to be 110.

Moses was 120 years old when he died. He lived the length of days attributed by YHVH to man. Gen 6:1-3.

120 is also considered to be the 'time of waiting'.

We are also reminded of that same number in Acts 1:14-26 Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)

14 These all devoted themselves single-mindedly to prayer, along with some women, including Miryam (Yeshua's mother), and his brothers.

15 During this period, when the group of believers numbered about 120, Kefa stood up and addressed his fellow-believers: 16 "Brothers, the Ruach HaKodesh spoke in advance through David about Y'hudah, and these words of the Tanakh had to be fulfilled.

Can you imagine living that long and not feeling old and decrepit? How would you fill your life and what would you want to achieve?

We are not told in the Bible text what filled Moses' life in the interludes of the narrative. As we approach his final few hours it would be good to consider an epitaph for our great leader. What could we write?

We know the bloodline that YHVH established in the patriarchal trinity of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob but I cannot help but think why we cannot at least give Moses the honorary title amongst them.

As you we read this week's Parsha we are coming toward the final recounts of Moses and in most parts we see the reiteration of scripture once again reinforcing the covenantal agreement which Moses so desperately wants the people to get a hold of. It's as if he's saying, 'no', begging the people to understand and be resolved in walking the path YHVH has set before them. He wants them to walk in the blessings and not be cursed. *'Don't be lost, keep your eyes fixed on YHVH. Prove that all that we have gone through as a people this last forty years has not been for nothing. Please don't let my life and all that I have done have been in vain.'* I can almost hear his heart.

When it comes to us, it is important to understand that YHVH is dealing with flesh and blood. We can speak openly to YHVH as a child speaks to his father. We can tell Him our concerns, our hopes and dreams. We can even tell Him our flaws and fears. However, we must learn as the caravan of the Hebrews had to learn, that the path to the promised land is full of treacherous humps and bumps, and around every corner there may well be a valley of shadows. YHVH wants nothing but good for us and that's the message of Moses.

As you read this message you are in a pivotal point of time. Never in the history of humanity has the world seen so much lawlessness. We don't have to listen to what the media says. We don't need to be told. We are seeing it so openly and experiencing ourselves. Though many people seem caring and concerned about the state of our world, there are also those who couldn't care less, and are so preoccupied with themselves that they are totally unaware of the intensity of the chaos we are about to face as a species. The eradication of YHVH's laws seem all but wiped out and observed by only a few, but this is all prophesied.

1 Timothy 4:

1 Now the Spirit expressly states that in later times some will abandon the faith to follow deceitful spirits and the teachings of demons, **2** influenced by the hypocrisy of liars, whose consciences are seared with a hot iron.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for *that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition....*

How about this for irony: the voice of the minorities in the world seem to be heard so loudly these days. The PC police are acutely waiting to pounce on individual thought or action that might upset their status quo. And yet the minority, YHVH's ethnic people, find it so hard to find a voice even to be heard amongst the bigoted tirade of the lawless masses.

1 John 4:3

and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and is already in the world at this time

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that change darkness into light, and light into darkness; that change bitter into sweet, and sweet into bitter!

What does this say to us? How do you feel about this?

So many of YHVH's people are seeing that the world they are living in is no longer for them. Halleluyah, at last! The question we should all be asking is: What do we do about it, and how do we go about making the radical changes needed?

What YHVH is in fact pointing out, is that the changes needed have to be revolutionary, and that change only comes when we are brave enough to do it. What follows is the reform of character and nature. Can't we see that this is what YHVH has wanted for us all along?

In this passage in Amos, YHVH is saying that even though He saved Israel from the judgement on the cities, the people still did not turn to Him.

Amos 4:11

Verse Concepts

"I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not *returned to Me*," declares the LORD.

Here we see the term '*returned to Me*'. It comes from the word 'shub'. Strongs H7725. Part of the returning process is restorative. YHVH does not want us to go forward and make our own ways but that we should return to the established way and the ancient paths. Friends, we must realise that YHVH gave us a covenant to walk 'in' and not 'into'. It was established from long ago.

Friends, returning means to 'about face' and walk to the way you once walked. It is understood to mean 'repentance', but what it means is that when we repent or make 'teshuvah', we resolve to walk in covenant with YHVH. The covenant is still in play even though we might err from its parts. Teshuvah allows us to return back and make amends and restoration. It is YHVH's grace at work. YHVH is saying to us: 'listen, my child, ok you have made an error you have backslidden but I am still holding up my end of the agreement. Come back, its ok!'

As we have been taught, repentance and forgiveness come before judgement, and judgement also brings us to a point of repentance and forgiveness. It is a continuum. Thus we continue to observe the solemn days of awe and Yom Kippur, because we are symbolically entering the courtroom of the Sovereign God and judge.

In this passage of scripture we see that YHVH makes a way out for us as He is about to pronounce His judgement.

2 Peter 2:6-9

and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul

tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.

These are the days we are living in, my friends. Be acutely aware of it.

Luke 17:28-30

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

Once having been saved from YHVH's wrath, we can expel the long Teruah 'the loud shout of praise' - Look what the Lord has done! Halleluyah! We have been forgiven and revived. We can once again praise Him with tambourine, cymbals and harp. The sound of celebration fills the air.

But the blowing of the teruah note also signifies something else. It is the proclamation that YHVH requires when Israel declares her sinfulness toward Him.

Isaiah 58 (CJB)

58 Shout out loud! Don't hold back!
Raise your voice like a *shofar*!
**Proclaim to my people what rebels they are,
to the house of Ya'akov their sins.**

²"Oh yes, they seek me day after day
and [claim to] delight in knowing my ways.
As if they were an upright nation
that had not abandoned the rulings of their God,
they ask me for just rulings
and [claim] to take pleasure in closeness to God,
³ [asking,] 'Why should we fast, if you don't see?
Why mortify ourselves, if you don't notice?'

"Here is my answer: when you fast,
you go about doing whatever you like,
while keeping your laborers hard at work.
⁴ Your fasts lead to quarreling and fighting,
to lashing out with violent blows.

**On a day like today, fasting like yours
will not make your voice heard on high.**

⁵"Is this the sort of fast I want,
a day when a person mortifies himself?
Is the object to hang your head like a reed
and spread sackcloth and ashes under yourself?
Is this what you call a fast,
a day that pleases *Adonai*?

⁶"**Here is the sort of fast I want —
releasing those unjustly bound,
untying the thongs of the yoke,
letting the oppressed go free,
breaking every yoke,**

⁷ **sharing your food with the hungry,
taking the homeless poor into your house,
clothing the naked when you see them,
fulfilling your duty to your kinsmen!"**

⁸ Then your light will burst forth like the morning,
your new skin will quickly grow over your wound;
your righteousness will precede you,
and *Adonai's* glory will follow you.

⁹ Then you will call, and *Adonai* will answer;
you will cry, and he will say, "Here I am."

The *teruah* is the last long blast of a series of different blasts and is the one used for warning or for making an alarm. It is also the sound blown at the arrival of a King. This is signified in the prophetic meaning of Rosh Hashanah.

One day my friends, we will hear that sound for real and we will see our Messiah King coming on the clouds, surrounded by the army of the hosts of heaven. What a glorious day that will be. I believe that we can hasten that day.

Friends, for so long the general opinion among believers has been that everything is in YHVH's hands — He's in control, it's up to Him. That is all true, definitely. But get this: we are His co-workers — it's up to us to make things ready.

When YHVH looks down and sees that it is, He will move. He does not work in our time. He works out of it. We can look at the biblical calendar and surmise the time and that the calendar is for our benefit. But what YHVH sees is the state and condition we are in. He sees the right time to intervene in human affairs and the life of His people.

As we continue our survey of this week's parsha we see that Moses, having declared the covenant to the people, is about to facilitate the inauguration of Joshua as the new leader.

7 Next Moshe summoned Y'hoshua and, in the sight of all Isra'el, said to him, "Be strong, be bold, for you are going with this people into the land Adonai swore to their ancestors he would give them. You will be the one causing them to inherit it." 8 But Adonai — it is he who will go ahead of you. He will be with you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you, so don't be afraid or downhearted."

Just look at the responsibility on Joshua's shoulders. The lesson we learn from this is when YHVH anoints you for service He will always go before you. We are admonished to be bold and strong and trust in Him. If we take it upon ourselves to go where God has not gone before, we are in serious danger — this is pure presumption.

In this final passage we see a personal moment between YHVH and these the two great men. What a moment this must have been. For these two it was an appointed time or 'Moedim'.

Joshua is officially brought before the Lord and anointed. Notice that Joshua is commissioned by YHVH Himself and not by men.

- **14 Adonai said to Moshe, "The time is coming for you to die. Summon Y'hoshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, so that I can commission him." Moshe and Y'hoshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting. 15 Adonai appeared in the tent in a column of cloud; the column of cloud stood above the entrance to the tent. 16 Adonai said to Moshe, "You are about to sleep with your ancestors. But this people will get up and offer themselves as prostitutes to the foreign gods of the land where they are going. When they are with those gods, they will abandon me and break my covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then my anger will flare up, and I will abandon them and hide my face from them. They will be devoured, and many calamities and troubles will come upon them. Then they will ask, 'Haven't these calamities come upon us because our God isn't here with us?' 18 But I will be hiding my face from them because of all the evil they will have done in turning to other gods.**

Once again, we see that YHVH is aware of our frailty and iniquity. He knows that even this new generation will fail in the journey, that despite the ministry of Moses and Joshua, despite the many times of returning to the Lord in the midst of His covenant the people will go astray.

Despite even desiring to serve Him, give Him our hearts, and want Him like no other, we will fail. Don't ever say you will not. However, there is hope. We will not fail miserably or completely, because we know the way back to His presence. The righteousness of our Messiah in us, through the Ruach hakodesh reveals our sin. It is only when we deny Him completely and run away from Him, and utterly reject Him that we are lost. Friends, we cannot crucify Messiah again.

As we enter the next parsha we are called to witness with heaven and earth the words given to Israel by Moses. It is as if, we too sign our names on the document. Finally, we are privy to a song or poem given to Moses by YHVH. It is a poem that the people must hear and remember.
Ha'azinu – Hear.

28 Assemble for me all the leaders of your tribes and your officials, so that I can say these things in their hearing, calling heaven and earth to witness against them — 29 because I know that after my death you will become very corrupt and turn aside from the way that I have ordered you, and that disaster will come upon you in the *acharit-hayamim* (end of days), because you will do what *Adonai* sees as evil and provoke him by your deeds.”

30 Then Moshe spoke in the hearing of the whole assembly of Isra'el the words of this song, from beginning to end:

44 Moshe came and proclaimed all the words of this song in the hearing of the people and of Hoshea the son of Nun.

45 When he had finished speaking all these words to all Isra'el, 46 he said to them, “Take to heart all the words of my testimony against you today, so that you can use them in charging your children to be careful to obey all the words of this Torah. 47 For this is not a trivial matter for you; on the contrary, it is your life! Through it you will live long in the land you are crossing the Yarden to possess.”

These words speak for themselves. We need to understand and make them clear. We have put our name on the agreement. It is the system with which we will cleanse the bride and make her ready for her husband. We have agreed to help her and present her. The time of the *Husband's* return is imminent. Please let us not fail in our tasks.

We have just come through the days of awe and spent many days in repentance. We want the Lord to act through us and show us favour and blessings for the coming year. We must remember to walk in the forgiveness we have received and in the agreement we have renewed. We have joined in solemn assembly and resolved to do all that He says. We pray that our lives will be changed and made ready for the days ahead and for His purposes. YHVH has made a way that we can come before His throne, and having received the blessing of forgiveness through the precious blood our Messiah Yeshua, we can draw near, 'stand' and 'hear', knowing that we can step into a new time.

Finally, as David said, our sin is forever before us. However, we must not live in it. The Torah, points out our transgressions and its judgments upon sin, bringing division between us and YHVH. However, teshuvah and the atoning sacrifice of Messiah, allow us to return back and enter into His presence. Sin is ever present but it does not have power over us anymore. We are free from that.

Shalom

May the YHWH bless and keep you and make His face shine on you and give you shalom in the coming new year.
Till next time.

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Talmud: *The Talmud (Hebrew for "study") is one of the central works of the Jewish people. It is the record of rabbinic teachings that spans a period of about six hundred years, beginning in the first century C.E. and continuing through the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The rabbinic teachings of the Talmud explain in great detail how the commandments of the Torah are to be carried out.*

Mishna: *'The Book of the Strong Hand' The contents of the Mishnah are the product of an ongoing process of elaborating and explaining the foundations, the details and the significance of the Torah's commandments. This process began long before the redaction of the Mishnah, and continued throughout the Talmudic period (1st to 6th centuries CE) Mishneh Torah consists of fourteen books, subdivided into sections, chapters, and paragraphs. It is the only Medieval-era work that details all of Jewish observance, including those laws that are only applicable when the Holy Temple is in existence, and remains an important work in Judaism.*

The Gemara is the component of the Talmud comprising rabbinical analysis of and commentary on the Mishnah (200CE). After the Mishnah was published by Judah HaNasi, the work was studied exhaustively by generation after generation of rabbis in Babylonia and the Land of Israel. Their discussions were written down in a series of books that became the Gemara, which when combined with the Mishnah constituted the Talmud.

Midrash: *Midrash falls into two categories. When the subject is law and religious practice (halakhah), it is called Midrash halakhah. Midrash Aggadah, on the other hand, interprets biblical narrative, exploring questions of ethics or theology, or creating homilies and parables based on the text. (Aggadah means "telling"; any Midrash which is not halakhic falls into this category.)*

The Zohar: *was kept hidden for 900 years, between the 2nd and the 11th centuries CE, since those who possessed its wisdom understood that at the time, people did not need it and would misunderstand its contents. The Zohar is a collection of commentaries on the Torah, intended to guide people who have already achieved high spiritual degrees to the root (origin) of their souls.*

The Zohar contains all the spiritual states that people experience as their souls evolve. At the end of the process, the souls achieve what Kabbalah refers to as "the end of correction," the highest level of spiritual wholeness.

To those without spiritual attainment, The Zohar reads like a collection of allegories and legends that can be interpreted and perceived differently by each individual. But to those with spiritual attainment, i.e. Kabbalists, The Zohar is a practical guide to inner actions that one performs in order to discover deeper, higher states of perception and sensation.

Sources.

Tanaiim: *The Talmudic rabbis whose views are recorded in the Talmudic literature are called Tannaim and Amoraim. Both these terms are also found in the Talmud in connection with learning activity. In this context, a Tanna ('rehearser' or 'teacher') was a functionary who rehearsed opinions and statements of the teachers of the first two centuries CE; an Amora ('expounder') was a different functionary, whose job it was to explain to the assembly the words of a contemporary sage, the latter making only a series of brief rulings which the Amora would then explain in detail.*

Aggadah: *the no legal or narrative material, as parables, maxims, or anecdotes, in the Talmud and other rabbinical literature, serving either to illustrate the meaning or purpose of the law, custom, or Biblical passage being discussed or to introduce a different, unrelated topic.*

Jubilees: *Jubilees covers much of the same ground as Genesis, but often with additional detail, and addressing Moses in the second person as the entire history of creation, and of Israel up to that point, is recounted in divisions of 49 years each, or "Jubilees".*

Jasher: *The Book of Jasher is also mentioned in the Biblical Book of Joshua amid the descriptions of Joshua's military exploits in the land of Canaan, specifically after Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, and his allies attacked Gibeon for allying themselves with Israel and Joshua and the Israelites came to Gibeon's aid (Joshua 9-10). When "YHWH gave the Amorites over to the sons of Israel", Joshua told the sun to stand still over Gibeon and the moon to stand still over Valley of Aijalon (Joshua 9:1-2). Then the Book of Joshua 10:13 states:*