

Last Week We Talked About:

Week 38 - PINCHAS (Phinehas / Dark Skinned)
Numbers 25:10–29:40 (30:1); Jeremiah 1:1–2:3; 1 Peter 3:8–4:19

“And Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,” Numbers 22:2

(This was the failing of the "generation of the desert": while they achieved an "Exodus from Egypt" - a liberation from the bounds that constrict the soul—they were unwilling to assume the challenge of "conquering the land" - transforming the material world into a home for G-d.)

Are We Conquering the Land?

Acts 17:6

“These men who have turned the world upside down.”

"Conquest of the land" - impose on it a higher purpose and function.

1. those who revel in challenge, and those who are all but devoid of the warrior
2. Are the latter exempt from the mission to "conquer the land"? And if they are not, how are they to achieve it?

“When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations.” Deuteronomy 18:9

This Week:

Week 39 - MATOT-MASEI (Tribes-Journeys)
Numbers 30:2–36:13; Jeremiah 2:4–28, 3:4, 4:1–2; Matthew 23:1–25:46

"Moses said to the heads of the tribes [matot] of Israel: 'This is what the Lord commands: When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.'" Numbers 30:1–2

Last week, in Reading Pinchas, God rewarded Aaron's grandson, Pinchas (Phinehas), a pact of peace and everlasting priesthood in response to his zeal for the Lord.

In this week's double Torah Reading of Matot-Masei, we begin with the laws regarding vows and oaths, emphasizing our responsibility to be a people who keep our word and do what we have promised. It is at this time that the Israelites are coming to an end of their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

The Lord goes on to command Moses to take vengeance on the Midianites in retaliation for their seducing the Israelites at Baal-peor. Both Balak, the King of Moab, and Balaam, who had advised that Israel would be cursed if they were drawn into sin, are killed in this battle.

After the battle, a massive quantity of booty is distributed to the soldiers, and a share is designated for the sanctuary.

Both Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses, have died in the desert; and Moses, in preparing for the end of his life in the desert as well, has passed on the mantle of leadership to his successor – Joshua.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law!

"I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:15) . . . (What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law):

²⁹ Then the king (Josiah) sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ And the king went up to the house of the Lord, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, *all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord.* ³¹ And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. ³² *Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it.* And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Thought Provoking Word this Week:

The Word vs. Torah Law

The Word: 3056. logos

Definition: a word (as EMBODYING an idea), a statement, a speech.

Torah law (G-d's teaching and instruction) – is more than a divinely ordained behavior pattern for life on earth: it also describes G-d's own "behavior pattern", the manner in which He chooses to relate to His creation. When we order our lives after Torah's directives, we are not only fulfilling G-d's will – we are also emulating His "behavior", translating the divine relationship with creation into human/physical terms. In the words of the Midrash, "G-d's manner is not like the manner of flesh and blood. The manner of flesh and blood is that he instructs others to do, but does not do himself; G-d, however, what he Himself does, that is what He tells his people to do and observe." (ex. 1 John 1:3-6, "And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.")

**Is the Law of God Illegal?
THE LAW OF LIBERTY**

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty"
James 2:12

This passage is occasionally offered as "proof text" for asserting that we were liberated from the law of God. This scripture speaks entirely of our liberation from sin by the mercies of God. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has indeed made us free from the law of sin and death, but not free from the laws of God (Ro 8:2). A misconception of this reference to the "Law of Liberty" has too often resulted in a concept of a lawless liberty, i.e., turning liberty into license. Liberty is the cornerstone of our democracy in the United States, but it is our legal system that guarantees the preservation of that liberty. The law of God remains valid. When we take occasion to transgress it, the debt is paid through repentance and faith in Christ's sacrifice. While disobedience to the law of God does not disqualify us from being children of God, unrepentance will exact a price.

The inclination to develop a theology that nullifies the law of God is perhaps a subconscious effort to absolve oneself from the responsibility of its requirements. If indeed the law of God had been abolished, the scripture teaches that it would be impossible to sin (1 John 3:4, Ro 5:13). The very existence of sin confirms the perpetuity of God's laws. There is a form to godliness and it is the law that defines it (2 Timothy 3:5). At the same time we must not deny the power (spiritual dimension).

The theology of "lawless grace" (antinomianism, i.e., "sin that grace may abound") reveals a gross lack of vision in the big picture of what is involved in the Gospel of the Kingdom. **The destiny of the people of God is to rule and reign with Christ in an eternal physical kingdom upon the earth. The world will be subjected to the law of God that comes forth from Mt. Zion. What law will it be? It will be the same eternal law that has existed before time in the bosom of the Father, manifested at different times in different ways, but the same in principle.** That law will once again be the international "law of the land" to be obeyed by the peoples of earth and manifested as is directed from Jerusalem.

So! *Is the Law of God illegal?* It really is an absurd question after all!

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul . . ." (Ps 19:7)

The scriptures affirm that **the Law of God is ETERNAL** (Ec 3:14)

<http://www.awarenessministry.org/lawofgodtorahinstruction.htm>

Ezekiel 36:26-27, ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and **cause** you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

John 14:6, Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and **the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me.

1 John 1:1, That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life.

Let's building on this concept of the Word being Life:

The Torah is a Tree of Life to those who Grasp It!

"Great is the Law (Torah), for it gives life to its doers in this world and in the next world, as it is written: 'For they [the teachings of the Torah] give life to those who find them and healing to all flesh' (Proverbs 4:22).

It also says: 'For length of days, years of life, and peace will they [the Torah's teachings] increase for you' (Proverbs 3:2).

And it is written: 'It is a tree of life (better translated: It is a Living Tree) to those who take hold of it (grasp it), and those who support it are fortunate' (Proverbs 3:18).

You really have to hold on, otherwise the World will sweep us away.

Take hold of it (grasp it): Ask God to Believe in Him More, More of the Holy Spirit . . . He Answers "Yes" every time.

ex. (Numbers 13:30-32, "But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, '**Let us go up (take hold of it – grasp it) at once and occupy it** (the Promised Land), for we are well able to overcome **it** (the Promised Land) . . . Then the men who had gone up with him (as Spies) said, 'We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are' . . . so they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land."

Caleb acknowledged the Giants, but asks to go up higher and higher; in essence, **I am a student of God . . . go to the one who knows.** We are made of something else, than what the World is made up of: **Belief!**

10 Negative voices (10 Negative Spies) telling you, “you can not do it”, and 2 Positive voices telling you, “you can do it”. It is in this that we are to **listen to the small voice** (God the Father/Holy Spirit).

listen to the small voice: 1 Kings 19:11-13

¹¹ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: ¹² And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice**.

¹³ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

Once we go up in our Requests, asking for more Belief in God, it is then that we can inherit what we have ASKED for, “The End of Exile”, not falling into the Sin of the Spies! Belief in God “So Much More”, not in knowledge and understanding, but rather “Much More Belief”, because we “Talk About It More!”.

Numbers 30:1-36:13

Numbers 30:1-2

¹ Moses spoke to the heads of the tribes of the people of Israel, saying, “This is what the Lord has commanded. If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. ² If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, **he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.**”

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.**

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**:

“I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will 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.”

On the matter of swearing an oath by God, the disciples are taught that 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.

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 Jesus’ teaching is to not put yourself in a position to lie.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people of our word . . . according to God’s word.

1 Peter 4:11, “whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

Numbers 30:3-31:9

Women and Vows

³ “If a woman vows a vow to the Lord and binds herself by a pledge, while within her father’s house **in her youth**, ⁴ and her father hears of her vow and of her pledge by which she has bound herself and says nothing to her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. ⁵ **But if her father opposes her on the day that he hears of it, no vow of hers, no pledge by which she has bound herself shall stand. And the Lord will forgive her, because her father opposed her.**

⁶ “If she marries a husband, while under her vows or any thoughtless utterance of her lips by which she has bound herself, ⁷ and her husband hears of it and says nothing to her on the day that he hears, then her vows shall stand, and her pledges by which she has bound herself shall stand. ⁸ **But if, on the day that her husband comes to hear of it, he opposes her, then he makes void her vow that was on her, and the thoughtless utterance of her lips by which she bound herself. And the Lord will forgive her.** ⁹ (But any vow of a widow or of a divorced woman, anything by which she has bound herself, shall stand against her.) ¹⁰ And if she vowed in her husband’s house or bound herself by a pledge with an oath, ¹¹ and her husband heard of it and said nothing to her and did not oppose her, then all her vows shall stand, and every pledge by which she bound herself shall stand. ¹² But if her husband makes them null and void on the day that he hears them, then whatever proceeds out of her lips concerning her vows or concerning her pledge of herself shall not stand. Her husband has made them void, and the Lord will forgive her. ¹³ Any vow and any binding oath to afflict herself, her husband may establish, or her husband may

make void. ¹⁴ But if her husband says nothing to her from day to day, then he establishes all her vows or all her pledges that are upon her. He has established them, because he said nothing to her on the day that he heard of them. ¹⁵ But if he makes them null and void after he has heard of them, then he shall bear her iniquity.”

¹⁶ These are the statutes that the Lord commanded Moses about a man and his wife and about a father and his daughter while she is in her youth within her father's house.

“He shall bear her iniquity” means he will suffer for the broken vow as though it were his.” (Wenham)

This is an outworking of the principle of headship. When God declares someone to be in a position of rightful authority and others are expected to submit to that authority, the head also is accountable before God for the result.

God never grants authority without accountability. When this is understood, it makes submission much easier.

Ephesians 5:22-33

Wives and Husbands

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who submit to authority . . . by being accountable to the Word of God.

Numbers 31:1-9

Vengeance on Midian

³¹ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Avenge the people of Israel on the Midianites. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.” ³ So Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Arm men from among you for the war, that they may go against Midian to execute the Lord's vengeance on Midian. ⁴ You shall send a thousand from each of the tribes of Israel to the war.” ⁵ So there were provided, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand from each tribe, **twelve thousand armed for war.** ⁶ And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand from each tribe, together with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the vessels of the sanctuary and the trumpets for the alarm in his hand. ⁷ **They warred against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every male.** ⁸ **They killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.** ⁹ **And the people of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones, and they took as plunder all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods.**

When Moses fled the wrath of Pharaoh, he traveled to Midian (Exodus 2:15). There, Moses met and married his wife, Zipporah, and served his father-in-law, Jethro, as a shepherd for forty years. The fact that Jethro was “a priest of Midian” (Exodus 2:16) indicates that the Midianites, at least during Moses' time, still retained the knowledge of the God of their father Abraham (cf. Jethro's words and actions in Exodus 18). At the end of Moses' time in Midian, God appeared to Moses—still in Midian—and commissioned him to lead the Israelites out of slavery (Exodus 3-4).

As the children of Israel traveled through the wilderness, they employed the services of a guide familiar with the desert – Moses' Midianite brother-in-law, Hobab (Numbers 10:29). However, the relations between the Israelites and the Midianites began to sour when the Midianites joined forces with the **Moabites** in order to hire Balaam to curse Israel (Numbers 22). Later, when Israel fell into idolatry and sexual sin with the Moabite women (Numbers 25), we find that a prominent Midianite woman was also involved (Numbers 25:6). The Lord then told Moses to wage war against the Midianites: “Treat the Midianites as enemies and kill them. They treated you as enemies when they deceived you in the Peor incident involving their sister Kozbi, the daughter of a Midianite leader” (Numbers 25:17-19). The Israelites did eventually attack the Midianites, meting out divine retribution against their enemies (Numbers 31). Five kings of the Midianites were killed, as was Balaam (Numbers 31:8). This battle was one of the last things Moses accomplished as leader of the Israelites.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Midianites.html>

Numbers 31:10-32:18

¹⁰ All their cities in the places where they lived, and all their encampments, they burned with fire, ¹¹ and took all the spoil and all the plunder, both of man and of beast. ¹² Then they brought the captives and the plunder and the spoil to Moses, and to Eleazar the priest, and to the congregation of the people of Israel, at the camp on the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

¹³ Moses and Eleazar the priest and all the chiefs of the congregation went to meet them outside the camp. ¹⁴ And Moses was angry with the officers of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, who had come from service in the war. ¹⁵ Moses said to them, “Have you let all the women live?” ¹⁶ Behold, these, on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the Lord. ¹⁷ Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. ¹⁸ But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him keep alive for yourselves. ¹⁹ Encamp outside the camp seven days. Whoever of you has killed any person and whoever has touched any slain, purify yourselves and your captives on the third day and on the seventh day. ²⁰ You shall purify every garment, every article of skin, all work of goats' hair, and every article of wood.”

²¹ Then Eleazar the priest said to the men in the army who had gone to battle: “**This is the statute of the law that the Lord has commanded Moses: ²² only the gold, the silver, the bronze, the iron, the tin, and the lead, ²³ everything that can stand the fire, you shall pass through the fire, and it shall be clean. Nevertheless, it shall also be purified with the water for impurity. And whatever cannot stand the fire, you shall pass through the water.** ²⁴ You must wash your clothes on the seventh day, and you shall be clean. And afterward you may come into the camp.”

²⁵ The Lord said to Moses, ²⁶ “Take the count of the plunder that was taken, both of man and of beast, you and Eleazar the priest and the heads of the fathers' houses of the congregation, ²⁷ and divide the plunder into two parts between the warriors who went out to battle and all the congregation. ²⁸ And levy for the Lord a tribute from the men of war who went out to battle, one out of five hundred, of the people and of the oxen and of the donkeys and of the flocks. ²⁹ Take it from their half and give it to Eleazar the priest as a contribution to the Lord. ³⁰ And from the people of Israel's half you shall take one drawn out of every fifty, of the people, of the oxen, of the donkeys, and of the flocks, of all the cattle, and give them to the Levites who keep guard over the tabernacle of the Lord.” ³¹ And Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.

³² Now the plunder remaining of the spoil that the army took was 675,000 sheep, ³³ 72,000 cattle, ³⁴ 61,000 donkeys, ³⁵ and 32,000 persons in all, women who had not known man by lying with him. ³⁶ And the half, the portion of those who had gone out in the army, numbered 337,500 sheep, ³⁷ and the Lord's tribute of sheep was 675. ³⁸ The cattle were 36,000, of which the Lord's tribute was 72. ³⁹ The donkeys were 30,500, of which the Lord's tribute was 61. ⁴⁰ The persons were 16,000, of which the Lord's tribute was 32 persons. ⁴¹ And Moses gave the tribute, which was the contribution for the Lord, to Eleazar the priest, as the Lord commanded Moses.

⁴² From the people of Israel's half, which Moses separated from that of the men who had served in the army— ⁴³ now the congregation's half was 337,500 sheep, ⁴⁴ 36,000 cattle, ⁴⁵ and 30,500 donkeys, ⁴⁶ and 16,000 persons— ⁴⁷ from the people of Israel's half Moses took one of every 50, both of persons and of beasts, and gave them to the Levites who kept guard over the tabernacle of the Lord, as the Lord commanded Moses.

⁴⁸ Then the officers who were over the thousands of the army, the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, came near to Moses ⁴⁹ and said to Moses, “**Your servants have counted the men of war who are under our command, and there is not a man missing from us.** ⁵⁰ And we have brought the Lord's offering, what each man found, articles of gold, armlets and bracelets, signet rings, earrings, and beads, to make atonement for ourselves before the Lord.” ⁵¹ And Moses and Eleazar the priest received from them the gold, all crafted articles. ⁵² And all the gold of the contribution that they presented to the Lord, from the commanders of thousands and the commanders of hundreds, was 16,750 shekels.^[L] ⁵³ (The men in the army had each taken plunder for himself.) ⁵⁴ And Moses and Eleazar the priest received the gold from the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and brought it into the tent of meeting, as a memorial for the people of Israel before the Lord.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who submit to authority . . . by being accountable to the Word of God.

Ephesians 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity (even the smallest (i.e. male child) of opportunities) to the devil.”

Genesis 4:7, “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it.”

Reuben and Gad Settle in Gilead

32 Now the people of Reuben and the people of Gad had a very great number of livestock. And they saw the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead, and behold, the place was a place for livestock.² So the people of Gad and the people of Reuben came and said to Moses and to Eleazar the priest and to the chiefs of the congregation, ³ “Ataroth, Dibon, Jazer, Nimrah, Heshbon, Elealeh, Sebam, Nebo, and Beon, ⁴ the land that the Lord struck down before the congregation of Israel, is a land for livestock, and your servants have livestock.” ⁵ And they said, “If we have found favor in your sight, let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan.”

Settlement on East Bank of the Jordan

As the tribes of Israel prepare to cross over the Jordan River into the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh approach Moses requesting permission to settle on the east side of the Jordan in the territories captured from Sichon and Og (*Numbers 32:1–5*).

Moses is at first disturbed by this request, accusing them of wanting to shirk their responsibility in following through on taking the Promised Land in obedience to the Lord's command.

Numbers 32:6-9

⁶ But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, “**Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here? ⁷ Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the Lord has given them? ⁸ Your fathers did this, when I sent them from Kadesh-barnea to see the land. ⁹ For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the Lord had given them.**”

He asks these tribes, “Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?” (*Numbers 32:6*)

He compares them to the ten spies who came back with a bad report, bringing calamity on Israel. His concern is that their actions will discourage the Israelites from taking the Land.

However, these tribes have no intention of avoiding battle; they just prefer the land on the east side of the Jordan since it is suitable for their large herds and flocks of livestock.

They are not only willing to go into battle, **they pledge** to go out ahead of the Israelites as shock troops to take the Land.

Numbers 32:10-18

¹⁰ And the Lord's anger was kindled on that day, and he swore, saying, ¹¹ 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, **because they have NOT wholly FOLLOWED me**, ¹² **none except Caleb** the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite **and Joshua** the son of Nun, **for they HAVE WHOLLY FOLLOWED the Lord**.' ¹³ And the Lord's anger was kindled against Israel, and **he MADE them WANDER in the wilderness FORTEY years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was gone**. ¹⁴ And behold, **you have risen** in your fathers' place, **a brood** (an excelling) of sinful men, to increase still more the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel! ¹⁵ For if you turn away from following him, he will again abandon them in the wilderness, and you will destroy all this people."

¹⁶ Then they came near to him and said, "We will build sheepfolds here for our livestock, and cities for our little ones, ¹⁷ **but we will take up arms, ready to go before the people of Israel, until we have brought them to their place**. And our little ones shall live in the fortified cities because of the inhabitants of the land.

¹⁸ **We will not return to our homes until each of the people of Israel has gained his inheritance.**

Our GREAT COMMISSION – Our Eternal Plan – Our Game Plan – Not Our Temporal Plan

"We will arm ourselves for battle and go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them to their place We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has received their inheritance." (Numbers 32:17-18)

When Moses understands their motivation and the full plan, he agrees to their request and the Lord awards them their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan.

We can understand from this that Israel's inheritance extends beyond the Jordan River.

This event also reminds each of us to patiently listen to a person's reasoning when their request seems to be in conflict with a perceived goal. We should not prejudge motivation and outcomes.

Numbers 32:19-24

¹⁹ **For we will not inherit with them on the other side of the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance has come to us on this side of the Jordan to the east.**"

Fight for the Inheritance Until Complete!

Numbers 32:20-24

²⁰ **So Moses said to them, "If you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the Lord for the war, ²¹ and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him ²² and the land is subdued before the Lord; then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the Lord and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.** ²³ **But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord, and be sure YOU'RE SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT.** ²⁴ **Build cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep, and do what you have promised."**

When they said to Moses, "We will build sheepfolds here for our cattle and cities for our children," Moses understood that what they were seeking was not an escape from the Land, but the opportunity to "make a home for G-d" in an even lowlier domain -- in the territories that lie beyond the borders of the most sacred of lands as defined by Israel's present mandate from G-d.

(From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Numbers 32:25-27

²⁵ And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben said to Moses, "**Your servants will do as my lord commands.**" ²⁶ Our little ones, our wives, our livestock, and all our cattle shall remain there in the cities of Gilead,

²⁷ **but your servants will pass over, every man who is armed for war, before the Lord to battle, as my lord orders."**

Battle for Eternity

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who wholly follow the Lord into battle for God's purposes and people . . . until God's promises are Inherited by God's people.

Numbers 32:28-33:37

²⁸ So **Moses gave command** concerning them to Eleazar the priest **and to Joshua** the son of Nun **and to the heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel**. ²⁹ And Moses said to them, "If the people of Gad and the people of Reuben, every man who is armed to battle before the Lord, will pass with you over the Jordan and the land shall be subdued before you, then you shall give them the land of Gilead for a possession. ³⁰ However, if they will not pass over with you armed, they shall have possessions among you in the land of

Canaan.”³¹ And the people of Gad and the people of Reuben answered, “What the Lord has said to your servants, we will do.”³² We will pass over armed before the Lord into the land of Canaan, and the possession of our inheritance shall remain with us beyond the Jordan.”³³ **And Moses gave to them**, to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben and to the half-tribe of Manasseh the son of Joseph, **the kingdom of Sihon** king of the Amorites and the kingdom of Og king of Bashan, **the land and its cities with their territories**, the cities of the land throughout the country.³⁴ And the people of Gad built Dibon, Ataroth, Aroer,³⁵ Atroth-shophan, Jazer, Jogbehah,³⁶ Beth-nimrah and Beth-haran, fortified cities, and folds for sheep.³⁷ And the people of Reuben built Heshbon, Elealeh, Kiriathaim,³⁸ Nebo, and Baal-meon (their names were changed), and Sibmah. And they gave other names to the cities that they built.³⁹ **And the sons of Machir the son of Manasseh went to Gilead and captured it, and dispossessed the Amorites who were in it.**⁴⁰ And Moses gave Gilead to Machir the son of Manasseh, and he settled in it.⁴¹ And Jair the son of Manasseh went and captured their villages, and called them Havvoth-jair.⁴² And Nobah went and captured Kenath and its villages, and called it Nobah, after his own name.

Recounting Israel's Journey

33 These are the stages of the people of Israel, when they went out of the land of Egypt by their companies under the leadership of Moses and Aaron.² **Moses wrote down their starting places, stage by stage, by command of the Lord**, and these are their stages according to their starting places.³ They set out from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month. On the day after the Passover, the people of Israel went out triumphantly in the sight of all the Egyptians,⁴ while the Egyptians were burying all their firstborn, whom the Lord had struck down among them. **On their gods also the Lord executed judgments.**⁵ So the people of Israel set out from Rameses and camped at Succoth.⁶ And they set out from Succoth and camped at Etham, which is on the edge of the wilderness.⁷ And they set out from Etham and turned back to Pi-hahiroth, which is east of Baal-zephon, and they camped before Migdol.⁸ And they set out from before Hahiroth and **passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness, and they went a three days' journey in the wilderness** of Etham and camped at Marah.⁹ And they set out from Marah and came to Elim; at Elim there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they camped there.¹⁰ And they set out . . .³⁷ And they set out from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the edge of the land of Edom.

Kadesh: *And they journeyed from Etzyon-Gaver, and camped in the wilderness of Tzin, which is Kadesh (33:36)*

1. Hence "journeys" 1 through 11 were in the first year following the Exodus,
2. journeys 32-42 in the fortieth year, meaning that there were nineteen journeys in the intervening thirty-eight years.
3. According to the Midrash, 19 of these 38 years were spent in Kadesh, and the other 19 wandering through the desert.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who remember where they have been and where they are going . . . until they have arrived where God has prepared for their inheritance.

Numbers 33:38-55

38 And Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor at the command of the Lord and died there, in the fortieth year after the people of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month.³⁹ **And Aaron was 123 years old when he died on Mount Hor . . .**

Drive Out the Inhabitants

⁵⁰ And the Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying,⁵¹ “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, **When you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan (the Promise Land),⁵² then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their figured stones and destroy all their metal images and demolish all their high places.**

⁵³ And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.

⁵⁴ You shall inherit the land by lot according to your clans. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance. Wherever the lot falls for anyone, that shall be his. According to the tribes of your fathers you shall inherit.

⁵⁵ But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell.

2 Corinthians 12:7-9

⁷ So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a **thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me**, to keep me from becoming conceited.⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me.⁹ But he said to me, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Numbers 33:56

⁵⁶ And I will do to you as I thought to do to them.”

I will do to you as I thought to do to them if you Do Not Drive Out the Inhabitants of the Land (the Life) I have given you!

Today, some believe the Jewish People have no right to the land, but in this Reading, we see the Creator of the Universe fulfill the promise He made to Jacob all those years earlier:

Genesis 35:12

“The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring (**Faith Descendants**) after you.”

God also instructs the people to drive out all the inhabitants of the Land once they receive it.

However, when the Israelites crossed the Jordan, many times they made treaties or allowed the Canaanites to dwell among them, where they continued practicing their pagan rituals. In time, these groups either led the Israelites back into pagan practices or tried to attack them from within.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . take God's Life as our Life . . . and drive out the andy inhabitants that do not line up with God.

Numbers 34:1-2

Boundaries of the Land

34 The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel, and say to them, When you enter the land of Canaan (this is the land that shall fall to you for an inheritance, the land of Canaan as defined by its borders),

As the Creator of the Universe, God has the right to set the boundaries for the nations that He created. In this week's Reading, **God sets the borders of the territory of Israel, which are far larger than what Israel has settled today.**

Fully inhabiting our inheritance of Judea and Samaria and even east Jerusalem may seem impossible with the creation of a Palestinian State, but **when the Messiah returns, there will be a redistribution of land to the Twelve Tribes, and the world will plainly see the extent of Israel's borders (Ezekiel 47:15-21).**

At that time, says the Lord, “when I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations.” (Ezekiel 39:27)

Unlike many of the foreigners who reside in the land today, after the war of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38-39) **those who remain will have reverence for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and no other;** therefore, as fellow Believers, the Lord makes them inheritors as well.

“You are to allot [the land] as an inheritance for yourselves and for the foreigners residing among you and who have children. You are to consider them as native-born Israelites; along with you they are to be allotted an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.” (Ezekiel 47:22)

Numbers 34:3-35:13

³ your south side shall be from the wilderness of Zin alongside Edom, and your southern border shall run from the end of the Salt Sea on the east. ⁴ And your border shall turn south of the ascent of Akrabbim, and cross to Zin, and its limit shall be south of Kadesh-barnea. Then it shall go on to Hazar-addar, and pass along to Azmon. ⁵ And the border shall turn from Azmon to the Brook of Egypt, and its limit shall be at the sea.

⁶ “For the western border, you shall have the Great Sea and its coast. This shall be your western border.

⁷ “This shall be your northern border: from the Great Sea you shall draw a line to Mount Hor. ⁸ From Mount Hor you shall draw a line to Lebo-hamath, and the limit of the border shall be at Zedad. ⁹ Then the border shall extend to Ziphron, and its limit shall be at Hazar-enan. This shall be your northern border.

¹⁰ “You shall draw a line for your eastern border from Hazar-enan to Shepham. ¹¹ And the border shall go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain. And the border shall go down and reach to the shoulder of the Sea of Chinnereth on the east. ¹² And the border shall go down to the Jordan, and its limit shall be at the Salt Sea. This shall be your land as defined by its borders all around.”

¹³ **Moses commanded the people of Israel, saying, “This is the land that you shall inherit by lot, which the Lord has commanded to give to the nine tribes and to the half-tribe. ¹⁴ For the tribe of the people of Reuben by fathers' houses and the tribe of the people of Gad by their fathers' houses have received their inheritance, and also the half-tribe of Manasseh. ¹⁵ The two tribes and the half-tribe have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan east of Jericho, toward the sunrise.”**

List of Tribal Chiefs

¹⁶ The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁷ “**These are the names of the men who shall divide the land to you for inheritance: Eleazar the priest and Joshua** the son of Nun . . .

Cities for the Levites

35 The Lord spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho, saying, ²“Command the people of Israel to give to the Levites some of the inheritance of their possession as cities for them to dwell in . . .

⁶“The cities that you give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, where you shall permit the manslayer to flee, and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities. ⁷ All the cities that you give to the Levites shall be forty-eight, with their pasturelands. ⁸ And as for the cities that you shall give from the possession of the people of Israel, from the larger tribes you shall take many, and from the smaller tribes you shall take few; each, in proportion to the inheritance that it inherits, shall give of its cities to the Levites.”

Cities of Refuge

⁹ And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ¹⁰ “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, ¹¹ then you shall select cities to be cities of refuge for you, that the manslayer who kills any person without intent may flee there. ¹² The cities shall be for you a refuge from the avenger, that the manslayer may not die until he stands before the congregation for judgment. ¹³ And the cities that you give shall be your six cities of refuge.

Six cities: *Six cities of refuge shall they be for you (35:13)*

The Torah includes six hundred and thirteen mitzvot (commandments)... Of these, the mitzvot that can be observed today [following the destruction of the Holy Temple and our exile from the Holy Land – *less 274 commandments*] number, altogether, three hundred and thirty-nine.

Numbers 35:14-34

¹⁴ You shall give three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge. ¹⁵ **These six cities shall be for refuge for the people of Israel, and for the stranger and for the sojourner among them, that anyone who kills any person without intent may flee there.**

¹⁶ “But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer. **The murderer shall be put to death.** ¹⁷ And if he struck him down with a stone tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. **The murderer shall be put to death.** ¹⁸ Or if he struck him down with a wooden tool that could cause death, and he died, he is a murderer. **The murderer shall be put to death.** ¹⁹ *The avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.* ²⁰ And if he pushed him out of hatred or hurled something at him, lying in wait, so that he died, ²¹ or in enmity struck him down with his hand, so that he died, then he who struck the blow shall be put to death. He is a murderer. *The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.*

²² “But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or hurled anything on him without lying in wait ²³ or used a stone that could cause death, and without seeing him dropped it on him, so that he died, though he was not his enemy and did not seek his harm, ²⁴ then the congregation shall judge between the manslayer and the avenger of blood, in accordance with these rules. ²⁵ **And the congregation shall rescue the manslayer from the hand of the avenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he had fled, and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.** ²⁶ But if the manslayer shall at any time go beyond the boundaries of his city of refuge to which he fled, ²⁷ and the avenger of blood finds him outside the boundaries of his city of refuge, and the avenger of blood kills the manslayer, he shall not be guilty of blood. ²⁸ For he must remain in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest, but after the death of the high priest the manslayer may return to the land of his possession. ²⁹ **And these things shall be for a statute and rule for you throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.**

³⁰ “If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness. ³¹ Moreover, you shall accept no ransom for the life of a murderer, who is guilty of death, but he shall be put to death. ³² And you shall accept no ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to dwell in the land before the death of the high priest. ³³ You shall not pollute the land in which you live, for blood pollutes the land, and no atonement can be made for the land for the blood that is shed in it, except by the blood of the one who shed it.

³⁴ **You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell, for I the Lord dwell in the midst of the people of Israel.”**

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who live a life free from offence . . . because Jesus, our High Priest, has set us free from offence of God and people.

Numbers 36:1-13

Marriage of Female Heirs

36 The heads of the fathers' houses of the clan of the people of Gilead the son of Machir, son of Manasseh, from the clans of the people of Joseph, came near and spoke before Moses and before the chiefs, the heads of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel. ² They said, “The Lord commanded my lord to give the land for inheritance by lot to the people of Israel, and my lord was commanded by the Lord to give the inheritance of Zelophehad our brother to his daughters. ³ But if they are married to any of the sons of the other tribes of the people of Israel, then their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of our fathers and added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry. So it will be taken away from the lot of our inheritance. ⁴ And when the jubilee of the people of Israel comes, then their inheritance will be added to the inheritance of the tribe into which they marry, and their inheritance will be taken from the inheritance of the tribe of our fathers.”

⁵ And Moses commanded the people of Israel according to the word of the Lord, saying, “The tribe of the people of Joseph is right. ⁶ This is what the Lord commands concerning the daughters of Zelophehad: *‘Let them marry whom they think best, only they shall marry within the clan of the tribe of their father.’* ⁷ **The inheritance of the people of Israel shall not be transferred from one tribe to another, for every one of the people of Israel shall hold on to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers.** ⁸ And every daughter who possesses an inheritance in any tribe of the people of Israel shall be wife to one of the clan of the tribe of her father, so that every one of the people of Israel may possess the inheritance of his fathers. ⁹ **So no inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another, for each of the tribes of the people of Israel shall hold on to its own inheritance.”**

¹⁰ The daughters of Zelophehad did as the Lord commanded Moses, ¹¹ for Mahlah, Tirzah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Noah, the daughters of Zelophehad, were married to sons of their father's brothers. ¹² **They were married into the clans of the people of Manasseh the son of Joseph, and their inheritance remained in the tribe of their father's clan.**

¹³ These are the commandments and the rules that the Lord commanded through Moses to the people of Israel in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho.

What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law . . . be people who receive the inheritance that God has given us and not man . . . that God's blessings might flow through us and not the jealousy and pride of man.

Closing Illustration:

“I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 34:15) . . . (What we Must Do when We Have Found the Book of the Law):

²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ And the king went up to the house of the Lord, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, *all the people both great and small.* And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord. ³¹ **And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.** ³² *Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it.* And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and made all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.

Jeremiah Warns Israel of the Coming Exile

The prophetic reading (Haftarah) for this week is the second of the three Prophetic Councils (“Haftarot of Admonition”), which are read during the Three Weeks. **During this three-week period between the 17th of Tammuz and the 5th of Av on the Jewish calendar (July 9th and July 30th on this year's civil calendar; with the 9th of Av falling between the eves of July 29th – July 30th 2020), we remember the Exodus cries as a result of the negative report of the Spies, and both temples being destroyed, among other tragedies.**

The Prophet Jeremiah had been warning about the impending destruction of the Holy Temple and of Jerusalem for at least a few decades leading up to the Babylonian invasion.

In this reading, he details **the terrible sins of the kings and the people that led to that destruction**, *Jeremiah 2:1-28:*

Israel Forsakes the Lord

¹ The word of the Lord came to me, saying, ² “Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord, “I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. ³ Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest . . .

⁴ Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the clans of the house of Israel. ⁵ Thus says the Lord: **“What wrong did your fathers find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthlessness, and became worthless?”** ⁶ **They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that none passes through, where no man dwells?’** ⁷ And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. **But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination.** ⁸ **The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’ Those who handle the law did not know me;** the shepherds transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal and went after things that do not profit . . .

¹¹ **Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods?** But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit.

¹² Be appalled, . . . be shocked, . . . declares the Lord,

¹³ **for my people have committed two evils;** they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water . . .

¹⁷ Have you not brought this upon yourself by **forsaking the Lord your God**, when he led you in the way? . . .

¹⁹ Your evil will chastise you, and **your apostasy will reprove you.** Know and see that it is evil and bitter **for you to forsake the Lord your God; the fear of me is not in you**, declares the Lord God of hosts? . . .

²¹ Yet I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. **How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?** . . .

²³ How can you say, ‘I am not unclean, I have not gone after the Baals?’ **Look at your way in the valley;** . . .

²⁶ **“As a thief is shamed when caught,** so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings, their officials, their priests, and their prophets, ²⁷ who say to a tree, ‘You are my father,’ and to a stone, ‘You gave me birth.’ For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, ‘Arise and save us!’” ²⁸ **But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble;** for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.

i.e. Romans 1:18-32

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world,^[a] in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ **For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.** ²² **Claiming to be wise, they became fools,** ²³ **and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ **because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,** who is blessed forever! Amen.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; ²⁷ and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸ And **since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.** ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

i.e. Romans 2:1-10

God's Righteous Judgment

¹ Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ **but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.** ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Jeremiah 3:13

Faithless Israel Called to Repentance

Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice.

Jeremiah 4:1-2

“IF YOU RETURN, O Israel, declares the Lord, to me you should return. **If you remove your detestable things from my presence, and do not waver,** ² and if you **swear (covenant),** ‘As the Lord lives,’ in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.”

To understand the extent of their wickedness, we need only look at King Manasseh (c. 687–642) who “sacrificed his own son in the fire, practiced divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing His anger.” (*2 Kings 21:6*)

The Book of the Law had been hidden away in the Temple so that even the kings had little to no knowledge of what was written in it. Instead of worshipping the God of Israel as written in Scripture, images of Baal were erected in the Temple where God said His name would be placed forever. (*2 Chronicles 33:2–9*)

The Lord warned Manasseh and the nation about their evil deeds, but they ignored Him. So the Lord took action against them:

“He rose up the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.” (*2 Chronicles 33:10–11*)

While in captivity in Babylon, Manasseh repented and with great humility called out to God, who restored him to his reign. Manasseh and later his grandson King Josiah tried to return the nation to the worship of the God of Israel alone, but it seems their efforts came too little too late; they were not able to provoke a national revival in the hearts of the people.

When these kings died, other kings took their place and continued to defile the Temple and disobey God's law.

Today, our cities and nations are full of the same sins that brought about the destruction of Jerusalem on Tisha B'Av and of the world in the days of Noah – a time when men were given over to other men in marriage.

Jesus told us that His coming would be in a time such as this:

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.” (*Luke 17:26–27*)

God Restores His People

Just as in the ancient days of Israel, God's desire is to bring correction in order that people will repent and turn back to Him and live in righteousness; for it is not God's will that even one person should perish.

We see this with Manasseh. God allowed him to be taken captive, but even he received God's mercy and restoration after sincerely repenting:

“In his distress he sought the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. **And when he prayed to Him, the LORD was moved by His entreaty and listened to his plea. So He brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom.** Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God.” (*2 Chronicles 33:12–13*)

Although a nation as a whole may still suffer the consequences of the collective sins of the people, God does show mercy and restores each individual person who sincerely humbles himself, calls on His name, and repents (*2 Corinthians 7:10*).

Therefore, let us make ourselves ready by genuinely turning from our sins and re-establishing His ways in our lives.

Further, God will grant everlasting life to those who believe that Jesus cleansed them from their sins with His blood once and for all.

Following is the Reading of the Lord's warning to Manasseh and the nation about their evil deeds, as found in 2 Chronicles 33-34:

2 Chronicles 33-34

Manasseh Reigns in Judah

33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ² **And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel.** ³ **For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them.** ⁴ **And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever."** ⁵ **And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord.** ⁶ **And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger.** ⁷ **And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God said to David and to Solomon his son, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever, and I will no more remove the foot of Israel from the land that I appointed for your fathers, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the rules given through Moses."** ⁹ **Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.**

Manasseh's Repentance

¹⁰ **The Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention.** ¹¹ **Therefore the Lord brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks and bound him with chains of bronze and brought him to Babylon.** ¹² **And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.** ¹³ **He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.**

¹⁴ **Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, and for the entrance into the Fish Gate, and carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah.** ¹⁵ **And he took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside of the city.** ¹⁶ **He also restored the altar of the Lord and offered on it sacrifices of peace offerings and of thanksgiving, and he commanded Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel.** ¹⁷ **Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.**

¹⁸ **Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, behold, they are in the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.** ¹⁹ **And his prayer, and how God was moved by his entreaty, and all his sin and his faithlessness, and the sites on which he built high places and set up the Asherim and the images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the Chronicles of the Seers.** ²⁰ **So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his house, and Amon his son reigned in his place.**

Amon's Reign and Death

²¹ **Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem.** ²² **And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and served them.** ²³ **And he did not humble himself before the Lord, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred guilt more and more.** ²⁴ **And his servants conspired against him and put him to death in his house.** ²⁵ **But the people of the land struck down all those who had conspired against King Amon. And the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.**

Josiah Reigns in Judah

34 **Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem.** ² **And he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father; and he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.** ³ **For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet a boy, he began to seek the God of David his father, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the Asherim, and the carved and the metal images.** ⁴ **And they chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them.** ⁵ **He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.** ⁶ **And in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins all around, he broke down the altars and beat the Asherim and the images into powder and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.**

The Book of the Law Found

⁸ **Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had cleansed the land and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God.** ⁹ **They came to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem.** ¹⁰ **And they gave it to the workmen who were working in the house of the Lord. And the workmen who were working in the house of the Lord gave it to repairing and restoring the house.** ¹¹ **They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin.** ¹² **And the men did the work faithfully. Over them were set Jahath and Obadiah the Levites, of the sons of Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. The Levites, all who were skillful with instruments of music, ¹³ were over the burden-bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service, and some of the Levites were scribes and officials and gatekeepers.**

¹⁴ **While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord given through Moses.** ¹⁵ **Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord."** **And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan.** ¹⁶ **Shaphan brought the book to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. ¹⁷ They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the Lord and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen."** ¹⁸ **Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it before the king.**

¹⁹ **And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes (repented – stopped doing things his way and started doing things God's way).** ²⁰ **And the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah**

the king's servant, saying, ²¹“**Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book.**”

Huldah Prophecies Disaster

²² So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect. ²³ And she said to them, “Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me, ²⁴ **Thus says the Lord, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah.** ²⁵ **Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands, therefore my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched.** ²⁶ **But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, thus shall you say to him.** Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: **Regarding the words that you have heard,** ²⁷ **because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the Lord.** ²⁸ **Behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place and its inhabitants.**” And they brought back word to the king.

²⁹ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. ³⁰ And the king went up to the house of the Lord, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. **And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the Lord.** ³¹ **And the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book.** ³² **Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin join in it.** And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. ³³ And Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel and **made all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.**

Psalm 95:7-11

⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness, ⁹ **when your fathers put me to the test and put me to the proof,** though they had seen my work. ¹⁰ **For forty years I loathed that generation and said, “They are a people who go astray in their heart, and they have not known my ways.”** ¹¹ Therefore I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter my rest.”

Massah and Meribah is the name given to a place near Rephidim where the Israelites arrived on their Egypt exodus after moving on from the Wilderness of Sin. Not finding drinking water there, they murmured against Moses and were almost ready to stone him. At the command of the Lord he went on before the people to the rock at Horeb which he struck with his rod so that it brought forth water. Moses named the location “Proof and Contention” because of the Israelites’ faultfinding and their putting the Lord to the test (Exodus 17:1-7).

The account in Numbers 20:1-13 refers to an event in Israel’s history some forty years later. This Meribah must be distinguished from Massah and Meribah. It is located in southern Pal. and received its name from an incident rather similar to the one related in Exodus 17. Here, instead of speaking to the rock as the Lord had commanded him to do, Moses struck the rock and as a consequence forfeited the right to enter the Promised Land (Deut 32:51).

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/encyclopedia-of-the-bible/Massah-Meribah>

The Parable of the Persistent Widow

(a contrasting parable – one is not like the other)

¹ And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ² He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. ³ And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ ⁴ For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor respect man, ⁵ yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.” ⁶ And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷ And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?”

“**I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”**

Luke 18:1-8

Next Week’s Reading & Location:

**Week 41 - Devarim (Words)
Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22; Isaiah 1:1–27; Mark 14:12–26**