

Parashah #50

(Updated 8.28.10)

Ki Tavo ~ כִּי תָבֹא ~ When you come

Torah: D'varim/Deuteronomy 26:1~29:8

Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 60:1-22

B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 13:1-23;
Luke 21:1-4; Acts 28:17-31; Romans 11:1-15

This week's Torah portion is (Key Tah-voe) Ki Tavo, which means “when you come” or “when you have come”. Once again Moshe is encouraging *B'nei Yisra'el/the Children of Israel* that HaShem is giving them the land as their inheritance. They are to take possession of it and settle there. Next are the instructions about (Ha Bik-koo-reem) *HaBikkurim/The Firstfruits*.

CHAPTER 26

In the Complete Jewish Bible, **verse 2** says, “. . . the first fruits of all the crops the ground yields . . .” while the Chumash says “. . . the first of every fruit from the ground . . .” When I read the words “all” and “every” I believe they mean what they say. However, the Sages indicate it only means the first fruits of some but not every species. As I understand it, they are referring to the seven species mentioned in **D'varim/Deuteronomy 8:8**,

- Wheat
- Barley
- Grape
- Fig
- Pomegranate
- Olives
- Date honey

Perhaps, because those specific species are mentioned, these are the ones to be offered as Firstfruits.

Nonetheless, the Sages continue to describe how *B'nei Yisra'el/the Children of Israel* came from all over the Land, city after city, to *Yerushalayim/Jerusalem* with music and great celebration. I can just see it now . . . with great merriment, men and women dancing with timbrels, twirling, laughing and enjoying this wonderful time. (I wanna be there too!!!) Bringing their Bikkurim as an act of worship and honor to HaShem for all He had done for them. Of course, there were the offerings for the *Kohen/Priest*.

As I read **verse 4**, HaShem gave me the sweetest mini-vision. When we bring our *Bikkurim/Firstfruits* of (Teh-shoo-vah) *T'shuvah/repentance*, by way of prayers and tears, Yeshua, as our *Kohen HaGadol/High Priest*, gently places His hand beneath ours and takes our Bikkurim and places it on the altar as He makes intercession on our behalf.

Immediately afterwards, a waft of incense came through the room. I can't begin to explain the sweetness of the moment.

A very moving ritual took place when the farmers brought their first fruits to the Temple. **Verses 5-10** share the declaration of gratitude to HaShem for guiding them to where they are. By offering their Bikkurim, they symbolically dedicate everything they have to the service of HaShem.

Verse 8 "And Adonai brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and a stretched-out arm, with great terror, and with signs and wonders." Parallel this with the prophetic **Chapter 16:14-16** in **Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah**, "Therefore, says Adonai, the day will come when people will no longer swear, "As Adonai lives, who brought the people of Isra'el out of the land of Egypt," but, "As Adonai lives, who brought the people of Isra'el out of the land to the north and out of all the countries where he drove them"; for I will bring them back to their own land, which I gave to their ancestors." Those who have a heart for Adonai and choose to follow His Word, His entire Word, His Torah, those are the ones He is speaking to in these verses.

"You shall be glad" or "You shall rejoice" or "... take joy ... " (**verse 11**) indicates the celebration should include joyous activities: singing, dancing and must include the **L'vi'im/Levites** and the needy.

Tithes are to be taken from the crops according to a three-year cycle. Each year, the first tithe is given to the Levite. During the first and second years, the (Mah-ah-sehr Sheh-nee) **Maaser Sheni/the second tithe** is taken, which is considered to have a degree of sanctity and must be eaten in Jerusalem. During the third year, instead of the second tithe, a tithe known as (Mah-ah-sehr Ah-nee) **Maaser Ani** is taken **for the poor** (**verse 12**). I wonder if this ties in with the "slave" who can offer himself for only three years at a time. Anyway, this tithe to the poor is repeated every three years except for the (Sh-meet-tah) **Sh'mittah/seventh** year and the (Yo-vehl) **Yovel/fiftieth** year, when no tithes are required. The tithe for the poor has a special status because it symbolizes Hebraic generosity and concern for the less fortunate.

According to one commentary, there are those who believe had Israel not worshipped the Golden Calf, every home could have been a sacred temple with the privilege of the offering belonging to the firstborn. It was only because of the nation's spiritual downfall it was necessary to remove the tithes from the home and give them to the Kohanim and the Levites.

An incredible union is voiced in **verses 17-19**. The **People of Israel/Am Yisra'el** agree HaShem is their G~d; they will observe and obey the **mitzvot/laws and rulings** with all their heart and being. In return HaShem agrees He is their G~d; they are His (Ahm Seh-

you-lah) *Am Segullah/His own unique treasured people* and He will raise them high above all nations in . . .

- Praise
- Reputation
- and glory

It would appear these verses constitute mutual pledges of allegiance between HaShem and His Chosen People, Israel. Ya know, the more I study scripture, it becomes abundantly clear to me “The Church” has **NOT** replaced the Whole House of Israel as His Chosen People!!! (See **Yirme’yahu/Jeremiah 33:24-25**)

CHAPTER 27

This chapter tells the story of how the people are to cross the *Yarden/Jordan River*, set up large stones on *Mount Eival/Ebal* and put plaster on the stones, which are not to be hewn by any iron tool. **Verse 8** says “You are to write on the stones all the words of this Torah very clearly.” So does “all these words of this Torah very clearly”, mean the original *Decalogue/Ten Commandments* or does it mean the commandments we have received so far or does it mean ALL THESE WORDS? And what’s up with this plaster stuff on the stones? And what does “very clearly” mean?

The Chumash is just full of all sorts of ideas with regard to this verse. Supposedly, they were to erect 12 huge stones. (I guess one for each tribe.) Some say ALL Torah is to be written on the stones while others indicate it is only the commandments. Yet others believe it is the entire Torah in the 70 primary languages, clearly and legibly, so any one who wished to read it could.

My friend, Brother Lynn, and I were talkin’ Torah and I believe HaShem gave him an awesome revelation!!! He asked me, “Could this be representative of the mezuzah?” I think yes!!! We are told to place them on the door post of our home. Were they, the children of Israel, not entering into their “home” land? And these stones were to be erected and Torah was to be written on them. I wish HaShem would give me divine revelations like this!!! Thanks, Bro. Lynn.

Verse 4 indicates the stones were to be coated with plaster. After the Torah was written on the stones, they were to be coated with another covering of plaster to protect the writing. Should anyone want to copy the text of Torah from the stones, the covering of plaster could be easily removed.

The same day Moshe tells them about setting up the stones, he also divides the twelve tribes. (**verses 11-26**) Six of the tribes will stand on *Mount G’rizim/Gerizim*, known as the Mount of Blessings and the other six tribes will stand on the Mount of Cursings, *Mount Eival/Ebal*, in Hebrew. The divisions, which follow, are quite interesting!

MOUNT G'RIZIM/GERIZIM

- Shim'on/Simeon
- Levi
- Y'hudah/Judah
- Yissakhar/Issachar
- Yosef/Joseph (Manasseh & Ephraim)
- Binyamin/Benjamin

MOUNT EIVAL/EBAL

- Re'uven/Reuben
- Gad
- Asher
- Z'vulun/Zebulun
- Dan
- Naftali/Naphtali

I'm sure there is more . . . but for now, on the Mount of Blessings are all the children of Leah and Rachel with the exception of *Shim'on/Simeon*. Those stationed on the Mount of Cursings were the children of the handmaidens, Zilpah and Bilhah. We also know *Re'uven/Reuben*, half of *M'nasheh/Manasseh* and Gad stayed on the east side of the *Yarden/Jordan* and Asher, Dan and *Naftali/Naphtali* settled in the north country. I know there is more . . . I just haven't "gotten" it yet!!!!

The *Kohanim/Priests* and Elders are in the valley with the Ark. Did you notice after each one of the initial twelve curses was pronounced, all the people said "amen"? Supposedly, "amen" was repeated after each and every curse and blessing.

One of the distinctions made during these verses (11-26) showed there were no contradictions between public and private morality. According to the Sages, "A nation that considers it acceptable to sin in private will inevitably see erosion in its moral integrity." All I will say concerning this is . . . AMEN!!!

Verse 18 says, "A curse on anyone who causes a blind person to lose his way on the road." Could this mean spiritually as well as literally? There are a lot of people who are not "led" on a straight path because of the incorrect teachings of the Word of the L~rd. For instance, the teaching where Paul says it is for those grafted in (Romans 9:4), the Original Covenant no longer applies.

As a matter of fact, First Fruits of Zion has an excellent commentary concerning this matter.

FIRST FRUITS OF ZION

A Question to Ponder

Thought for the Week: Just as He promised to scatter them, He has also promised to re-gather them. Although Israel failed as a nation to perform the stipulations of the covenant, the other partner of the agreement—God—remains faithful to His promises. In the end, He will reverse all of Israel's sorrows on account of His faithfulness, mercy and grace.

Commentary: So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. (Deuteronomy 29:9)

All through the book of Deuteronomy, Moses drives home the message: "Keep God's Torah." When Israel failed to keep the Torah, God sent prophets warning them to repent and turn back to Torah. When they repented, they were rewarded and blessed. When they did not, they suffered the maledictions threatened in the Torah. God continuously told His people for 1,400 years to walk in His commandments, keep His Torah and His covenant.

Does it make sense to imagine that after 1,400 years, God suddenly changed His mind? Would it make sense to suppose that after all the pain and suffering of invasion, exile, re-gathering and so on, God would suddenly change the program and announce to His people, "From now on, don't keep the commandments of the Torah," and then punish them when they did?

That could be compared to a father who warned his son not to play ball in the house. Every time the boy played ball in the house, his father would spank him and send him to his room. This went on for three years. Then one day, his father seized him and spanked him. The boy cried out, "Why are you spanking me?" "Because you weren't playing ball in the house," the father explained. "From now on, you must play ball in the house, and if you do not, I will beat you."

We would call a father like that capricious and deranged. Yet many theologians claim that this is what God has done to Israel. For 1,400 years He punished them when they did not keep the Torah. Then when Jesus came, He cancelled the Torah and henceforth punished them for keeping it.

Obviously God is not a capricious and deranged father. Rather He is the Unchanging One, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He has not cancelled the words of His Torah. Even today, He longs for His people — all of His people — to repent, turn away from sin and come back to the good and beautiful commandments of His Torah, just as His holy Son, Yeshua, has shown us. In Yeshua His people will find forgiveness for sins, and through His Spirit we find the strength and joy to serve God with gladness.

For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you would hear His voice. (Psalm 95:7)

Continuing with **verses 20-23**, it appears incest is as abhorrent as bestiality!

Verse 24 says, "A curse on anyone who secretly attacks a fellow member of the community." Do you suppose this applies to verbal attacks as well as physical?

CHAPTER 28

This chapter is known as the Chapter of Blessings but, on closer examination, I believe there are more curses than blessings. Paraphrasing **verse 1**, Moshe tells Israel, if you will listen, observe and obey, then Adonai will . . . We heard this before in **Vayikra/Leviticus 26:3** when HaShem told Moshe to tell the people, “if you live by my regulations, observe . . . and obey . . . then I will . . .” However, in **Vayikra/Leviticus 26:14**, it says “if you will not listen to me and obey, if you loath . . . reject . . . not obey . . .then I will do this . . .” which is very similar to **verse 15** “. . . if you refuse . . . do not observe and obey. . . then all the following curses will be yours in abundance”.

I really like **verse 2!!!** “. . . all the following blessings will come upon you/thee and overtake you/thee . . .” is the most common rendering from several translations. The two translations I like the best are:

- Complete Jewish Bible has “all the following blessings will be yours in abundance . . .”
- . . . and The Message reads, “All these blessings will come down on you and spread out beyond you . . .”

Of course, these are all conditional upon obedience. Obedience to what? HaShem's Torah!!!

According to the Sages, the blessings mentioned in **verses 3-8** were a reward for Torah study and the blessings which follow **verse 10** were a reward for performance of other commandments.

The reference to “rain at the right season” or “rain in its time” in **verse 12** alludes to the fact an abundance of rain can be a curse as we have witnessed around the world with floods. For instance, in Pakistan, China, and the mid-South of the United States! However, even a small amount can be a blessing when the crops are in need of it.

HaShem promises if Israel is worthy, it will be respected by everyone and subservient to no one. According to **verse 13**, Moshe tells them they shall be placed as a head and not a tail. This is not a redundant remark because it is possible for a nation to be “a head”, i.e. leader, to some but still be a follower of others. Interestingly, Israel has had more Nobel prize winners, per capita, than any other nation!!!

In simple terms, the Sages indicate, according to **verse 15**, to obey and to observe or perform there were three requirements for Israel to receive HaShem’s blessings.

- Study Torah,
- Avoid transgression of the negative commandments

- Perform the positive commandments.

According to Rabbi Or HaChaim, this verse alludes to all three, saying if any of the three is ignored, punishment will follow.

- “The voice” alludes to the Torah;
- “to observe” refers to the care needed to refrain from transgressing the negative commandments; and . . .
- “to perform” refers to the active performance of the positive ones.

“You will grope about at noon like a blind person groping in the dark . . .” (verse 29). The question I had was . . . “What’s the difference? If you’re blind, you’re blind! Whether you’re groping about at noon or groping around in the dark, what’s the difference? I found the answer in the Chumash commentary. During the day, others will most likely see a blind person and come to his aid whereas at night, he would be more isolated and unlikely to have anyone help him. This makes sense! In other words, you will be without hope.

A friend sent the following information to me . . .hoping it would “shed more light” on what the difference may be concerning a blind person groping about in the light as opposed to the darkness.

I once knew a young lady who was both deaf and legally blind. She had been to the National Helen Keller Institute for training and used a white cane. (However, with deafness, which has different levels of deafness: mildly deaf to profoundly deaf, there must also be different level of blindness.) That young lady could see enough to read Sign Language with great concentration IF the signer was at just the right distance from her . . . not too close, but not too far away.

As an assignment, she was to follow the same schedule at least two nights a week, which took her from a meeting to a bus stop through an area that was not at all well lit. In the daytime, she had no apparent difficulty with that path. However, the first couple of nights that she had to navigate from the meeting to the bus stop, she became very disoriented and seemed somewhat scared. She had great difficulty getting where she was going! I’m not sure she was able to get there at all without help. Her white cane and slight stature just screamed vulnerability. I was concerned, because she was following a set schedule, that could easily be observed by some “ne’er-do-well” (the kind who normally do come out to do evil deeds at night) who could have planned some sort of terrible mischief against her. That situation was rectified so that she could access the bus near the meeting place and in a well lit area. The security personnel of the building where the twice weekly meeting was held were also alerted to provide security for her on a regular basis.

I see this as applying to many church-goers who walk in a degree of blindness, having only partial truth. Yeshua IS the Way, the Truth and the Light AND He walked in the fullness of the WRITTEN TORAH. Yeshua and the apostles referred to Torah as the scriptures which many folks have been told has been done away with. Consequently, their Truth and Light are diminished and it has left them disoriented and sometimes going down the wrong path. Unfortunately, their partial blindness doesn't even allow them to know they are going the wrong way.

“Your sons and daughters will be given to another people” (verse 32) alludes to the Romans practice of selecting the most attractive Hebrew young people and sending them to Rome to be slaves and to satisfy the lusts of the conquerors.

As I mentioned earlier, Chapter 28 certainly has more curses than it has blessings. In fact, verses 15-68 are pretty grim reading, or at least I think so! If we are claiming to be children of Abraham, as *Sha'ul/Paul* teaches and we are not participating in hearing, observing and obeying the *mitzvot/commandments* our Abba Father has given to us, in the Torah, we would do well to consider our consequences.

As we read in verses 43 and 44, “The foreigner living with you will rise higher and higher while you sink lower and lower. He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he will be the head and you the tail.” We should consider our nation in this verse at this time. Because the decision has been made to remove Adonai from our lives, spiritually, physically and morally, we can see these very verses coming to pass. For those who have ears to hear and eyes to see, verses 45-52 are happening even now.

CHAPTER 29

The first few verses of this chapter are an overview of Israel's history from their days in (Mitz-rah-yeem) *Mitzrayim/Egypt* and the signs and wonders they saw performed through the mighty hand of Adonai to the 40 years in *B'midbar/the wilderness* when their clothing nor their shoes wore out. They were reminded how HaShem provided for their sustenance as well as giving them victory in battle over the kings, (See-khone) Sichon of Heshbon and (Ohg) Og of Bashan. Now forty years later, Moshe is trying to get them to understand, since soon, he will no longer be with them. HaShem is calling them to a higher level and will now begin to expect more of them. Soon the children of Israel will enter the land and everything will be different. Their needs will not longer be provided directly by HaShem. On the contrary, they are expected to cultivate the land and raise its crops for sustenance. They will weave their own clothing, make their own shoes, and build their own dwellings. How will they do all these things and still maintain the intimate relationship they shared with HaShem in the desert?

All through the book of D'varim/Deuteronomy, Moshe drives home the message: “Keep G~d's Torah”. Then Israel failed to keep the Torah, HaShem sent prophets warning them to repent and turn back to Torah. When they repented, they were rewarded and blessed. When they did not, they suffered the consequences threatened in the Torah. HaShem continuously told His people for 1,400 years to walk in His commandments, keep His Torah and His covenant. Does it make sense to imagine after 1,400 years HaShem suddenly changed His mind? Would it make sense to suppose after all the pain and suffering of invasion, exile, re-gathering and so on, HaShem would suddenly change the program and announce to His people, “From now on, don't keep the commandments of the Torah,” and then punish them when they did?

Obviously, HaShem is not a schizophrenic and deranged father. Instead, He is the Unchanging One, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He has not cancelled the words of His Torah. Even today, He long for His people ~ ALL of His people ~ to repent, turn away from sin (idolatry) and come back to the good and beautiful commandments of His Torah, just as His holy Son, Yeshua, has shown us.

Ki Tavo ~ כִּי תָבֹא ~ When you come
Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 60:1-22

As we have progressed through the (Hahf-tah-roat) Haftarot of comfort and consolation, the prophecies of the future grow more and more profound. Here again, *Yesha'yahu / Isaiah* tells *Yerushalayim/Jerusalem* the glory of HaShem is close at hand, and calls upon her to lift her eyes and gaze at her children returning to her, as well as the nations of the world streaming to pay tribute to her. Little by little, the nations of the world come to know in Zion there is G~d and in G~d there is truth and fulfillment.

The discomforts of the past will be transformed to the realized hopes of the future, like bronze turning into gold and iron into silver. May this promise come true soon for Jerusalem and for all *B'nei Yishra'el/Children of Israel*.

Ki Tavo ~ כִּי תָבֹא ~ When you come
B'rit Hadashah: Mattityahu/Matthew 13:1-23;
Luke 21:1-4; Acts 28:17-31; Romans 11:1-15

Mattityahu/Matthew 13:1-23 Verses 9 and 13 are a direct reference to verse 3(4) of D'varim/Deuteronomy 29. Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 6:9-10 would have been an excellent Haftarah for this Torah portion. Continuing with these verses, Yeshua explains (verse 19) the seed is The Word which is a Hebrew idiom for those words spoken to

Moshe/Moses, in other words (pun intended) Torah! Yeshua said there are three basic outcomes when one hears Torah.

1. This person hears but doesn't understand.
2. Represents the person whose heart is hard (stoney, **verse 20**) and The Word (Torah) doesn't take root.
3. This person hears, understands and receives much harvest.

Luke 21:1-4 This is a parable we are all familiar with concerning the widow bringing her offering to the Temple. Yeshua says her offering meant more because she gave out of her need not out of her abundance as most of those coming to the Temple. I believe these verses parallel the verses in **D'varim/Deuteronomy 26** which concerns bringing the tithe to the **Cohanim/Priests**.

Acts 28:17-31 In **verses 26 and 27** **Rav Sha'ul/Rabbi Paul** addresses the subject matter of **D'varim/Deuteronomy 29:3(4)** which is also covered in **verses 9 and 10 of Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 6**.

Romans 11:1-15 In **verse 8**, Rav Sha'ul is talking with the Messianic Community in Rome concerning those who "have been made stonelike" just as we learned in **verse 3(4) of D'varim/Deuteronomy 29** as well as **Yesha'yahu 6:9-10**.

The corresponding Psalm for this Torah Portion is: Psalm 51

Next Week's Lesson: Parashah #51

~ Nitzavim **נִצַּבִּים** (Standing (You are all standing ~

Torah: D'varim/Deuteronomy 29:9(10) ~ 30:20

Haftarah: Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 61:10 ~ 63:9

B'rit Hadashah: Romans 9:30 ~ 10:13; Ivrim/Hebrews 12:14-15

Who fills his mind with Torah clears it of fear and folly.

Rabbi Chanina Sgan HaKohanim

Shavuah tov (have a good week)!!!