

Opening Story:

Keith’s testimony of Uganda & Kenya, Africa included his connecting with those he engaged with the proposal of being Discipled by him, and included these three individuals: 1. Edem King, Uganda, Africa, Server at the Holiday Inn Keith was staying at; 2. Mike, Uganda, Africa, Taxi Cab Driver; and 3. Country Man, Kenya, Africa, Street Evangelist (self proclaimed) reaching the Gangs on the Street in Kenya. Edem and Mike both attended church, but had never been Discipled, and Country Man was not in a church or nor had he ever been disciple. Finally, Keith told of his wife, Maureen (More-eeen), and her testimony of Keith to their ministry friends, family, that she Pray that she can be more of a Disciple Maker like Keith.

Last Week We Talked About:

Again, as a Reminder, Earlier this Month Began, “The Days of Favor” known as:

“The King is in the Field”

*These 40 days are a time of meeting with the King of Kings - a time to be happy. Which also corresponds to the prophesied Messianic Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14), Jesus’ Birth (which this year would have fallen on **September 7, 2019**), and the prophesied Messianic Return (Zechariah 14:1-4, 9), Jesus’ Return (which this year will fall on **September 29th through October 1st, 2019**).*

Week 49 - KI TETZE (When You Go Out)
Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19; Isaiah 54:1–10; 1 Corinthians 5:1–5

“When you go forth [ki tetze] to battle against your enemies, and the Lord your God delivers them into your hands ...” (*Deuteronomy 21:10*)

The “TRUE” Christmas Story:

It is Saturday night, Kislev 25, in the Jewish year 3755. It is the first night of Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and the Feast of Light, December 6, 6 BCE. The angel Gabriel comes to the Virgin Mary with a message from God. She will conceive in her womb, bear a son and name him Jesus (Yashua – Joshua – “I AM SALVATION”). The Holy Spirit will come upon her, and the power of the Most High will overshadow her; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.

Also around the time of the winter solstice (December 21st), Romans observed Juvenalia, a feast honoring the children of Rome.

In addition, members of the upper classes often celebrated the birthday of Mithra, on December 25. Mithra was an ancient Persian god of light. It was believed that Mithra, an infant god, was born of a rock. For some Romans, Mithra’s birthday was the most sacred day of the year. In the later Roman Empire, Mithra blended with Sol Invictus, god of the “unconquered sun.”

Some theorists believe the early Roman Catholic Church may have chosen the same date for Christmas in order to supplant pagan rituals, though many Christian scholars dispute this.

<https://www.history.com/topics/natural-disasters-and-environment/winter-solstice>

Pagans commonly celebrated the birthdays of their gods, however in the Bible a birthday is never celebrated to the true God, who being eternal has no birth or day of origin.

Mary appropriately Hanukkahs (dedicates – first use for a holy purpose) her body to be the temple of God by saying, *“Behold, the bondservant of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word.”*

The Holy Spirit impregnates Mary. She now has the Word of God, eternal life and the light of men dwelling in the darkness of her womb. As it is written: *In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was **life**, and the **life** was the **light** of men. And the **light** shines in the **darkness**, and the **darkness** did not comprehend it.* (John 1:1-5)

Interestingly, on the first night of Hanukkah many Jews quote this passage of Scripture, *“In the beginning God **created** the heavens and the earth. And the earth was **formless** and **void**, and **darkness** was over the surface of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, **“Let there be light”; and there was light.**”* (Genesis 1:1-3)

Coincidentally we are reminded by the Scripture in **John 10:22-39**, that Jesus declared Himself to be the Son of God on Hanukkah, the Feast of Dedication and Light in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Forty weeks (Forty weeks is the period of human gestation) after His conception Jesus is born. It is Friday night, Elul 9, in the Jewish year 3756. This corresponds to our Gregorian calendar date of September 9, 5 BCE. It is the beginning of the weekly Sabbath. The Jewish people have a particular name for every Sabbath and they read specific passages of Scripture on those Sabbaths. The one on which Jesus is born is called KiTeitzei, **“WHEN YOU GO OUT to battle against your enemies”**. On that Sabbath night Jesus goes forth from the womb. And the next morning in the Temple and in every synagogue Isaiah 54:1-10 is read. It begins this way:

^{*} (1 John 3:7-9 ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. **The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.** ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's^[a] seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.)

“Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; for the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman,” says the LORD.” Isaiah 54:1

On the following Sabbath, being the eighth day Jesus is circumcised. The Jewish people call this particular Sabbath, KiTavo, **“When you enter”**. On that day Jesus entered into the Mosaic Covenant through His circumcision. And in the Temple and every synagogue the prophet Isaiah 60:1-22 is read. It begins this way:

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, and deep darkness the peoples; but the LORD will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. And nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you.

Mary waited the prescribed 40 days^{*} for her purification (Leviticus 12:1-4 - “The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ²“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, If a woman conceives and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days. As at the time of her menstruation, she shall be unclean. ³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. ⁴ Then she shall continue for thirty-three days in the blood of her purifying. She shall not touch anything holy, nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying are completed.”) from the blood of childbirth before presenting her son, Jesus at the Temple. It was Thursday, Ethanim 21 (Ethanim is the seventh month of God’s calendar. It falls within our September/October time frame. The Jewish people currently call this month Tishri.), of the Jewish year 3756 or our October 23, 5 BCE. The Jewish people call the day Hossana Rabba or **“The Great Day of Salvation”**. It is the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (In Hebrew the feast is called Sukkoth, which is translated as tent, hut, tabernacle or booth and indicates a temporary dwelling) (Sukkoth).

^{*} **2019: 40 DAYS** from the Sabbath, Friday, September 6th at 6pm through Saturday, September 7th at 6pm, reading during the Sabbath is **“When you go out”** (Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19), puts us on Tuesday, October 15th at 6pm, or on the Biblical Calendar, Tuesday, October 16th at 6pm, 3 days from Sabbath, and 5 days from the **“Eight Day”** (the Beginning of Eternity in Heaven) of the Feast of Tabernacles, known as the **“Great Day of Salvation”**.

The Feast of Tabernacles is the most joyous feast of the year for Israel and it has four major themes associated with it. Lets see how these four themes are linked to Jesus’ first appearance at the Temple.

The first theme is the **ingathering of various tree branches**. Jesus, “the **Branch**” spoken of by Isaiah the prophet (Isaiah 11:1-10) concerning the messiah is brought into Jerusalem during the feast. It was written of Him: *“Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”*

Jesse was King David’s father. Therefore the messiah had to be a descendent of King David, which Jesus was according to the genealogies. The shoot or branch in the prophecy can also be rendered from the root Hebrew word Nazir meaning *“unpruned vine”* from whence we get the word Nazarene. This is why the Bible references Jesus as the Nazarene or Jesus from Nazareth (understood as a messianic title, therefore, **having more of a religious significance instead of denoting a place of origin**).

The second theme of the feast is **God comes to tabernacle or dwell with His people**. For the past week, all the Jewish people had been living in temporary dwellings or booths made out of tree branches. It was meant to remind them of the Exodus, when God’s presence was manifest among His people, leading and protecting them day and night. Jesus arrives among the people as **Immanuel ... “God With Us”** to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. *“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

The third theme of the feast is **the salvation of God’s people**. The angel commanded Joseph to name the child, Jesus because He would save His people from their sins. In Hebrew, Jesus’ name is Yashua or Joshua, which means, **“I AM salvation”**. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM” (Exodus 3:14) had sent him to deliver them from the Egyptians. In today’s world we just hear a person’s formal name and it has no particular meaning to us. But in Jesus’ day peoples name were actual statements. So every time Jesus introduced Himself, the people heard the statement, **“I AM salvation”**.

The fourth theme of the feast is **great joy**. While the people were rejoicing in God outside the Temple, Jesus was presented before God, in the Temple, as was the custom. At that time old Simeon and Anna were filled with the **joy of the Holy Spirit** and began prophesying because they had seen the consolation of Israel.

Where was the Birthplace of the Lord Jesus?

He was born in Bethlehem, at the birthing place of the sacrificial lambs that were offered in the Temple in Jerusalem which *Micah 4:8* calls the **“tower of the flock.”**

List of Dates

The Reading “When You Go Out” (Ki Teitzei) is read in the Diaspora (God’s People living outside Israel) on:

- [14 September 2019](#) - [29 August 2020](#) - [21 August 2021](#) - [10 September 2022](#) - [26 August 2023](#) - [14 September 2024](#) - [06 September 2025](#)
[22 August 2026](#) - [11 September 2027](#) - [02 September 2028](#) - [25 August 2029](#) - [07 September 2030](#) - [30 August 2031](#)

A Man Hanged on a Tree Is Cursed

We remember from the week before, the only person who Killed Jesus, was Jesus himself, as he declares in John 10:17-18:

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.” John 10:17-18

“If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and you hang him on a tree, his corpse shall not remain on the tree overnight. You must bury it the same day; anyone who is hanged is a curse of God.” Deuteronomy 21:22–23

The Hebrew word for tree is *etz*; the phrase “hang him on a tree” refers to death as a result of hanging on a tree or gallows, or to displaying a corpse on a tree after his execution. Either way, the sight of a hung man on a wooden pole is a curse of God.

But Jesus wasn’t guilty of a capital offense, so why was he put to death on a tree?

According to Jewish priestly legal interpretation found in the *halakhah* (literally, the way) **the one who is guilty of treason or blasphemy would be hung to death on a tree in full display before the people he has betrayed and the God he has blasphemed.** This interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:22–23 is found in early Aramaic translations of the Bible and rabbinical literature.

The Jewish leaders, therefore, saw Jesus’ hanging as “proof” that He blasphemed the Lord by claiming to be the Messiah; in their interpretation, **no true Messiah would hang on a tree and become a curse of God.**

However, this Torah reading helps us see how Jesus took the full measure of the curse on our behalf by hanging on a tree.

There on the tree, Jesus took on Himself the curse that was meant for us, accepting the penalty for our sins and experiencing for the first time what it felt like to be separated from God because of transgression.

This is what the Prophet Isaiah referred to when he wrote:

“Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:4–5

Paul, a former Pharisee, also referred to the curse when he wrote:

“Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.’” Galatians 3:13

There on the tree, Jesus took all of our curses so that we could experience His blessings. Those who follow Jesus are no longer alienated from God but have His laws inscribed on their hearts.

Having the laws of God written on our hearts means that God’s character and nature are known to us in a very personal way — not through external laws on stone tablets, but internally in our very souls.

That does not mean we can turn our backs on the Law, which helps us to better understand holiness and God's nature.

“Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.” Romans 3:31

This Week:

Week 50 - Ki Tavo (When You Enter)
Deuteronomy 26:1–29:9 (8); Isaiah 60:1–22; 1 Peter 2:1–25

“We are to enjoy His blessings on our lives if we are walking (entering into covenant) in obedience to His commandments”

“When you have entered [ki tavo] the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance ... take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the Lord your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for His name.” Deuteronomy 26:1–2

Last week, in Reading “When You Go Out” (Ki Tetze), God gave to the Israelites 74 of the 613 commandments found in the Torah—far more than any other Torah portion.

These laws mostly seem to be concerned with protecting the weaker members of society. They include the laws concerning the beautiful captive, paying workers in a timely fashion, and leaving a portion of the harvest in the field for the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger.

This week, in Reading “When You Enter” (Ki Tavo), God instructs Israel to bring the first-ripened fruits (**bikkurim**) to the central sanctuary once the Israelites have finally entered the Land He promised to them.

It must have been a relief for the children of Israel to hear that their prolonged, 40-year journey through the wilderness would finally be coming to an end. They were about to **cross over** into the Promised Land.

In fact, the word in Hebrew for a Hebrew, **Ivri**, comes from the root **I-V-R**, which means to **cross over**. In a spiritual sense, anyone who has **crossed over** into the Kingdom of God is an **Ivri**.

For that reason, perhaps, Paul said that being a Jew is a matter of having a **circumcised heart** more than circumcised flesh. **He wasn't by any means negating circumcision; he was emphasizing that to cross over into the Kingdom of God, there must be an inward change.** Those who worship God, worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

“But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.” Romans 2:29

The wilderness experience was so challenging and defining that future rabbinic texts consider any physical or spiritual desert as an enemy to be overcome. **Our challenge is to walk through the times of wilderness in our lives and be transformed so that we can enter the Promised Land.**

Ki Tavo promises that obedience to God will be rewarded. These rewards include **Divine protection, prosperity, and blessings on families and future generations.**

Deuteronomy 27:1-10, 28:1-14

The Altar on Mount Ebal

27 Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, “Keep the whole commandment that I command you today. ² And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster. ³ And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you. ⁴ And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. ⁵ And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them; ⁶ you shall build an altar to the Lord your God of uncut^[b] stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God, ⁷ and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God. ⁸ And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly.”

Curses from Mount Ebal

⁹ Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the Lord your God. ¹⁰ You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today.”

Blessings for Obedience

28 “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. ³ Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

⁷ “The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. ⁸ The Lord will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ⁹ The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹ And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. ¹² The Lord will open to you his

good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Disobedience and rebellion against God, however, result in punishment; the Word of God lists 98 chilling admonitions that take up half of this Parasha. These include diseases, plagues, poverty, famine, slavery, and defeat by enemies.

For this reason, the week’s Reading, Ki Tavo (When You Enter), has been called “the warning chapter,” and the Torah reader, who traditionally chants the Torah portion according to a sing-song pattern, instead **rushes through the recital of dreaded curses in a hushed, fearful tone.**

We need not look far to see that the Jewish People have been blessed by the Almighty God as He promised; but they have also done more than their fair share of suffering over the centuries due to the curses of the law that come into play because of sin Deuteronomy 28:15–68.

Deuteronomy 27:13-26, 28:15-68

Curses from Mount Ebal

¹³ And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. ¹⁴ And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice:

¹⁵ “Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the Lord, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.” And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁶ “Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁷ “Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor’s landmark.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁸ “Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁹ “Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁰ “Cursed be anyone who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s nakedness.”^[e] And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²¹ “Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²² “Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²³ “Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁴ “Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁵ “Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁶ “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.” And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

Curses for Disobedience

²⁸ ¹⁵ “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. ¹⁶ Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. ¹⁷ Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ¹⁸ Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. ¹⁹ Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

²⁰ “The Lord will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. ²¹ The Lord will make the pestilence stick to you until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. ²² The Lord will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought^[d] and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish. ²³ And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. ²⁴ The Lord will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.

²⁵ “The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶ And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. ²⁷ The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. ²⁸ The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, ²⁹ and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways.^[e] And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. ³⁰ You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall ravish her. You shall build a house, but you shall not dwell in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but you shall not enjoy its fruit. ³¹ Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat any of it. Your donkey shall be seized before your face, but shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, but there shall be no one to help you. ³² Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all day long, but you shall be helpless. ³³ A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually,³⁴ so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see. ³⁵ The Lord will

strike you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

³⁶ “The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. ³⁷ And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away. ³⁸ You shall carry much seed into the field and shall gather in little, for the locust shall consume it. ³⁹ You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. ⁴⁰ You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off. ⁴¹ You shall father sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours, for they shall go into captivity. ⁴² The cricket^[1] shall possess all your trees and the fruit of your ground. ⁴³ The sojourner who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. ⁴⁴ He shall lend to you, and you shall not lend to him. He shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

⁴⁵ “All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. ⁴⁶ They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, ⁴⁸ therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. ⁴⁹ The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰ a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. ⁵¹ It shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground, until you are destroyed; it also shall not leave you grain, wine, or oil, the increase of your herds or the young of your flock, until they have caused you to perish.

⁵² “They shall besiege you in all your towns, until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout all your land. And they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land, which the Lord your God has given you. ⁵³ And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. ⁵⁴ The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces,^[2] and to the last of the children whom he has left, ⁵⁵ so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. ⁵⁶ The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces,^[3] to her son and to her daughter, ⁵⁷ her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns.

⁵⁸ “If you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and awesome name, the Lord your God, ⁵⁹ then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting, and sicknesses grievous and lasting. ⁶⁰ And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you. ⁶¹ Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the Lord will bring upon you, until you are destroyed. ⁶² Whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, you shall be left few in number, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God. ⁶³ And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you. And you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it.

⁶⁴ “And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. ⁶⁶ Your life shall hang in doubt before you. Night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you shall say, ‘If only it were evening!’ and at evening you shall say, ‘If only it were morning!’ because of the dread that your heart shall feel, and the sights that your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸ And the Lord will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.”

Teviah, the father in the movie *Fiddler on the Roof*, expressed this sentiment so humorously after his horse became lame just before the Sabbath: “God, I know that we are Your chosen people, but ... couldn’t You choose someone else for a change?”

There are some who follow Jesus the Messiah, but believe that it is our lot in life to suffer from these curses along with the rest of the world; however, the Word of God tells us differently:

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (but if you are not led by the Spirit you are held accountable by the law).” **Galatians 5:18**

¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

God’s Judgment and the Law

¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and **all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.** ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the **doers of the law** who will be justified.” **Romans 2:11-13**

As covenant children of God, we are to enjoy His blessings on our lives if we are walking in obedience to His commandments.

"But Messiah has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When He was hung on the tree, He took upon Himself the curse for our wrongdoing." Galatians 3:13

Deuteronomy 26:1-19 **Offerings of Firstfruits and Tithes**

“When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you **for an inheritance** and have taken possession of it and live in it, ² you shall **take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest** from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall **go to the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name to dwell there.**³ And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’⁴ Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.

⁵ “And you shall make response before the Lord your God, ‘**A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.**’⁶ And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor.⁷ **Then we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.**’⁸ **And the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror,^[a] with signs and wonders.**’⁹ **And he brought us into this place and gave us this land,** a land flowing with milk and honey.¹⁰ And behold, **now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Lord, have given me.**’ And you shall set it down before the Lord your God and worship before the Lord your God.¹¹ And you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the sojourner who is among you.

¹² “When you have **finished paying all the tithe of your produce** in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled,¹³ then you shall say before the Lord your God, ‘I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. **I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.**’¹⁴ I have not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, or offered any of it to the dead. **I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God. I have done according to all that you have commanded me.**’¹⁵ **Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us,** as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.’

¹⁶ “This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. **You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.**’¹⁷ **You have declared today** that the Lord is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.

Blessings Come from Being a Blessing

One of the first acts of obedience that the Lord asks of His people is to remove the firstfruits of our increase, our tithe, the sacred portion—and to give it to those who serve the Lord, as well as to the poor.

“Then say to the LORD your God: ‘**I have removed from My house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow,** according to all You commanded.’” (Deuteronomy 26:13)

If we are not obeying this command, then we have little Biblical basis on which to expect God’s blessings on our finances.

God promises that if we obey Him in giving our tithe, He will rebuke the devourer for our sakes and bless our finances.

“Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts.” Malachi 3:11

But the reverse holds true as well: if we fail to give to God the “hallowed portion” of our income, then we are breaking covenant by **“robbing God.”**

When we fail to tithe, we come under a curse and give the devourer free rein to work havoc and destroy our finances.

While Jesus has removed from us the curse of the law, He has not removed from us the obligation to follow His example by living a holy life. When we understand that we are walking in sin in some area, we are to repent and return to Him.

By giving our tithe—the holy (kadosh) portion of our income—removing it from our possession, we return to God in so many ways and He returns to us.

“Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty. But you ask, “How are we to return?” Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, “How are we robbing you?” In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing Me.” Malachi 3:7–9

In Judaism, the giving of **tzedakah** (charity) is considered such an important **mitzvah** (commandment) that if someone does not fulfill this law, their lineage actually becomes suspect.

Giving to the poor is an obligation in Judaism, a duty that cannot be forsaken even by those who themselves are in need. Some sages have said that tzedakah is the highest of all commandments, equal to all of them combined, and that a person who does not perform tzedakah is equivalent to an idol worshiper.

This principle is affirmed also in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament), which emphasizes that if we don’t give when we see a brother in material need, it is doubtful that the love of God truly dwells within us.

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (1 John 3:17)

Of course, the Lord rewards compassion and generosity. He promises that when we give to the poor and needy, the widows and orphans, He will pay us back for what we have given.

“Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his deed.” (Proverbs 19:17)

Transition: Jesus, in Matthew 6:1-4, teaches on this very topic:

Matthew 6:1-18

Giving to the Needy

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

²“Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Jesus addresses the good deed of giving alms first. **The meaning of the word alms is compassion.** It is associated with giving money to the poor and should not be confused with the tithe that belongs to God. Alms could be giving directly to an individual or collected in a pooled fund to be distributed to the poor.

Jesus instructs His disciples to do their almsgiving in secret. He wants them to do it in such a way that other men do not notice. When a person receives charity from another he knows, there is always a sense of indebtedness that goes with it. When the giver is unknown to the poor, the only thanks he can give is to God.

The second instruction is to not sound a trumpet before giving alms. In Jesus’ day wealthy people, who were puffed up with pride, may have actually sounded a trumpet before they gave alms making it clear to everyone that they were charitable people. The point Jesus is making is that people shouldn’t announce their giving. He reinforces this thought with His next command, “**Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.**” We know that it is impossible for the left hand not to know what the right hand is doing but the point is to be discreet.

In His discussion on good deeds Jesus draws attention to the word **hypocrite**. It is His first recorded use of the word. Therefore, we should gain a clear understanding of its meaning so it can be applied properly in future contexts. **A hypocrite is an actor under an assumed character.** He is playing a role. What you see, is not reality; it’s phony.

Jesus said hypocrites could be found in the synagogues and streets. They are also found in churches and other public places. Whenever an audience gathers, their performance can be seen. They are actors performing on a public stage. And they live for the applause of men for the role they are playing.

The hypocrite is motivated by a pride that says, “See how good I am” and a desire to receive the credit for his performance. **The hypocrite does his acts of righteousness out of love for himself not others.**

Deuteronomy 26:18-19

Offerings of Firstfruits and Tithes (continued)

¹⁸And **the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments,** ¹⁹and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor high above all nations that he has made, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord our God, **as he promised.”**

A Treasured Possession

“And the LORD has declared this day that **you are His people, His treasured possession as He promised, and that you are to keep all His commands.** He has declared that He will set you in **praise, fame and honor** high above all the nations He has made and that you will be a people **holy** to the LORD your God, **as He promised.**” Deuteronomy 26:18–19

The Lord promises Israel in this week’s Reading that if they keep His commandments, they will be “His treasured possession.” This promise is also found in Exodus:

“Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be My treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” Exodus 19:5–6

And although they have experienced many curses over the generations, in the Haftarah (prophetic portion), the prophet Isaiah tells Israel that God in His favor and mercy will one day exalt them even in the midst of much persecution and hatred against them:

“Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.” Isaiah 60:15

In the New Testament, all followers of Jesus are called God’s special people. Because of our covenant with the Almighty God through the blood of Jesus, both Jew and Gentile together can know that they are God’s most treasured possession.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you **out of darkness into His marvelous light.**” 1 Peter 2:9

In Hebrew, the word for **special treasure** is **segulah**. The **color purple** in Hebrew is **sagol**, a word that comes from the same root letters. Why? Purple is the color of **royalty!**

As the Lord’s **segulah**, we are clothed in **sagol—the color of royalty.** We are children of the King and He is our Father. He values and treasures us. There is no need to search for external or superficial qualifications. This is simply our identity in the Messiah!

We might look at ourselves and say, I don’t look much like a treasure.

We might check in with our emotions and say, I don’t feel that I qualify to be called a treasure of God; I have so many faults and weaknesses—I need to work on keeping my temper; I’m not yet disciplined enough; I don’t witness enough—whatever we perceive to be our weakness.

But as the apostle Paul says, **we are to put no confidence in the attributes of our flesh** Philippians 3:3. Certainly, if anyone could have qualified as a treasure by the certificates on his wall and trophies on his desk, it would have been the apostle Paul, who described himself in this way:

“... circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.” Philippians 3:5–6

He considered himself without fault in the flesh and in his keeping of the Torah; yet he put no value on all of these external qualifications. Instead, he put his trust in the person of the Messiah:

“**But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Messiah. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Messiah Yeshua Adonai (my Lord), for whose sake I have lost all things ...**

“**I consider them garbage, that I may gain Messiah and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Messiah—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.**” Philippians 3:7–9

Although Paul continued to keep the law perfectly, he understood that his faultless performance was not to be compared to the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

And while our own performance may not be as flawless as Paul’s, we must accept by faith that if we are empowered to walk in Adonai’s ways by His Spirit and are obedient, then we are in truth His special treasure.

Despite our faults, weaknesses and imperfections, the Lord loves and values us, and we can say, “**I am royalty—a child of the King of Kings—the Special Treasure (segulah) of the Lord—a precious treasure!**”

He values us because we are His covenant children and are each created in His image and likeness. **A spark of His divine (Shekinah) glory is within us.**

If we have a \$100 bill and it accidentally drops on the ground, getting soiled, stepped on, crumpled, and bent—is it worth any less than \$100? No, it retains its value.

So too it is with us. Many of us, however, do not understand our value.

Some of us have not always been treated like a treasure. Perhaps parents, schoolmates, spouses, or fellow Believers have not treated us with honor and respect. We may have even been abused or mistreated terribly by people, as if we are someone inconsequential.

But God does not see us this way. Even if we have been broken; even if our heart has been torn in two or our whole life shattered, we are still a beautiful treasure to the Lord—“a crown of beauty and a royal diadem in the hand of our God.” Isaiah 62:3

How do we care for treasures? We put them in special places and guard them jealously, keeping them in a safe, secure place. Can we even fathom the grief and wrath that God feels when someone causes one of His segulah to suffer?

We need to leave these injustices and hurts in the hands of the Lord who says He will vindicate us. Our only choice is to forgive those who have hurt and mistreated us.

Sometimes, when we don't see ourselves as valuable and worthy of respect, we send signals to others that we are valueless and worthless. The result is often that they will treat us as such.

**** Or our perception of how others treat us can prevent us from moving forward in God's promises. For instance, when the Israelites saw themselves as grasshoppers, they thought that the giants in Canaan (who occupied the Promise Land they were to possess, now 38 years later as a result of this false perspective) did as well! ****

But when we begin to value and respect ourselves in a balanced and Godly manner, we will find more and more that the people in our lives properly value and esteem us as well.

Part of our healing and recovery is a transformation in the way we see ourselves—knowing our identity in the Messiah as righteous, whole, precious, valuable. We receive these precious attributes only through His Divine Covenant.

Let us enter into everything that God has for us—our freedom from condemnation, freedom from the curses, joy unspeakable, and peace that passes all understanding.

Deuteronomy 26:1-29:9

The Covenant Renewed in Moab

29^[1] These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.

² [1] And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt (the World), to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ³ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. ⁴ But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. ⁵ I have led you forty (The number 40 has great significance in the Bible; in addition to repentance, it is associated with testing, judgment, renewal, and new beginnings.) years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. ⁶ You have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. ⁷ And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them. ⁸ We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. ⁹ Therefore keep the words of this covenant and do them, that you may prosper^[k] in all that you do.

All these and more have been given to us through the New Covenant, bought with the precious blood of the sinless Lamb of God, Jesus the Messiah!

Next Week's Reading & Location:

Week 51 - NITZAVIM (You Are Standing)
Deuteronomy 29:9 (10)–30:20; Isaiah 61:10–63:9; Romans 10:1–21

“The King is in the Field”

These 40 days are a time of meeting with the King of Kings - a time to be happy. Which also corresponds to the prophesied Messianic Virgin Birth (Isaiah 7:14), Jesus' Birth (which this year would have fallen on September 7, 2019), and the prophesied Messianic Return (Zechariah 14:1-4, 9), Jesus' Return (which this year will fall on September 29th through October 1st, 2019).