

# Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

## SHABBAT SERVICE

Saturday, August 11th – 10:30 AM

Lolo Community "Synagogue"

Oneg Shabbat Levinsons' Home

Interactive Torah Study



Moses Speaks to his People

**R'eh** -- See....

Deuteronomy 11:26 - 16:17

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה:  
ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה

**R'eh** Anochi noten lif'neichem ha-yom b'rachah oo-k'lalah  
"See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse..."

אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אִתְּכֶם הַיּוֹם:

את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצוות יהוה אלהיכם  
אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום

**Et-hab'rachah asher tishme'oo el-mitsvot Adonai Eloheichem asher anochi m'tsaveh etchem hayom.**

The blessing if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today;

וְהַקְלָלָה אִם-לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ אֶל-מִצְוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

והקללה אם לא תשמעו אל מצוות יהוה אלהיכם

**V'hakelalah im-lo tishme'u el-mitsvot Adonai Eloheichem**

And the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God,

וּסְרַתֶּם מִן-הַדֶּרֶךְ אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוֶּה אִתְּכֶם הַיּוֹם

וסרתם מן הדרך אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום

**v'sartem min-haderech asher anochi m'tsaveh etchem hayom**

but turn aside from the way, which I am commanding you today

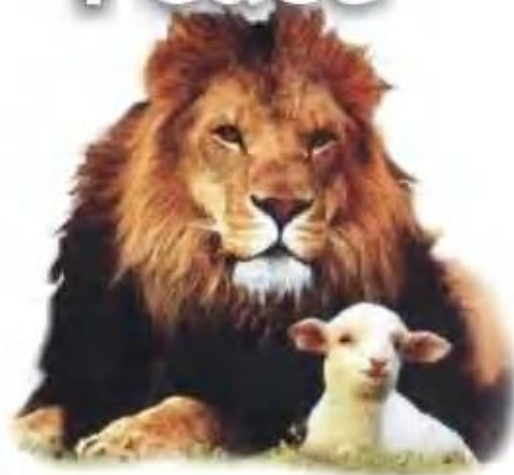
לִלְכֹת אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתֶּם:

ללכת אחרי אלהים אחרים אשר לא ידעתם

**lalechet acharey elohim acherim asher lo-y'datem.**

by following other gods, which you have not known.

The work  
of  
Righteousness  
shall be  
Peace



## Freedom of Choice

At the end of **Chapter 11**, Moses gave future instruction to the people for when they would enter into the land. He prepared for them an object lesson, leading them to a narrow valley between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. These two mountains rise dramatically from the relatively flat and narrow valley separating them. They represented to the people two very different paths. The path that leads to blessing from God, providing prosperity and fruitfulness in the land, and the path that leads to God's curse on His people, which would yield war, devastation, and sorrow in the land....and eventually expulsion from the land. Chapter 27 will give the specific details of how they will place the blessings on Mt. Gerizim and the curses on Mt. Ebal. Here, Moses tells the people that only by obedience to God's "**chukim**" and "**mishpatim**" (statutes and judgments), can they walk the path of God's blessing. In the rest of this week's Torah portion, we find instructions from Moses on several subjects: **Chapter 12**, how and where to worship (and what to avoid).

**Chapter 13**, the test of a true prophet versus a false prophet.

**Chapter 14**, remaining a holy and chosen people by what they were allowed to eat and drink, and by how they used their tithes for worship, food and to provide for the Levites, who did the work of God.

**Chapter 15**, how they should provide the financial needs of their kinsmen, and a reminder to give the first-born of their animals to the Lord.

**Chapter 16**, instructions for the observance of the three pilgrimage festivals.

In Deuteronomy 30:19, Moses again mentioned these two paths. He said, "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land, which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."



## God's Requirements for Worship

**Chapter 12**: When God's people entered the land of Canaan, they would come upon places of worship of various Canaanite gods. They were to totally destroy all of these places of worship wherever they found them, including any man-made gods or figures of worship. They were told to break up or burn their **matsevotam va'ashereyhem** sacred pillars and wooden carved images of their gods. Sacred pillars were large rocks that were placed on end usually in a "high place," a place that overlooked a plain or valley. **Asherim** were wooden poles or trees carved into images of Canaanite deities. They were usually found among groves of trees. Today we might call these places "retreats," where one goes to worship. Some cultures make totem poles with various images carved into them. There are also still today cults of the goddess Ashera.

Moses instructed the people to burn the wooden asherim and to smash the upright rocks, so that no trace of them should be left. God's people were only to worship Him and only "...at the place which the Lord your God shall choose...to establish His name..." (vs.5). History tells us that these places were at Shiloh, Nob, Gibeon, and finally at Jerusalem. Their gatherings for worship should be orderly with each household bringing their sacrifice to eat and to rejoice together before the Lord. The people would come together with unity of purpose and worship. Their focus should be on their corporate worship of God and rejoicing in unity before Him. A good example of corporate worship was their coming together for worship at the three pilgrimage festivals mentioned in this Torah portion in Chapter 16. Today, worship among the body of believers in Messiah seems more fractional than corporate, where every denomination does ..."what is right in his (their) own eyes." At least those denominations who believe in the inerrancy of scripture are playing by the same

"rulebook." Worship among various sects of Judaism is also fractional. Some major sects of Judaism do not believe that all of the Jewish scripture is God's word or that it should be obeyed in today's world. Other sects believe that the Jewish scripture is God's word but must be obeyed according to Rabbinic interpretation, which can be quite legalistic, as will be illustrated in Chapter 14 in the discussion on the Kosher Laws. Most Messianic Jews believe that the principles given by God to His people should still be our rulebook for life, guided by the **Ruach Hakodesh** (Holy Spirit). Orthodox Rabbi, Berel Wein, states, "The Torah implies here that life can indeed be a matter of **simple correct choices** that in reality are not difficult to make. The Torah is therefore completely correct in using the verb **re'eih** in dealing with the pivotal decisions of life that Jews and Jewish society are always faced with. Good vision and knowledge of the past will always help us find the right path for us and for all of Israel.... See how unforgiving history is of wrong decisions and of the pursuit of vanity, the lure of passing political correctness and of the faddish culture of the time. See and understand the fate of those Jews who no longer considered themselves Jewish but were destined to nevertheless be Jewish by the definition of a hateful anti-Semitic society.... In the eyes of history and of non-Jewish society there are no liberal or conservative, wealthy or poor, observant or less observant Jews. There are only Jews." All Jews must look to the Torah as providing Godly principles which if followed will yield God's blessings.

A transition to **Chapter 13** is found in 12:32, where Moses stated, "Whatever, I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it." In Chapter 13, Moses mentioned the false prophet or dreamer of dreams. Any so-called "prophet," who has led people away from God's commandments (found in the Bible), "has counseled rebellion against the Lord..." (vs.5). We are admonished not to listen to his words but to 1) follow the Lord, 2) fear Him, 3) keep His commandments, 4) listen to His voice, 5) serve Him, and 6) cling to Him. Several weeks ago, we had a discussion about the merits of listening to the audible voice of God versus obeying the written "voice" of God in scripture. Some felt that when God speaks to them, the congregation should implement what God said to them. Others felt that God speaks to everyone through His word. Hopefully all agree that no "audible voice of God" would contradict scripture. Moses concluded this chapter with the further admonition to remove any sin from our lives that would cause us to "...go and serve other gods..." (vs.13). Being ruthless with sin, especially the sin of idolatry that Moses calls "an abomination," puts us in the correct position before God of wanting to listen to His voice (alone) and keep all of His commandments.



### **You Are What You Eat**

If we are truly to be God's holy people, then our actions and motivations should be different from those of the unbelieving community. In the time of Moses, one way God's people were distinct from other pagan nations was by the foods they ate and did not eat. In **Chapter 14**, Moses instructed the people in what have come to be called the Kosher Laws. Animals that had a split hoof and also chew

their cud were permissible to be eaten. Fish with both fins and scales were permissible. Certain "clean" birds like doves, chickens, pigeons, and quail could be eaten. Chapter 11 of Leviticus expanded on other permitted foods, such as crickets, locusts, and grasshoppers. This Shabbat we will again discuss whether we should keep the Kosher Laws today. For our discussion, think about the following questions: 1) Are God's reasons for His people keeping the Kosher Laws are still valid today. 2) Are Kosher foods "health foods?" 3) Does keeping Kosher Laws show us to be God's distinctive people today? 4) Are Gentile believers in Messiah also required to keep Kosher laws? 5) Since they were commandments from God, are they not valid today? (Should all the commandments (mitsvot) of Mosaic Law that can be kept be practiced today...cities of refuge...laws regarding women as property...not neglecting the Levite in your town...bringing your sacrifice to the temple in Jerusalem...etc.?) However, if some mitsvot are excluded, who gets to choose which ones to exclude? 6) Are we asking for God's curse, if we do not follow all His commandments (11:28)? Stewart Dauermann says, "Keeping Kosher is all about worshipping God with your mouth, your knife and your fork. And it is about giving expression to your membership in the people of Israel, about heightening rather than weakening the testimony of a nation that Hashem is our God."

Think about **Mark 7:15, 18-20**: "There is nothing outside the man which going into him can defile him; but the things, which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.... whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it does not go into his heart but into his stomach and is eliminated. (Thus He declared all foods clean.) "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Do these scriptures from the **B'rit Chadashah** (New Testament) argue that we should forgo the **mitsvot** (commandments) of the **Tanakh** (Old Testament)? One of the reasons Messianic congregations exist is to show our distinctiveness as Jewish and Gentile believers in Messiah, worshipping God together within a Jewish framework and community, fulfilling the commission of Paul in **Romans 1:16** to take the gospel to "...everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Do we as Messianic Jews lose our distinctiveness before the Jewish community, if we do not keep the Kosher Laws?



### **Debt Free Living -- No Poor Among God's People**

In our materialistic world, **Chapter 15** must surely seem strange. It is God's wish that there be no poor among His people because His people will share their resources with their brothers. Failing to do so ... "will be sin in you" (vs.9). In the days of Moses, a poor person could sell himself into the service of a brother Israelite. Being in the service of a brother was not like the 18th century Southern concept of slavery. The person was not owned, only in service for a short period of time. Then his debts were canceled, and he was set free with the financial capability of sustaining himself (vs.12-14). He would serve for six years and be set free during the seventh year, unless he chose to remain "forever" (vs.17 and Exodus 21:6). What does the word "forever" actually mean? Will he be a servant for all eternity? How did this concept apply to Paul in Romans 1:1 ["**Sha'ul** (Paul), a slave of the Messiah, Yeshua, an emissary because I was called and set apart for the Good News of God."]

and how does it apply to us today? Paul, writing about the generosity of fellow believers in Messiah in **Philippians 4:10-19**, stated that he had learned contentment in whatever his circumstances. He found contentment knowing that he ... "can do all things through Him who strengthens me." During his travels he received gifts from fellow believers that "abundantly" sustained him. Summing up Chapter 15, If God's people follow His rules to be generous with their brothers, God's physical blessings to us will supply all our needs, and His spiritual blessings will more than make up for our physical losses.



### **Pilgrimage Festival To The "Wailing Wall"**

The first 17 verses of **Chapter 16** tell us to observe three "Pilgrimage Festivals:" Passover (Unleavened Bread), Weeks (Shavuot, First-fruits, Pentecost), and Booths (Sukkot, Tabernacles). Passover (vs.1-8), commemorates God's deliverance of His people from the slavery of Egypt into the freedom of the "promised land." Then 50 days (seven weeks) later comes the Feast of Weeks, when the gathering of the first fruits of the harvest took place. The people were to offer back to God some of the first-fruits of their harvest, as God had blessed them in the land. The Feast of Booths commemorates God's love, protection, and provision for His people (while they were yet sinners - Rom.5:8) in their wilderness wanderings on the way to the "promised land." These three festivals have several things in common. They commemorate God's presence and ability to preserve His people. They offer a mechanism for God's people to give back to Him a memorial offering in gratitude for His blessing on them. They were to be held at ..." the place where God chooses to establish His name." So three times a year all the men were required to make a pilgrimage to the temple to present their offering....hence the name "Pilgrimage Festivals." Just as we observed in Chapter 12, God wanted His people to enter into the joy of corporate worship at particular times. Today God's people can worship Him while driving in their cars or at a picnic, observing the awesomeness of His creation. However, there is no substitution for corporate worship. We are told not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together in Hebrews 10:25. In Romans, Chapter 12, we find that Paul tells his "brethren" to gather together ... "to present your bodies (the totality of one's life) a living and holy (set apart) sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." The joy, encouragement, and camaraderie of corporate worship is an essential part of every believer's spiritual life. I hope to see you **all** this Shabbat, as we corporately experience God's physical and spiritual rest in Messiah.

# SHABBAT SHALOM

