

Opening Scripture Reading/Prayer:

Exodus 31:12-17

The Sabbath

¹² And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³ “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. . . .’ ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.”

Isaiah 58:13-14

¹³ “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; ¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 66:22-23

²² “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.

Jesus Lord of the Sabbath

“For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.” Matthew 12:8

Opening Discussion:

Driven by Eternity

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

²⁴ Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵ Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Every one of us is going to Stand before Jesus Christ as our Judge.

1 Corinthians 5:8-10

⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Every one of us will Stand before Jesus and Give an Account of how we lived this life as believers. The Bible is very clear that He will not only Judge/Examine our works as believers, but He will Judge/Examine our Words, our Thoughts, our motives and our intentions.

Two Areas where we are going to be Judged/Examined in our lives:

- 1. Our involvement in building the kingdom of God.**
- 2. How we built individual lives, our influence on them.**

The Word of God refers to us as Builders:

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” Psalm 127:1

God gives us choices on how to Build . . .

1 Corinthians 3:1-15

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, ³ for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human?

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but **God gave the growth.** ⁷ So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. ⁹ **For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.**

¹⁰ **According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.**

¹¹ **For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—¹³ **each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.** ¹⁴ **If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.** ¹⁵ **If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.**

Illustration: Imagine on your day of retirement, everything you had saved up for to retire was completely lost and/or burned up, and all you had was the shirt on your back, "saved by grace", after over 40 years of working towards this goal of retirement. How would that make you feel? Yet spiritually speaking we as Believers in our Lord and Savior are preparing for the same outcome, "saved by grace", but positioned into Eternity with nothing more than our salvation through fire, nothing saved up for Eternity.

Matthew 6:19-21

Lay Up Treasures in Heaven

¹⁹ **Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

John 6:27-28

²⁷ **Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.** ²⁸ Then they said to him, *"What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"*

Matthew 5:19-21

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

¹⁷ **Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore **whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.** ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Daniel 7:10

A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; *the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.*

In God's **Final Judgment** of your life, the **Books** will be open, **about your life, and then He will compare them, what you did in your life, to what you were called to do in your life, before the foundations of the World, and REWARD/Judge/Make a Final Decision accordingly.**

Ecclesiastes 3:9-15

The God-Given Task

⁹ What gain has the worker from his toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, **he has put eternity into man's heart** (He wrote out our life/calling and put it in our heart), yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. ¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man.

¹⁴ I perceived that whatever God does endures forever; **nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it.** God has done it, so that people fear before him. ¹⁵ **That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already has been; and God requires an account of what is past.**

Or to be more clearly understood, Ecclesiastes 3:15 can be read, "That which is" has already been, recorded in the book before I was born, "that which is to be" has already been, already written in the book, God requires an account for what has passed, that which has already been written in the book.

Did you walk in what he wrote in that book or did you go your own way?

Revelation 22:10-21

¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. ¹¹ Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."

¹² "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

¹⁴ Blessed are those who wash their robes,^[s] so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.^[d] Amen.

Prayer:

That calling was placed upon me before I was formed in my mother's womb, today I am taking it seriously, I want to fulfill all that you have written about me in the book, and therefore, am asking, Holy Spirit, to open my eyes, my ears, and my heart to preserve and to know and to understand my calling in *Jesus name*.

John Bevere: *Driven By Eternity* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9X62XcSEN8&feature=youtu.be>

**Week 34 - Bechukotai (In My Statutes – “engraved”)
Leviticus 26:3–27:34; Jeremiah 16:19–17:14; Luke 22:7–20**

"We can not live an abundant life if we are not willing to live an obedient life."

Leviticus 26:1-4

Blessings for Obedience

¹ **You shall not make idols for yourselves or erect an image or pillar, and you shall not set up a figured stone in your land to bow down to it, for I am the Lord your God.** ² **You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.** ³ **If you walk in my statutes (“engraved”) and observe my commandments and do them,** ⁴ **then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield its increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.**

Reward

"If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments and do them; I will give your rain in due season, the land shall yield its produce, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit."

Our Temporary Reward: "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap," **Galatians 6:7**

Our Eternal Reward: "Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." **Matthew 5:19**

In other words, punishment for wrongdoing is no more G-d's "revenge" than falling to the ground is Divine retribution for jumping out the window. Just as the Creator established certain laws of cause and effect that define the natural behavior of the physical universe, so, too, did He establish a spiritual-moral "nature," by which doing good results in a good and fulfilling life and doing evil results in negative and strife-filled experiences.

A third approach sees the suffering associated with sin as the by-product of G-d's rehabilitation of the iniquitous soul. The analogy is the removal of an infective splinter from a person's body: the pain that is experienced is not a "punishment" as such for the person's carelessness, but an inevitable part of the healing process itself. The fact that a foreign body has become imbedded in living flesh and has caused its decay makes its removal a painful experience. By the same token, when something alien to the soul's bond with G-d has become imbedded within it, the extraction of this alien body, and the healing of the bond, is experienced as painful to both body and soul.

Light and Vessels: Consider a parent who slaps the wrist of an eight-month-old child about to insert his finger in an electric socket. The slap is a form of communication. The parent wishes to convey to the child information essential to its very life, namely that the socket is charged with electricity of sufficient voltage to kill him should he succeed in inserting his finger. The problem is that this information or "light" infinitely transcends the intellectual capacities of the child. Eight-month-old children are incapable of relating to such advanced concepts as electricity, voltage, or death. In the case of an adult the conceptual "light"—i.e., the information that a potential deadly electric shock awaits anyone who sticks his finger in a socket—is grasped, internalized, and appreciated by the intellect. This assimilation of the light within the intellectual "vessels" of the mind elicits an appropriate emotional response, alarm, which in turn evokes a determination to act. The end result is that the finger is withdrawn from the source of danger, and it is to this end that the entire process was initiated. The mind of the child, however, can not absorb the "light", so that the communication necessary to remove him from harm must bypass his insufficient intellectual and emotional faculties and simply activate a withdrawal from the socket. Although, in this regard, the slap is most effective, the "skipped steps" result in an unbridgeable gap between the slap and the light that motivated it. Hence, despite the fact that the slap is literally a gift of life that originates in the highest level of parental love, the child experiences only the absence of light and interprets the slap as random, meaningless, suffering. These and similar analogies help us to appreciate that the mundane afflictions, which we necessarily experience as evil and harsh, are, in fact, rooted in the most sublime level of Divine wisdom and love. However, while this line of inquiry sheds some light on the origin of earthly anguish, it does not address the enormous disparity between the lofty G-dly source of suffering and the dreadful, appalling forms that it assumes in this world. In the analogy above, for example, it is the parent him/herself who administers the slap to the child. Despite the inexplicable suffering, the child knows intuitively that the slap, delivered by his loving parent, does not express alienation or hostility; indeed, the parent comforts the child and wipes away the tears. In our case, however, it is nigh on impossible to discern the hand of our loving Father in the strikes that we receive through the agency of such vile, satanic creatures as Stalin, Hitler, etc. The forces and circumstances that afflict us seem to have a life of their own.

Chessed and Gevurah The source of all mundane tribulations is the Divine attribute of Gevurah. Gevurah, translated as strength, justice, or severity, is one of the ten sefirot (attributes or faculties) through which the Almighty interacts with creation. As a particular expression of G-dliness, Gevurah represents perfect goodness just as do the other sefirot, such as Wisdom, Kindness, and Mercy. Contrary to our intuition, Gevurah is as much an expression of G-d's love as is Chessed (“kindness”). Indeed, it is Gevurah that complements and perfects Chessed. However, as manifestations of Gevurah extend downward through successively lower levels of creation, they assume the properties of the worlds through which they descend, and thus become progressively distorted and coarsened. Ultimately, the influence of the Divine attribute of Gevurah is invested within, and gives rise to the what the Kabbalists call *gevurot kashot*—“harsh severities”—a medium in which Divinity is concealed so deeply as to be completely unrecognizable. The cruel evils of this world, therefore, seem totally detached from any vestige of G-dly purpose, and they appear to exist, and to function independently . . . Similarly, the Divine attribute of Gevurah, which is a particular manifestation of G-d's love and concern, of necessity appears removed from the very afflictions that it engenders. Were the hand of G-d perceivable in each of our travails, the authenticity of the ordeal would dissipate and our free will would be compromised, thus precluding the fierce inner struggle required for our intended spiritual rectification and growth. In short, there could be no transforming spiritual crisis and subsequently, no redemptive possibilities within the experience. Thus, the earthly agents of suffering serve the crucial purpose of concealing the Divine compassion at the core of the tribulations. In reality, however, they are nothing more than instruments of Divine will, and they have no independent authority or autonomous existence. Body and Soul This is all very fine. There remains, however, one serious problem. In the analogies presented above, the subjects survive and benefit from their suffering. The child, saved from electrocution, can now safely grow up to lead a productive life. The erstwhile transgressor, relieved of the burden of sin, is transformed into an upstanding, valuable member of society. But what about those who do not survive the cure? How can Jews killed by Hitler, Arafat or the black plague possibly profit from the experience? The answer is quite simple: The premise on which the question is based is incorrect. No Jews died, nor ever will die. The G-dly soul, which is the reality of a Jew, is immortal. Only the soul's body, which is to say, the Jew's circumstances, are subject to change. The soul is capable of existing on a myriad of levels (this world, the Lower Garden of Eden, the Higher Garden of Eden, etc.). However, the soul itself, as an extension of pure G-dliness, is eternal and immutable. As far as the soul is concerned, the changing circumstances signify progressively loftier manifestations of its own essence. Furthermore, a Jew's departure from this world is only temporary. The culmination of the soul's quest for ultimate self-realization is *Techiat Hameitim*, the resurrection of the dead. Thus “death” is simply one of the many varieties of ephemeral mundane afflictions that a soul experiences in order to achieve elevation, perfection, and ultimate joy. This is already abundantly apparent to those Jews who are, at present, unencumbered by a body. Although those of us currently residing in the physical world may have to wrestle with the problem of mundane suffering, souls see that no evil descends from on high. May the time soon arrive when this great truth is self-evident.

<https://w2.chabad.org/media/pdf/17098.pdf>

Bechukotai: If you walk in My statutes (Leviticus 26:3)

The word *chok* (“statute” or “decree”), which gives the Parshah of *Bechukotai* its name, literally means “engraved”

When something is written, the substance of the letters that express it—the ink—remains a separate entity from the substance upon which they have been set—the parchment. On the other hand, letters engraved in stone are forged in it: the words are stone and the stone is words.

By the same token, there is an aspect of Torah that is “inked” on our soul: we understand it, our emotions are roused by it; it becomes our “lifestyle” or even our “personality”; but it remains something additional to ourselves. But there is a dimension of Torah that is *chok*, engraved in our being. There is a dimension of Torah which expresses a bond with G-d that is of the very essence of the Jewish soul.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

Since we know that the reward for the *commandments* (mitzvot), and the good which we shall merit if we keep the way of G-d written in the Torah, is solely in the life of the World To Come . . . Nevertheless, those good things are not the ultimate reward of the mitzvot, nor are those evils the ultimate punishment for transgressing them.

The explanation of the matter is thus: G-d gave us this Torah; it is a tree of life, and whoever observes all that is written in it and knows it with a complete knowledge merits thereby the life of the World To Come . . . Yet G-d also promised us in the Torah that if we observe it with joy . . . He will remove from us all things that may prevent us from fulfilling it, such as illness, war, hunger, and the like, and He will bestow upon us all blessings that bolster our hand to observe the Torah such as abundant food, peace, and much gold and silver, *in order that* we should not need to preoccupy ourselves all our days with our material needs but be free to learn the wisdom and observe the commandments by which we shall merit the life of the World To come...

(Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 9:1)

. . . concept of the “reward” for mitzvot in this world has a parallel in Torah law. The law states that farm workers must be allowed to eat of the food they are working with; even an animal may not be “muzzled as it threshes.” This is not payment for their work—their wages they receive later, after their work is done—but a special provision that says that they must be allowed to eat from the produce they are working with.

By the same token, we are employed by G-d to develop and elevate His world through the performing of *commandments* (mitzvot). **The actual reward for our work will come later, in the World To Come, after our task is completed; but G-d is also “obligated” to allow us to enjoy the material blessings of this world, which is the object of our toil.**

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Revelation 22:13-15

¹³ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

¹⁴ Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

¹⁵ For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

“We can not live an abundant life if we are not willing to live an obedient life.”

⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Matthew 6:33

³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Psalm 1

The Way of the Righteous and the Wicked

Blessed is the man

who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,

nor stands in the way of sinners,

nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

²but his delight is in the law of the Lord,

and on his law he meditates day and night.

³He is like a tree

planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,

and its leaf does not wither.

In all that he does, he prospers.

Leviticus 26:5-13

⁵Your threshing shall last to the time of the grape harvest, and the grape harvest shall last to the time for sowing. **And you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land securely.** ⁶I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid. And I will remove harmful beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land. ⁷You shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword. ⁸Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall chase ten thousand, and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. ⁹**I will turn to you and make you fruitful and multiply you and will confirm my covenant with you.** ¹⁰You shall eat old store long kept, and you shall clear out the old to make way for the new. **¹¹I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you.** **¹²And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.** ¹³I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their slaves. And I have broken the bars of your yoke and made you walk **erect** (or upright).

upright: I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you walk upright (26:13)

An animal walks with its face to the earth, for earthiness and materiality is all that it knows. Man walks upright, for man was born to gaze upon and aspire to the Heavens.

(Rabbi DovBer of Mezerich)

Leviticus 26:14-28

Punishment for Disobedience

¹⁴“**But if you will not listen to me and will not do all these commandments,** ¹⁵if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my rules, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, ¹⁶then I will do this to you: I will visit you with panic, with wasting disease and fever that consume the eyes and make the heart ache. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. ¹⁷**I will set my face against you,** and you shall be struck down before your enemies. Those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you. ¹⁸And if in spite of this you will not listen to me, then I will discipline you again sevenfold for your sins, ¹⁹and I will break the pride of your power, and I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰And your strength shall be spent in vain, for your land shall not yield its increase, and the trees of the land shall not yield their fruit.

²¹“**Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins.** ²²And I will let loose the wild beasts against you, which shall bereave you of your children and destroy your livestock and make you few in number, so that your roads shall be deserted.

²³“**And if by this discipline you are not turned to me but walk contrary to me,** ²⁴**then I also will walk contrary to you,** and I myself will strike you sevenfold for your sins. ²⁵And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall execute vengeance for the covenant. And if you gather within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. ²⁶When I break your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in a single oven and shall dole out your bread again by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

²⁷“**But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me,** ²⁸**then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins.**

My face: If you will not hearken to Me, and walk casually with Me; I, too, will act casually with you... (26:28)

All sins derive from the sin of insignificance: when a person ceases to be sensitive to the paramount importance which G-d attaches to his life and deeds. "I don't really matter" is not humility--it is the ultimate arrogance. It really means: "I can do what I want."

The most terrible of punishments is for G-d to indulge the sinner this vanity. For G-d to say: "All right, have it your way; what happens to you is of no significance"; for G-d to act toward him as if He really does not care what happens to him.

(The Chassidic Masters)

Leviticus 26:29-46

²⁹ You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰ And I will destroy your high places and cut down your incense altars and cast your dead bodies upon the dead bodies of your idols, and my soul will abhor you. ³¹ And I will lay your cities waste and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your pleasing aromas. ³² And I myself will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it shall be appalled at it. ³³ And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.

³⁴ “Then the land shall enjoy^[c] its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. ³⁵ As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. ³⁶ And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies. The sound of a driven leaf shall put them to flight, and they shall flee as one flees from the sword, and they shall fall when none pursues. ³⁷ They shall stumble over one another, as if to escape a sword, though none pursues. And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. ³⁸ And you shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. ³⁹ And those of you who are left shall rot away in your enemies' lands because of their iniquity, and also because of the iniquities of their fathers they shall rot away like them.

⁴⁰ “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me,⁴¹ so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, ⁴² then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ But the land shall be abandoned by them and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them, and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my rules and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and **break my covenant** with them, for I am the Lord their God. ⁴⁵ But I will for their sake **remember the covenant** with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord.”

⁴⁶ These are the statutes and rules and laws that the Lord made between himself and the people of Israel through Moses on Mount Sinai.

covenant: Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away (26:44)

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said: Come and see how beloved are Israel in the sight of G-d, in that to every place to which they were exiled the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) went with them. They were exiled to Egypt and the *Shechinah* was with them, as it says, "Did I reveal myself unto the house of your father when they were in Egypt" (1 Samuel 2:27). They were exiled to Babylon, and the *Shechinah* was with them, as it says, "For your sake I was sent to Babylon" (Isaiah 43:14). And when they will be redeemed in the future, the *Shechinah* will be with them, as it says, "Then the L-rd your G-d will return with your captivity" (Deuteronomy 30:3)

(Talmud, Megillah 29a)

Transition:

The World is being Called to a Higher Standard of Service, realizing the doing things the same way is not going to keep the doors open (i.e. CEO of AirBNB – May 2021), but somehow the Church does not believe, Spiritually, that too is what God is Calling them to, a Higher Standard of Service, realizing that without it the world will not see God (Heb 12:14). That in fact, they are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev 3:17); not relevant anymore (Rev 3:15-16); but being called to Zealously Repent, returning back to God and start doing it His way, and no longer are way anymore.

Will the Church answer the Higher Standard of Service that the World is being Called to, Spiritually, or fail like all those secular businesses who choose not to answer the Call, and choose to go back to the same old way of doing it before this Pandemic.

1 Peter 2:9

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Transition: We are Lamp Lighters! God has called us to be in proximity of others to ignite the oil that God has already prepared in them to Light their lives on fire for His purposes.

Shavuot 2022 (2-weeks out):

the Giving of the Law, fulfilled in the Giving of the Holy Spirit – The Forerunner of all Prophecy (the Spirit of Elijah, John the Baptist, and the Second Coming)

will begin in the evening of

Saturday, June 4th

and ends in the evening of

Monday, June 6th

Transition: We are Lamp Lighters! Picture – Jesus turning Water into Wine, set apart for a Transformed life (John 2:1-12). The purpose of God bringing the Israelites into the Wilderness was to give His Law and speak to His people, not just to Deliver them.

Ezekiel 22:26

²⁶ Her **priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things. They have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.**

1 Timothy 4:1-10

Some Will Depart from the Faith

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that **in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,** ² **through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared,** ³ who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, ⁵ **for it is made holy by the word of God** and prayer.

A Good Servant of Christ Jesus

⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed; ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ **for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come** ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ **For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God,** who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

2 Thessalonians 2

The Man of Lawlessness

¹ Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ **Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless (the False Doctrine of Eminency) the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.**

Leviticus 27 (Jesus’ Teaching on Vows, Promises)

Laws About Vows

Vow: 1 of personal service to יי **Genesis 28:20; Genesis 31:13 (of Jacob at Bethel), 2 Samuel 15:7,8; (at Hebron); Leviticus 27:2 (P, any one), of Nazirite Numbers 6:2,5,21; Hannah’s consecration of her son 1 Samuel 1:11, compare בַּר נָדָר Proverbs 31:2.**

<https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5088.htm>

Genesis 28:20 – of Jacob at Bethel

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear,

Genesis 31:13 – of Jacob at Bethel

¹³ I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now arise, go out from this land and return to the land of your kindred.”

Leviticus 27:2 – of Vows

² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, If anyone makes a special vow to the LORD involving the valuation of persons,

Numbers 6:2, 5, 21 – the Nazirite Vow

² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When either a man or a woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD,

⁵ “All the days of his vow of separation, no razor shall touch his head. Until the time is completed for which he separates himself to the LORD, he shall be holy. He shall let the locks of hair of his head grow long.

²¹ “This is the law of the Nazirite. But if he vows an offering to the LORD above his Nazirite vow, as he can afford, in exact accordance with the vow that he takes, then he shall do in addition to the law of the Nazirite.”

1 Samuel 1:11 – of Hanahan of her son Samuel

¹¹ And she vowed a vow and said, “O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall touch his head.”

Proverbs 31:2

² What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb? What are you doing, son of my vows?

¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, If anyone makes a special **vow** to the Lord involving the **valuation** of persons,

Valuation:

Why was the redemption price for men and women different in Leviticus 27:3-8

In Leviticus 27, God gave instructions regarding vows made on behalf of various people in dedication to the Lord. When a vow was made, a “redemption price” was paid—and the amount of the offering varied based on the age and gender of the person being dedicated. The redemption price for men and women was different, as shown in the following list:

- Males 60 and over: 15 shekels
- Females 60 and over: 10 shekels
- Males ages 20–60: 50 shekels
- Females ages 20–60: 30 shekels
- Males ages 5–20: 20 shekels

Females ages 5–20: 10 shekels

Males ages 0–5: 5 shekels

Females ages 0–5: 3 shekels

A **shekel** is believed to be the value of a worker for an entire month, so even one shekel was a large amount for the average person. For those too poor to pay the set redemption price, the priest would determine an appropriate amount (**Leviticus 27:8**).

Males were more expensive to dedicate than females, and males 20–60 years of age required the highest redemption price. The difference in redemption price appears to be based on a person’s ability to work in an agricultural society and on how many years that person could work. A man aged 20–60 was seen as a worker who could perform the best labor, therefore resulting in the highest redemption price. Those over 60 and under 20 could do some work, but not as much, traditionally. Those 5 years old and under required the lowest price, as they would have been unable to work much or at all.

It is important to note that the Bible begins with the creation of male and female in the image of God. **Genesis 1:27** states, “God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” The law of **Leviticus 27** recognized that the burden of manual labor fell primarily on the male—and only during the years of his strength. The redemption price had nothing to do with the inherent worth of men and women; it had everything to do with the practicality of production in an agrarian society.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/redemption-price.html>

Leviticus 27:3-25

Laws About Vows

³ then the valuation of a male from twenty years old up to sixty years old shall be fifty shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary. ⁴ If the person is a female, the valuation shall be thirty shekels. ⁵ If the person is from five years old up to twenty years old, the valuation shall be for a male twenty shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁶ If the person is from a month old up to five years old, the valuation shall be for a male five shekels of silver, and for a female the valuation shall be three shekels of silver. ⁷ And if the person is sixty years old or over, then the valuation for a male shall be fifteen shekels, and for a female ten shekels. ⁸ And if someone is too poor to pay the valuation, then he shall be made to stand before the priest, and the priest shall value him; the priest shall value him according to what the vower can afford.

⁹ “If the vow is an animal that may be offered as an offering to the Lord, all of it that he gives to the Lord is holy. ¹⁰ He shall not exchange it or make a substitute for it, good for bad, or bad for good; and if he does in fact substitute one animal for another, then both it and the substitute shall be holy. ¹¹ And if it is any unclean animal that may not be offered as an offering to the Lord, then he shall stand the animal before the priest, ¹² and the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall be. ¹³ But if he wishes to redeem it, he shall add a fifth to the valuation.

¹⁴ “When a man dedicates his house as a holy gift to the Lord, the priest shall value it as either good or bad; as the priest values it, so it shall stand. ¹⁵ And if the donor wishes to redeem his house, he shall add a fifth to the valuation price, and it shall be his.

¹⁶ “If a man dedicates to the Lord part of the land that is his possession, then the valuation shall be in proportion to its seed. A homer^[e] of barley seed shall be valued at fifty shekels of silver. ¹⁷ If he dedicates his field from the **year of jubilee**, the valuation shall stand, ¹⁸ but if he dedicates his field after the **jubilee**, then the priest shall calculate the price according to the years that remain until the year of jubilee, and a deduction shall be made from the valuation. ¹⁹ And if he who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, then he shall add a fifth to its valuation price, and it shall remain his. ²⁰ But if he does not wish to redeem the field, or if he has sold the field to another man, it shall not be redeemed anymore. ²¹ But the field, when it is released in the **jubilee**, shall be a holy gift to the Lord, like a field that has been devoted. The priest shall be in possession of it. ²² If he dedicates to the Lord a field that he has bought, which is not a part of his possession, ²³ then the priest shall calculate the amount of the valuation for it up to the year of **jubilee**, and the man shall give the valuation on that day as a holy gift to the Lord. ²⁴ In the year of **jubilee** the field shall return to him from whom it was bought, to whom the land belongs as a possession. ²⁵ Every valuation shall be according to the shekel of the sanctuary: twenty gerahs shall make a shekel.

Jubilee: Just like in the **Year of Jubilee**, when debts were forgiven and the Hebrew slaves set free, the day is soon coming when all of Israel will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah who forgives us and releases (**shemitah**) us from slavery to sin.

The Year of Jubilee: the Redemption of the Land

“Count off seven Sabbath years — seven times seven years — so that the seven Sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years . . . Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” **Leviticus 25:8, 10**

The seven-year **Shemitah** cycle accumulated in sets of seven (49 years) and culminated in **The Year of Jubilee** (Yovel).

Every 50th year, both the **land** and the **people rested**.

This is a very special appointed time of freedom and liberty that is sanctified, set apart, or holy (**kadosh**) to the Lord.

It was proclaimed throughout the land with the blowing of the shofar on the Day of Atonement

With the blast of the shofar, Hebrew slaves were freed and debts were forgiven.

And while the land was left uncultivated, as in the **Shemithah** year, in **The Year of Jubilee** (Yovel), inherited **property was returned to its original family, even if it had been sold because of misfortune, poverty, or to pay off a debt.**

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The next Shmita falls in the Jewish year 5782, which begins on Sept. 7, 2021. Just as the **Torah calls for Jews to work six days and rest on the seventh, it calls for them to work the land six days and let it rest in the seventh.** After 49 years, seven cycles of seven, the 50th is Yovel – the Jubilee year. However, the Jubilee year has not been marked for centuries.

- * **Timeline of Jesus' Ordination (Baptism, (late-August); Temptation, 40 Days prior to the Feast of Atonement (late-September/early-October); Commissioning, in the Temple and Reading of Isaiah 61:1-2: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Jesus, our High Priest, Declares here the "Year of Jubilee" – the Biblical Cancellation of All Debts), and the day of vengeance of our God."** Isaiah 61:1-2; Second Coming of Jesus, will fall during the same Feast, "Atonement" (late-September/early-October), where he will complete the reading of Isaiah 61:2, which he did not complete Reading in his First Coming, but will Declare in his Second Coming: **"to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Jesus, our High Priest, Declares here, again, the "Year of Jubilee" – the Biblical Cancellation of All Debts), and the day of vengeance of our God (Jesus here Declares God's Wrath to be Poured Out on all the Nations that "do not Repent")."**

Closing The Gate (ceremony of the Feast of Atonement)

Just prior to nightfall a hushed congregation prepares to observe the last service of Yom Kippur called **Ne'ilah**, which means, **"closing the gate"** (A person could not have atonement and forgiveness without entering the temple courts before the gate was closed.). The cantor calls, *"Hear, O Israel, the Lord (Yahuwah/Jehovah) is our God, the Lord (Yahuwah/Jehovah) is one."* Immediately following this comes the threefold repetition of the words, *"Blessed be the name (Yahushua/Joshua/Jesus) of Him whose glorious kingdom endures forever."* The attendant worshipers anciently uttered these words when the high priest pronounced the name of God (Yahuwah) in the Temple. Then, beginning in a whisper and progressively increasing in volume of his voice, the cantor **declares seven times, "The Lord (Yahuwah) is God."** When the last notes of the chant have died away, a long blast, **Tekiah Gedola (The Last Trump)** is sounded on the shofar and the Day of Atonement comes to an end. **This last trump proclaims the year of Jubilee** every fiftieth year.

- * **Year of Jubilee:** Now, using Ezra's decree as the starting point (457 B.C.), if we count forward 483 years we will arrive at **27 A.D.** (There is only one year between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D.) According to the translator of Josephus, the Jewish new year that began in the fall of 27 A.D. **marked the beginning of the last Jubilee Year that the Jews enjoyed in the land** before their worldwide dispersal by the Romans in 70 A.D. This is most likely the year that **Jesus began His public ministry.** This is hinted at in **Luke 4** where it says that when Jesus launched His ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth, He did so by reading a passage from Isaiah 61 about the way in which **the Messiah would fulfill the spiritual essence of the Jubilee.** After finishing the reading, Jesus proclaimed, **"Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"** Luke 4:21.

(<https://christinprophecy.org/articles/daniels-70-weeks-of-years/>)

Putting the next Jubilee Year around 2027 to 2030, starting around 2021-2022 or 2022-2023, of the last seven years prior to the fulfillment of the Last Jubilee of the Messiah's Return.

The Sabbath Year – the prophetic Millennial Reign of Christ (and one of the Reasons we Keep (without delay) the Appointed Time of the Weekly Sabbath, the 7th Day, the prophesied 7th and final 1,000 year before the fulfillment of all prophecy, "The New Heaven and New Earth" just following the "Final Judgement" – The Feast of Tabernacles (only observed and fulfilled in the Land itself – The Promise Land) Leviticus 25:1-26:2

Leviticus 27:26-34

²⁶ "But a firstborn of animals, which as a firstborn belongs to the Lord, no man may dedicate; whether ox or sheep, it is the Lord's. ²⁷ And if it is an unclean animal, then he shall buy it back at the valuation, and add a fifth to it; or, if it is not redeemed, it shall be sold at the valuation.

²⁸ "But no devoted thing that a man devotes to the Lord, of anything that he has, whether man or beast, or of his inherited field, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted thing is most holy to the Lord. ²⁹ No one devoted, who is to be devoted for destruction^[a] from mankind, shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death.

³⁰ "Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. ³¹ If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it. ³² And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord. ³³ One shall not differentiate between good or bad, neither shall he make a substitute for it; and if he does substitute for it, then both it and the substitute shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed."

³⁴ These are the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai.

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished."

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:17-20

Do not think that I came to abolish **the Law or the Prophets**; I **did not come** to abolish (do away with completely), but to **fulfill** (walk it out as it is intended to be walked out). For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then **annuls** (relaxes) one of the least of these **commandments**, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **keeps** (putting into practice without delay) and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Introduction:

Jesus smoothly transitions topics from adultery to vows. He links the two subjects by dealing with unfaithfulness (breaking oneness) both in marriage and in keeping one's vows. To better grasp what Jesus is talking about in this lesson, a Biblical understanding of some inter-related terms would be helpful.

Definitions

1. To **swear** means to give one's word or testimony that something is true or the truth.
2. To **vow** means to **swear** to do or give something.
3. To **promise** is to **vow**.
4. A **pledge** is something **tangible** that is required by the person to whom the promise or vow is made. The pledge acts as surety or assurance that the vow will be fulfilled. **Collateral** on a loan conveys this concept.
5. An **oath** is the same as a vow or promise with something of value given with it. The Hebrew word for oath is also the same word for the number **seven**. Seven is considered God's number and connects Him with the concept of oath. It means something that has been multiplied by seven or made full and complete. It has the **idea** that it was not spoken in haste or carelessly but repeated **seven** times.
6. A **curse** or **curses** are added to swearing, promises, vows, oaths and covenants to strengthen the agreement. To curse is asking God to bring evil in some form on the individual who makes the promise if it is **not** fulfilled. The words "God damn" are an example of this. The individual to whom the promise is given may require a curse or the one who gives the promise offers it.
7. A **covenant** is a formal agreement between two or more people and may involve **all** of the above.

To see the actions associated with these words we'll turn to a story in Genesis 21:22-33. *"Now it came about at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, 'God is with you in all that you do; now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity; but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me, and to the land in which you have sojourned.'* And Abraham said, *'I swear it.'*

But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water, which the servants of Abimelech had seized. And Abimelech said, 'I do not know who has done this thing; neither did you tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.' And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them made a **covenant**. Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said to Abraham, *'What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?'* And he said, **'You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand in order that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.'** Therefore he called that place Beersheba (which means well of the oath or the well of seven); because there the two of them took an **oath**. So they made a **covenant** at Beersheba; and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines. And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Reading the Scripture:

**Keeping Promises
The Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 5:33-37**

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD.' But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; and anything beyond these is of evil.

The Commands:

- ❖ Make no oath at all.
- ❖ Let your statement be, Yes, yes or No, no.

The Lesson:

Swearing oaths, taking vows and making promises are sacred and not to be taken lightly. God is the witness to all that men say and by their words they will be judged. Jesus attests to this fact when He speaks with the Pharisees. In Matthew 12:36-37 He declares, *"And I say to you, that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned."*

Jesus tells the disciples that they should not swear oaths, vows or promises. All of these deal with giving or doing something at some future date. Oaths, vows and promises are presumptuous and based in pride. No one knows whether he will live long enough or have the resources to fulfill what he promises, except God alone. This point is best illustrated by wedding vows, most of which end with the words, "until death do us part."

Jesus tells the disciples that they should not swear an oath by heaven, the earth or Jerusalem because these things belong to God, not to the person who is offering them as a pledge. No one has the right to offer another person's property as a pledge. A person who swears an oath by God seeks to indebted Him. The one who swears in this manner is in effect saying that he has power over God and can demand that God accomplish his own personal will. Should the person making the oath fail to keep it, how will the other collect from God? Swearing in this manner only discredits a disciple's relationship to God and ruins his testimony of Jesus Christ if he fails to keep his oath.

In the next statement Jesus uses the term "your head" to indicate an oath in the individual's own name. The person who swears this type of oath offers himself as the pledge. He is declaring that he is God or at least equal in power and authority to Him. An example of this is given in Hebrews 6:13. *"For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself."*

Should the one who swears in this fashion not keep his oath he will be indebted to the other, thus having to render service to him and not God. Swearing by one's self hides the truth, that men are not God, when in reality they are weak and in need of His help. If a disciple swears in this manner and does not keep his oath his testimony of Jesus Christ and His ability to save people will also be shrouded in doubt.

Week 34 - Bechukotai (In My Statutes)

Leviticus 26:3–27:34; Jeremiah 16:19–17:14; Luke 22:7–20

*“We can not live an **abundant life** if we are not willing to live an **obedient life**.”*

By saying, “let your yes be yes and your no be no”, Jesus is declaring that He expects His disciples to keep their word! To do what they said they would do. If the disciples don’t keep their word they will be known as liars and cannot be counted on to speak the truth or be trusted. How then will people believe, the message of the gospel that they preach? There is an old saying that goes like this: “A man is only as good as his word.” God is good. He always does what He says he is going to do.

The Point of the Lesson:

Don’t put yourself in a position to lie.

Next Week:

Week 33 - BAMIDBAR (In the Wilderness – “Where God Speaks”)
Numbers 1:1–4:20; Hosea 1:10– 2:20 [2:1–2:22]; Romans 15:1–7