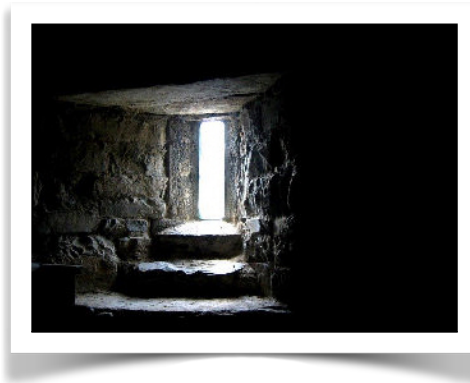


Treasures of the Torah

“..again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:45

‘Its a narrow gate, just enough room for you’



5th August 2023 18 Av 5783

Parsha Ekev ‘Because’ Deuteronomy 7:12 -11:25

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim.

Blessings for a great Shabbat and the week ahead.

Keynotes:

Moses continues to recount the journey of the Hebrews.

He reiterates that if they continue to obey YHVH, they will live and prosper in the land and that they must annihilate the people who worship others gods.

Moses reminds the people of their failings and sinful actions but also speaks of how YHVH has carried them through the wilderness, supplying their food and watching over them, assuring them of His love and forgiveness.

This week’s Parsha begins;

CH :12 “Because you are listening to these rulings, keeping and obeying them, Adonai your God will keep with you the covenant and mercy that he swore to your ancestors. 13 He will love you, bless you and increase your numbers; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground — your grain, wine, olive oil and the young of your cattle and sheep — in the land he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. 14 You will be blessed more than all other peoples; there will not be a sterile male or female among you, and the same with your livestock. 15 Adonai will remove all illness from you — he will not afflict you with any of Egypt’s dreadful diseases, which you have known; instead, he will lay them on those who hate you. 16 You are to devour all the peoples that Adonai your God hands over to you — show them no pity, and do not serve their gods, because that will become a trap for you. 17 If you think to yourselves, ‘These nations outnumber us; how can we dispossess them?’ 18 nevertheless, you are not to be afraid of them; you are to remember well what Adonai your God did to Pharaoh and all of Egypt — 19 the great ordeals which you yourself saw, and the signs, wonders, strong hand and outstretched arm by which Adonai your God brought you out. Adonai will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Moses emphasises that the wilderness journey is ending and they are about to enter the land YHVH promised to their ancestors.

Moses tells the people of the 'seven species', of fruit and crops that will be their yield.

The people are admonished to remember that their wealth comes from the Lord and is not from their own doing.

The closing passages include an integral prayer declaration that reminds the people who YHVH is and what they must do in order to receive the benefits of the covenant promises.

As we continue reading into the book of Deuteronomy, we remind ourselves that this book is called the book of 'Words', or 'Devarim' in the Hebrew.

We are now very much at the end of Moses' life. The recounting of Moses covers the journey of the Hebrews throughout their forty year wilderness experience. We remind ourselves that we are also seeing the new generation emerge from amongst the families of Israel.

A new time is around the corner for the people and Moses wants to make sure that they continue in the ways they have learned. They must strive to maintain their position with YHVH and seek to obey His laws and in doing so they must attend to some pretty brutal aspects of their conquest.

The inhabitants of the land, the worshippers of other gods must be annihilated from among the population.

Deut 7:16 You are to devour all the peoples that *Adonai* your God hands over to you — show them no pity, and do not serve their gods, because that will become a trap for you.

Forty years previously, Moses had sent out the scouts to spy the land which Israel would inhabit. Their distrust in the positive report of Joshua and Caleb, resulted in a decision that was made through fear and this decision cost them a generation and much hardship along the way. Their exodus from Egypt was not only one of deliverance from the hardships and slavery to their Egyptians masters, but was also meant to be a deliverance from what they had become. The people had to relearn who they were and most importantly who their God was.

This is the journey of every believer in Messiah. Our journey involves us being released from a restricted life, burdened by the constraints of a world we live in but of which we are not part. The report of the scouts brought a glimmer of what could be, but the peoples' response put what they could have had well into the future.

Every believer, growing in the Lord, is given the same message. The promises of God are now, but the lack of faith may prevent what YHVH has for us. Israel's journey is reiterated to us as much as it is to them in these passages.

Let us read what Paul writes:

1 Corinthians **10 For I do not want you to be unaware**, brothers *and sisters*, that our fathers were all under the cloud and they all passed through the sea; **2** and they all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; **3** and they all ate the same spiritual food, **4** and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. **5** Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased; for *their dead bodies* were spread out in the wilderness.

6 Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they indeed craved *them*. **7** Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." **8** Nor are we to commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. **9** Nor are we to put the Lord to the test, as some of them did, and were killed by the snakes. **10** Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were killed by the destroyer. **11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. **12** Therefore let the one who thinks he stands watch out that he does not fall.

Moses reminds the people of all the signs and miracles YHVH did for them and admonishes them now not to be afraid of their enemies. In Chapter 7:1-3 the people are told that YHVH will remove the nations from around His people. There were seven nations that YHVH promised to remove.

Ch 7:1 When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you— 2 and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them.

(It is worth noting , that the six day war in June 1967, Israel entered into conflict with the combined forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. However, though Israel defeated these nations, the conflict continues over the territories. Biblically we know that YHVH has an allotted land area for Israel that extends into much of the surrounding areas. The story is not over yet.)

Returning to our Parsha — Moses is explicit that the people are not entering the land because of their own righteousness.

8:17 Do not say to yourself, 'My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth.' 18 But remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, so that He may confirm His covenant that He swore to your ancestors, as He is doing today.

Friends, it is with all due diligence and resolve that YHVH's children must listen to these words of Moses. Our commitment to YHVH will depend on our very survival and that is why we must continue to seek the will of God and His sovereign hand in our personal lives and in life of our nations. We must be focused in our observation and be wise watchmen over the Word of God and to what is preached behind the pulpit in every aspect.

Those who lead God's people astray will come under greater judgement, but those who listen to them are also culpable in spreading their erroneous teachings. God will not only apportion blame on the false teachers but will ask why those who adhered to them, listened to them. We are all called to study the word and apply what we learn to our lives, and thus we must learn to do what scripture tells us to do first, and remove our gaze to a greater degree from what others have done. There has to be a shift if our focus is upon any one person and not on scripture.

There will be a major change when the word is illuminated and not the stage of any ministry.

Let us continue:

Israel has been chosen to be a consecrated nation to God and thus will receive the covenant privileges if they remain in obedience to the covenantal laws.

v7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, 10 and who repays in their own person those who reject Him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject Him. 11 Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today.

Ch9 opens in reminding the Israelites that they have been here, on the cusp of entering the land, before.

1 Hear, O Israel! You are about to cross the Jordan today, to go in and dispossess nations larger and mightier than you, great cities, fortified to the heavens, 2 a strong and tall people, the offspring of the Anakim, whom you know. You have heard it said of them, 'Who can stand up to the Anakim?' 3 Know then today that the Lord your God is the one who crosses over before you as a devouring fire; He will defeat them and subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess and destroy them quickly, as the Lord has promised you. 4 When the Lord your God thrusts them out before you, do not say to yourself, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to occupy this land'; it is rather because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is dispossessing them before you. 5 It is not because of

your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to occupy their land; but because of the wickedness of those nations that the Lord your God is dispossessing them before you, in order to fulfil the promise that the Lord made on oath to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. 6 Know, then, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to occupy because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people.

If Israel is to enter the land, they must not forget the previous actions of their ancestors. This is the message that Moses is driving into them.

I can almost hear the desperation in Moses' voice, as he recalls the failures of the people, and the sacrifices he gave in intercession for their sins.
Ex 32:32. V 9:25-27.

As Moses recounts this journey, he is also remembering his own, and the struggle to deliver these people who for most of his life had been strangers. We see that as part of his own conversion, Moses' great love for them is shown in his willingness to be removed from the book of life.
Ex 32:32. V 9:25-27.

However, among Moses' final remarks he still concludes that 'Israel is a stubborn and defiant people toward the Lord'. V9:24.

The closing chapters of 10 and 11, now refer us to the key principles that all of Israel must adhere to and which are reflected within verses of the 'shema'.

We read in v10:12, a familiar verse which Yeshua pronounced to His disciples:

Matt 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 And Jesus replied to him, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'** 38 **This is the first and greatest commandment.**

Mark 12: 28 Now one of the scribes had come up and heard their debate. Noticing how well Jesus had answered them, he asked Him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus replied, "This is the most important: **'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'** 31 **The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'** No other commandment is greater than these."

As we come to the end of the chapter, we cannot leave without drawing somewhat of a forensic conclusion to what we are witnessing. Let us now look a little closer at the scene and the possible conversation now taking place.

First let us establish a time and place and the reason we now stand at this point of Israel's final few steps before they enter the promised land. This is important because a legal treaty is about to be signed.

The book of Deuteronomy is also called the 'Mishnei Torah', which means the second book or repeated book of the law.

Approaching this book in context, we see that what it stipulates is said in the common language of the people. The laws are for all to understand, not just the learned and educated. It's not just for kings and priests, but for the people too. Every man must have access to its words.

Thus the communication of it must be understood by all.

Now let us look at what has happened so far. The beginning of Deuteronomy places the people at a significant time and place. We read:

CH1:1 These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. **2** (By the

way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb.) **3** In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the Lord had commanded him to speak to them.

Because we are witnessing an agreement to a legal document, there is a date stamp. We witness that an agreement between YHVH and Israel and the whole of the people, is about to be signed.

The people have come full circle. In the beginning YHVH had to clarify to them who He was, what He wanted, what He would do, how the people should respond and how they should live. We see that the fledgling community had a lot to learn and understand. Their first sight of the land and the invitation to enter it proved that they were not ready to make the transition and so the forty year journey would ensue. Now forty years on, and a new generation later, the people now, having or been accustomed to YHVH teaching along the way, now have to make a decision of whether they are going to ratify the covenant that is being laid out for them.

The people are about to be enjoined (*a priestly term*) to the covenant. This is a very serious moment. YHVH is fundamentally saying “this is it”.

Do you remember the passage in Exodus where Moses asks the people, following the golden calf incident, “Who is for the Lord?”

Ex 32:25 Moses saw that the people were running wild and that Aaron had let them get out of control and so become a laughingstock to their enemies. 26 So he stood at the entrance to the camp and said, “Whoever is for the Lord, come to me.” And all the Levites rallied to him.

Following the sin of the people, YHVH says:

31 So Moses went back to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. **32** But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.” **33** The Lord replied to Moses, “**Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.** **34** Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin.

In Exodus 24:1-9 We hear the people affirming that they will do all that the Lord has asked. But do they?

So here we are again. Moses is reiterating the laws, which all the people have tried to familiarise themselves with over the last forty years. By now they should all be wiser and mature enough to understand their relationship with God, and what comes from Him, if His stipulations are met or not.

The question from Moses, is ‘do you understand what you are about to agree to?’ If you agree and then break any of the agreements within the covenant treaty, you will be in breach and YHVH will act accordingly. My hope is that you will adhere to all you have learned, so that you will live in peace and abundance in the land, the Lord your God has promised our ancestors’.

In 11:18, the people are commanded: **v18 You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. 19 Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 20 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, 21 so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.**

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers 15:37-41, are the three paragraphs of the ‘Shema’.

Deuteronomy is the pivotal book within the Torah, because it reiterates the covenant stipulations of YHWH, and thus brings the people to a point of the ratification of the treaty, conveying that loyalty to the covenant will provide the condition of life in the promised land for Israel.

Friends, as we close, I want us to consider our own walk with God and the agreement we each made to Him, as we received our wonderful Lord and saviour into our lives. In the passages we have studied, we see that even as the people, who are just about to enter the land, are given choice to follow YHWH's laws so too we have the same choice.

Israel had forty years to familiarise themselves with the commandments of God and were brought to a moment where they had to agree to them or not.

Friends, life as a covenant person brings many blessings and the promises of God. Conflict to its terms arises when we do not know who we are in it and what we have done to accept it. The Sacrifice of our precious Messiah and Saviour Yeshua came at a great cost. Our salvation came at the price of His death. In agreement to the covenant and in accepting the Way of Christ we must also give our own lives to Him. This is the divine exchange — in effect, His blood for ours. We affirm that our agreement with the world is finished. As an aside, we find that in the world when a treaty is broken, the conflict will also ensue, and thus we find that we as believers also find ourselves in conflict with a world that we have rejected.

Before we end, I would like to raise a few of questions.

Do we as believers in Messiah Yeshua agree with the ways that He has taught us? Are we familiar with them, and furthermore, are new believers equally familiar with them and indeed has anything changed?

Does the Church stipulate the path that says we must obey His commands before we ask people to accept Christ?

What about those who are accepted into the family of faith and have not had the opportunity to read and understand the covenant?

Does it make any difference whether they understand, agree or not?

Should the document be presented to them before they enter?

How can we expect non-believers to agree to a covenant, if it has never been presented to them?

Should time be spent with unbelievers in explaining the house rules?

Should an approach like this be incumbent upon the church or should we just allow new believers to people meander through their walk?

Surely we must take heed of our Messiah's words when walking in His way with others. It is better for them to learn from our mistakes.

I suggest, without being too legalistic, that a little help will go a long way especially when bringing up fledgling disciples. Offering a better way of life, and even the promises of God as a carrot to accept Christ, will not save anyone. A person must know what they are signing up for. It is after all a matter of life and death.

Should we indeed ask these questions?

This is certainly something we should think about. Perhaps the reason we find so many unable to accept the way of Christ is that they have not been unable to accept the rules of the covenant.

The failure to prepare the ground before the seed is sown results in the loss of many souls, I fear.

Shalom

Additional readings — Isaiah 49:14-51:3, Mt 16:13-20



Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.