

Bechukotai (by my decrees)



Leviticus 26:3 If you walk in My statutes **אֶתֵּן** and keep My commandments and do **אֶתֵּן** them; 4 Then I will give you rain in its season and the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit. C-MATS

Question: Why does it say throughout the Torah, "If you obey, you will receive such and such; if you do not obey, it shall happen to you such and such"--things that are of the present world, such as plenty and hunger, war and peace, sovereignty and conquest, inhabitancy of the land and exile, success and failure, and the like? **יהוה** promised us in the Torah that if we observe it with joy... He will remove from us all things that may prevent us from fulfilling it, such as illness, war, hunger, and the like, and He will bestow upon us all blessings that bolster our hand to observe the Torah such as abundant food, peace, and much gold and silver, in order that we should not need to preoccupy ourselves all our days with our material needs but be free to learn the wisdom and observe the commandments by which we shall merit the life of the World To come. *Chumash*

Question: What does “If you walk in My statutes **אֶת־** and keep My commandments” actually mean? If you will follow My decrees by engaging in intensive Torah study, with the intention that such study will lead you to observe My commandments properly, and, if you actually do perform them, you will merit the blessings given in the following verses. *Chumash*



Leviticus 26:5 And shall last *until* your threshing **אֶת־** until the grape harvest and the grape harvest will extend to **אֶת־** the sowing time: and you will eat as much as you want and live in your land safely. C-MATS

Question: How plentiful will your crops be if you keep the laws of the Sabbatical years? The prosperity will be so great that you will still be busy threshing your grain when the time comes to harvest your grapes, and you will still be occupied with your vintage when the time comes to sow next year's grain. The verse stresses that constant activity is part of the blessing. *Chumash*

Question: Is working hard a blessing? When people are busy, they feel fulfilled and their health is better, as the verse says, you will eat your bread until you have had enough, and they have neither the time nor the inclination to go visiting other lands, as the verse says, you will dwell securely in your land. But when people are idle, they seek amusement and motivation. They lose the discipline of home, routine, and community. This increases the dangers of sin and has ill effects even on physical well-being.

Spiritual Exercise: Seek fulfillment in working hard this week. Do not seek ways to amuse or pleasure yourself.

Leviticus 26:6 And I will give peace in the land and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid: and I will remove wild beasts out of the land and the sword will not go through your land. C-MATS

Question: What is the value of **peace in the land**? There may be food, there may be drink, but if there is no peace, there is nothing. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:7 And you will chase **את** your enemies and they will fall before your sword. C-MATS

Question: How will יהוה protect us from our enemies? If we keep יהוה Father's commandments our enemies will also be **את** Yahusha's enemies. C-MATS

Leviticus 26:8 And five of you will chase 100 and 100 of you will put 10,000 to flight: and your enemies will fall before your sword. C-MATS

Question: Is it natural that the observance of Sabbatical years will enable a hundred Israelites to pursue ten thousand enemies, and that the violation of the Sabbatical laws will cause the nation to be exiled and helpless? The Torah's intention is to teach that obedience to יהוה is of such magnitude that it will be rewarded miraculously. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:9 For I will turn towards you and make **אתכם** you fruitful and multiply **אתכם** you and establish **את** My covenant **אתכם** with you. C-MATS

Question: What will happen if we strive to keep יהוה Laws? Leviticus 26:9 promises that if we strive to keep Torah that **את** will establish יהוה Father's Covenant with us and not reject us, but Leviticus 26:15-38 begins the promises of judgment (*chastisement*) which will be administered by יהוה Father through **את** Yahusha against all His covenant children who do not honor יהוה Father's Torah. C-MATS

Leviticus 26:10 And you will eat last year's harvest and throw out the old to make room for the new. 11 And I will set My Tabernacle among you: and I will not reject **אתכם** you. C-MATS

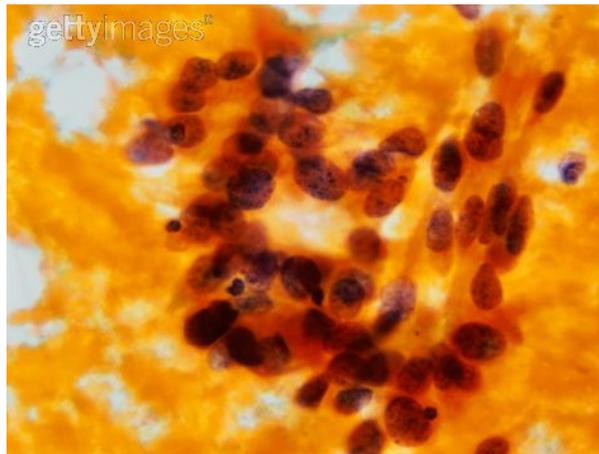
Question: What does this promise mean, "I will not reject **אתכם** you"? יהוה's Presence will rest with Israelites wherever they are. יהוה's Presence will rest directly upon the righteous among you meaning that יהוה will be even closer to the righteous than to the angels. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:12 And I will walk among you and will be your Elohim **ואתם** and you will be My people. 13 I *am* יהוה your Elohim who brought **אתכם** you out of the land of Egypt, so that you would not be their slaves; and I have broken the bands of your yoke and made **אתכם** you walk upright. 14 But if you do not listen to Me and obey **את** all these commandments. 15 And if you despise My statutes, or if **את** My judgments you reject, so that you do not obey **את** all My commandments, *but* you break **את** My covenant: 16 Also I will do **זאת** this to you; I will bring upon you terror, **את** consumption (*disease*) **ואת** and burning fever that will dim your eyes and cause sorrow of heart: and you will sow your seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. 17 And I will set My face against you and your enemies will defeat you: those who hate you will reign over you; and you will flee when no one is pursuing **אתכם** you. C-MATS

Question: What are the seven sins that receive punishment? (a) to not dedicate yourselves to Torah study; (b) eventually stop performing commandments (or pick and choose the ones you want to keep) (c) be disgusted by others who are loyal to the Torah; (d) hate the teachers who explain the ordinances; (e) prevent others from being observant; (f) deny that יהוה gave the commandments, (g) deny the very existence of the יהוה Who made the covenant. *Chumash*

Question: What are the first series of punishments? The seven sins will have brought the following seven punishments:

1. **Consumption-** This is a disease that consumes the flesh; anoles in Old French, blisters. [The afflicted] appears like one who has had swellings and whose swellings have abated, thereby causing a sad appearance to his face [due to the stretched skin sagging after the swellings have abated].
2. **Burning fever-**This is an illness that makes the body feverish, heating it up and making it burn, like “My anger has been fired up and burns to *the lowest hell.*” Deuteronomy 32:22)
3. **Dim your eyes and cause sorrow of heart-**The eyes look with anticipation, longing to see that the illness will abate, and he will recover, but, he eventually does not recover, and depression falls upon his family members when he dies.
4. **You will sow your seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it.** Sowing seeds that will produce crops for the enemy
5. **Your enemies will defeat you.** Being struck down before the enemy
6. **Those who hate you will reign over you.** Being under enemy control
7. **You will flee when no one is pursuing you.** Fleeing with no one in pursuit. *Chumash*



Cancer cell growth

Question: What are the top ten incurable diseases today that are used as punishment against those who do not obey His commandments?

1. Ischemic heart disease, or coronary artery disease - 8.8 million deaths (in 2015)
 2. Stroke- 6.2 million deaths
 3. Lower respiratory infections (flu, pneumonia, bronchitis)- 3.2 million deaths
 4. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (lung)- 3.1 million deaths
 5. Trachea, bronchus, and lung cancers- 1.7 million deaths
 6. Diabetes mellitus (pancreas)- 1.6 million deaths
 7. Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias (memory) -1.5 million deaths
 8. Dehydration due to diarrheal diseases (intestines) – 1.4 million deaths
 9. Tuberculosis (lung)- 1.3 million deaths
 10. Cirrhosis (liver)-1.2 million deaths
- World Health Organization (WHO) 2015

Question: Why does יהוה punish his people? If the Israelite people fail to live up to their obligations as the Chosen People, they will fall from the blessed state promised them above, and become the victim of the horrendous punishments described below. These are meant not as revenge, but to influence the people to repent, and for that reason they are inflicted in stages of increasing severity, measure for measure. If the first stage comes and Israel does not derive the desired lesson, their refusal to recognize and heed the word of יהוה makes the sin more serious. Consequently, the next and more severe stage of punishment will befall them, and so on, until, as the climax of the chapter states, repentance and יהוה's mercy finally comes. *Chumash*

Spiritual Exercise: Dedicate yourself to studying Torah this week and see if your frustrations disappear and peace comes to you instead.



Babylon conquers Israel

Leviticus 26:18 And if you will still not listen to Me (*and obey Me*), then I will punish **אתכם** you seven times more for your sins. C-MATS

Question: What does it mean “I will punish **אתכם** you seven times more”? יהוה punishes only measure for measure; there would not be seven punishments for one sin, but only one punishment per sin. If you do not repent, you will receive seven punishments in total. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:19 And I will break **את** the pride you have in your own power; and I will make **את** your heavens like iron **ואת** and your earth like brass. C-MATS



Famine in Israel

Leviticus 26:20 And your strength will be spent in vain: because your land **וְהִרְבָּה** her increase, will not yield its produce, neither will the trees of the land yield their fruits. C-MATS

Question: What is the second series of punishments? The seven punishments of this series are:

1. **I will break the pride of your strength.** This is the Destruction of the Temple. (**Behold, I will profane וְהִרְבָּה My sanctuary, the pride of your power (strength). Ezek. 24:21.**)
2. **Make your skies like iron.** The sky will not sweat, just as iron does not sweat, and therefore, there will be drought in the world
3. **And your land like copper.** Just as copper sweats, thus causing its fruits to rot [through its dampness].
4. **Strength will be spent in vain.** You will work hard in vain like a man who did toil, who plowed, sowed, weeded, cut off [the thorns], and hoed-if blight comes and ruins everything, this man's teeth become blunt [i.e., his spirit will surely be broken]! [Thus is the force of the retribution described here].
5. **Your land will not yield its produce.** The earth will not yield crops, even [that quantity of seed] that you "bring forth" to [the field] at the time of sowing.
6. **Neither will the trees of the land yield their fruits.** The trees will be smitten even from the earth, for they will not be able to put forth their fruits in the season when fruits sprout forth. [The production of fruit originates from the earth in which the tree is rooted. The tree will blossom, but the earth will have no power to bring forth fruit.]
7. **Neither will the trees of the land yield their fruits.** This represents two separate curses in one phrase. If a tree will produce any fruit, they will drop off. Chumash.

Discuss: Are you having success at work? Are all your profits being eaten up and you are still in debt? Consider how you are living your life.

Leviticus 26:21 And if you go against Me and will not listen to Me (*and obey Me*); I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. C-MATS

Question: Will the Israelites recognize that their misfortunes are caused by their sins? The people will refuse to recognize that their misfortunes were Divinely ordained and that, if carefully and objectively analyzed, the punishments could be seen to fit the crime, and therefore, as a clear message to repent. Instead, they will insist that everything was a coincidence, the result of natural causes. *Chumash*

Discuss: Are the people or the United States in the same state of mind as the Israelites-refusing to recognize that their misfortunes are punishment from יהוה?



Leviticus 26:22 I will send among you **אתי** beasts that will rob **אתכם** you of your children and destroy **אתי** your cattle and make **אתכם** you few in number until your highways are desolate.23 And if you refuse my correction and still go against Me; 24 Then I will go against you and punish **אתכם** you seven times *more* for your sins. C-MATS

Question: What are the third series of punishments? The seven punishments of this series are:
Beasts that will rob אתכם you of your children and destroy אתי your cattle-

1. wild beasts
2. domestic animals
3. poisonous snakes
4. death of children
5. loss of livestock

and make אתכם you few in number until your highways are desolate.

6. decrease of population
7. destruction of roads. *Chumash*

Question: What will happen if the Israelites continue to not repent? If you persist in thinking that all of My carefully calibrated punishments were merely coincidental -- so that My message is wasted -- I will punish you measure for measure by making it more difficult for you to perceive the Divine hand. The next series of punishments will seem haphazard, for their correspondence to your sins will not be as obvious as in the case of the earlier punishments. This follows the principle that if people refuse to "see" *יִהְיֶה*, He withdraws His Presence [Hiddenness of the Countenance], and makes it harder for them to recognize the truth. *Chumash*

Discuss: Has the United States already come to this punishment that they cannot recognize truth even when presented to them?

Leviticus 26:25 *וְהִבֵּאתִי* *And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of My covenant: and when you are huddled together within your cities, I will send the sickness among you; and you will be delivered into the hand of your enemy.* C-MATS



Siege of Jerusalem

Leviticus 26:26 And I will cut off the supply of your bread, ten women will bake your bread in one oven and they will dole out your bread by weight: and you will eat and not be satisfied. C-MATS

Question: Why did the women only use one oven? Due to a shortage of firewood, many women will share an oven. To make matters worse, the grain will be rotten, so that the loaves will fall apart, forcing the women to weigh the baked crumbs to divide them equally. *Chumash*

Question: What is the fourth series of punishments? The seven punishments of this series are:

1. **Bring a sword against you-** the sword of foreign invaders has victory over you.
2. **You are huddled together within your cities-** siege, forcing people into the cities
3. The siege causes food shortage
4. Lack of fuel
5. Crumbling bread
6. Constant hunger
7. **I will send the sickness among you-** plague. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:27 And if בָּזֵאת in this you still will not listen (obey) to Me, but go against Me. C-MATS

Question: How does יהוה feel when He punishes us? When a father punishes his child, the suffering he inflicts on himself is greater than anything experienced by the child. So it is with יהוה: His pain is greater than our pain. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:28 Then I will go against you furiously; and I will chastise אתכם you seven times more for your sins. 29 And you will eat the flesh of your sons and daughters. 30 And I will destroy את your high places and cut down את your images and throw את your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols and I will detest אתכם you. 31 And I will make את your cities waste and bring to desolation את your sanctuaries and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet odors. C-MATS

Question: Why did יהוה destroy their cities? The people placed their confidence in the high towers from which they would be able to repulse invaders, but יהוה would destroy the buildings, leaving the people helpless against their enemies. *Chumash*

Question: What are the fifth series of punishments? The seven punishments of this series are:

1. **You will eat the flesh of your sons and daughters-** cannibalism
2. **Destroy your high places and cut down your images-** destruction of defense structures (city walls)
3. **Throw your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols-** death of people
4. **I will detest you-** loss of the Shechinah
5. **Make your cities waste-** destruction of cities
6. **Bring to desolation your sanctuaries-** This is 2 curses in one phrase. Desolation of the sanctuaries
7. יהוה's refusal to accept offerings. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:32 And will bring I את the land into desolation: and your enemies who live in your land will be astonished at it. C-MATS



Jerusalem destroyed

Question: What curse still rests on Israel? Although Israel would be exiled from its land, none of its conquerors or successors would ever prosper on it. Indeed, throughout the many centuries of Israelite exile, Israel, once a land flowing with milk and honey, remained a desolate, inhospitable country, barely able to support its inhabitants on a subsistence level. *Chumash*

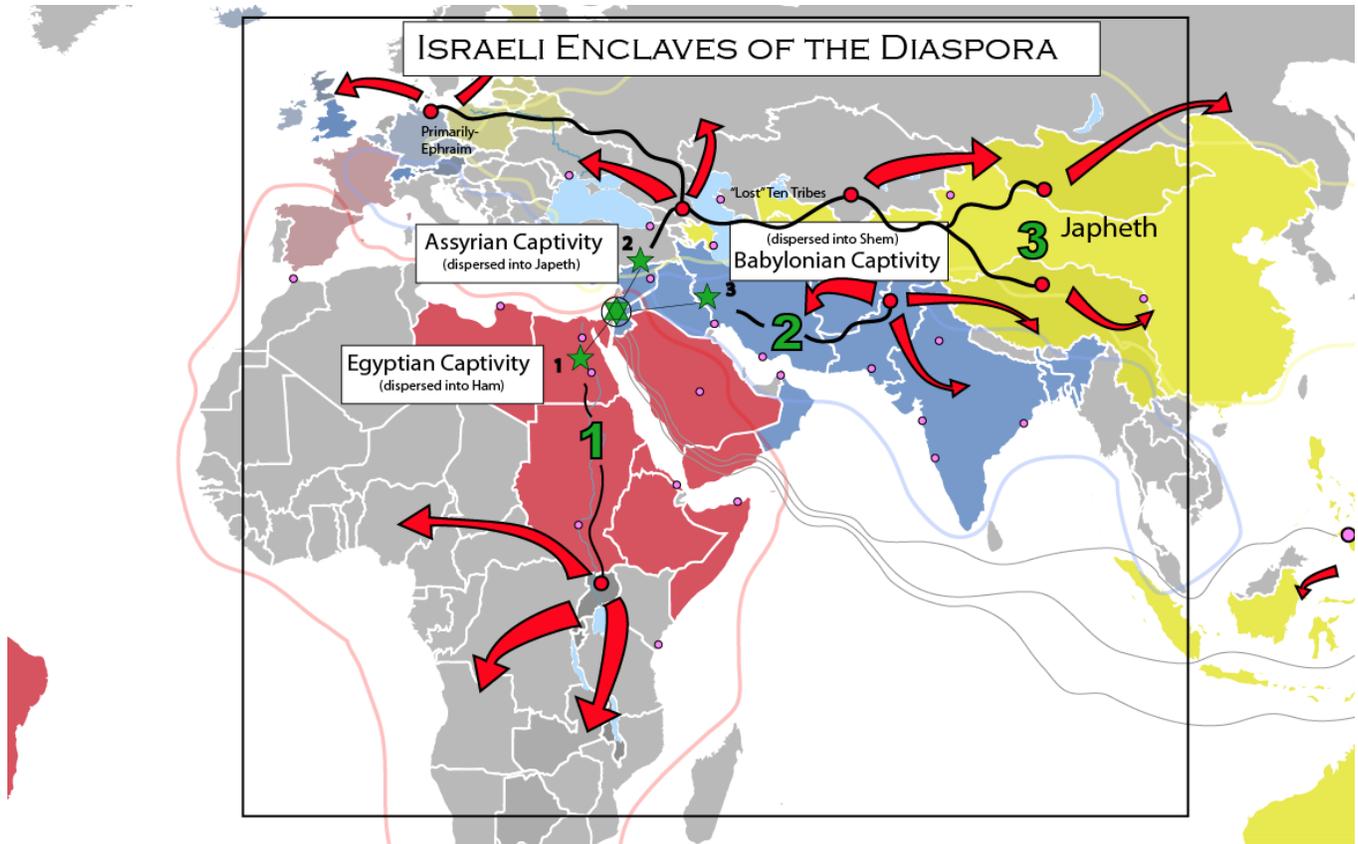


Israel today as a barren wilderness

Leviticus 26:33 And I will scatter you among the heathen (*gentile nations*) and will draw a sword in pursuit after you: and your land will become desolate and your cities wasted. C-MATS

Question: Why is exile such a curse? Israelites will be scattered and isolated from one another, and exile is much harder to bear when one does not have the support of fellow citizens. *Chumash*

Question: How did our exile bless the world? The people of Israel were exiled among the nations only in order that the Truth about יהוה would be spread among the nations.



Question: Why do you think parents punish their children? Parents are responsible to educate their kids and prepare them for life. They really want them to be happy and successful. Sometimes punishment is the only way to get their lessons across to the kids, so they will pay attention and realize that the consequences of what they do are important.

Question: What does it mean that "sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind?" Sometimes what seems like strictness is actually much better for a person than just letting him do whatever he wants. For instance the "cruel" mother who doesn't let her son eat only junk-food (like he wants to) is really being kind to her child by helping him to grow up healthy and learn good eating habits etc.

Question: 'One positive decision or action leads to another, and likewise one negative decision or action leads to another.' Why do you think this is so? The decisions we make, and the actions we take, largely determine the course of our lives. Each time we choose to do something positive, we are in essence training ourselves in that direction. The next time we are faced in a similar situation, we will find ourselves more naturally inclined to make another positive choice. The same dynamic works in the negative, as well. Sometimes choosing to do the right thing, even when it's difficult, can be a turning point to bring us to a better, happier life.

Question: How is יהוה like our parent? A parent has a very special relationship with a child. He loves him intensely, yet at times he must express this love in the form of restriction or discipline. The parent has a clear picture of what life-tools will ultimately give the child the best chance to achieve happiness and success. In his great love for the child, he will do whatever he can to educate him in this way, even if at times it brings him into conflict with the child's desires. יהוה, our loving parent, cares for us so deeply that He arranges every event in our lives for the sole purpose of bringing us the most ultimate spiritual good, although at times we, His children aren't yet able to recognize it.



Scattered to foreign lands

Leviticus 26:34 Then shall enjoy the land אַתְּ her Sabbaths, as long as it lies desolate וְאַתְּ *and you will be* in your enemies land; *even* then the land will rest and enjoy אַתְּ her Sabbaths. C-MATS

Question: Why were the Israelites exiled to Babylon? The exile resulted from Israel's failure to observe the commandment of the Sabbatical year. If the people do not let the land rest in their presence, it will rest in their absence. Because of the seventy Sabbaticals that Israel had violated prior to and during the period of the First Temple, the Babylonian exile lasted for seventy years, during which the land made up for the rest of which it had been deprived. *Chumash*



Rest the Land

Leviticus 26:35 As long as *the land* lies desolate it will rest **את** because it did not rest in your Sabbaths, when you lived on it. **36** And on those of you who are left, **וְהָיָה אֲתִי** and I will bring anxiety in their hearts **בְּאֶרְצָתָם** in lands of their enemies and will chase **אֹתָם** them and the sound of a shaken leaf will frighten them; and they will flee like fleeing from a sword; and they will fall when no one pursues them. **37** And they will stumble over each other when no one pursues them like fleeing from a sword and you will have no power to stand before your enemies. **38** And you will perish among the heathen and the land of your enemies will devour **אֶתְכֶם** you. **39** And those who are left will pine away in their iniquities **בְּאֶרְצָתָם** in lands of your enemies in the iniquities **אֲבוֹתָם** of their fathers **אִתָּם** with them shall they pine away. C-MATS

Question: What will happen to those Israelites in exile? The exile will so demoralize people that even brothers will become selfish and think only of their own best interests. The exiles may be subject to new sins, committed because they will be in the lands of your foes. Instead of recognizing the true cause of the exile, some people will say that the Torah's commandments applied only in Israel, but in foreign lands Israelites must adapt to the new conditions. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:40 If they will confess **את** their iniquity **ואת** and the iniquity **אבותם** of their fathers, which they committed against Me in their rebellion and that they went against Me, 41 At that time I will be going against **אתם** them **וקבצתי** and I will bring them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they accept **את** the punishment of their iniquity, 42 Then I will remember **את** My covenant with Jacob and also **את** My covenant with Isaac and also **את** My covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land. C-MATS

Question: When will we know that Israel has truly repented? When Israel repents and becomes worthy of redemption, יהוה will remember the Land by not allowing gentiles to remain on it. The people will seek to appease יהוה, so that He will allow them to return to the Land. *Chumash*

Leviticus 26:43 The land will be left abandoned by them and will enjoy **את** her Sabbaths, while she lies desolate without them: and they will accept **את** the punishment of their iniquity: because, even because their soul abhorred My judgments, and they despised **ואת** and My statutes. 44 And even for all **זאת** this when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away or reject them to destroy them and break My covenant **אתם** with them: I am יהוה their Elohim. C-MATS

Question: How will יהוה care for us in exile? יהוה comforts His exiled, tormented people. Let them not think that the violence of exile prove that they are no longer יהוה's Chosen People. No, says יהוה. Even in exile, they are still My people and My covenant with them remains in full force. Even at times when the exiles have not repented and do not deserve His help, יהוה will perform miracles for them so that His Name will not be desecrated. *Chumash*



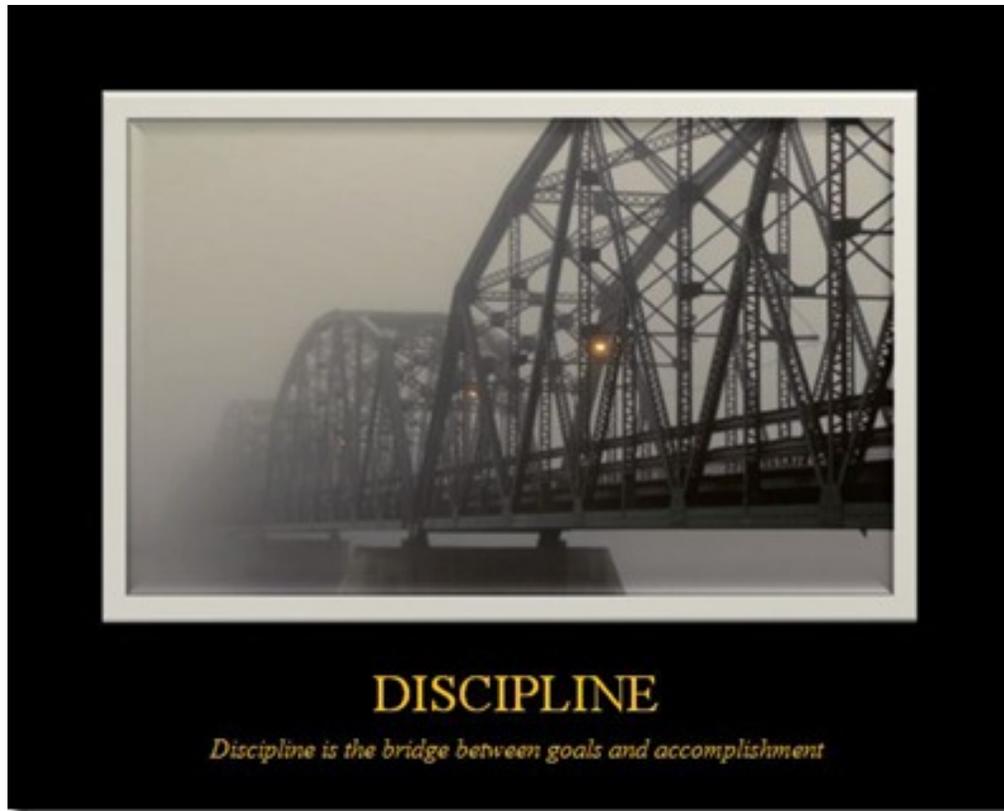
Exiles cared for by angels

Leviticus 26:45 I will, for their sakes, remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought אֶת־הֵם *them* out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their Elohim: I am יְהוָה. 46 These *are* the statutes and judgments and Torah, which יְהוָה made between Him and *the* Children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses. C-MATS



A model of the second temple in Jerusalem

Question: The Israelites did not listen to the warnings in this chapter, so what happens to them? This chapter refers to the sins of the First Temple era and its aftermath, while Deuteronomy 28 refers to the sins leading up to the second Destruction and the current exile. Thus our chapter speaks frequently of neglect of the Sabbatical Year as a cause of the exile, a theme that is explicitly mentioned in II Chronicles 36:21 as a reason for the exile. Another major proof that our chapter speaks of the First Temple era is that it does not promise either complete repentance or a total redemption. Verse 42 says only that יְהוָה will remember the covenant, but not that He will return Israel to its former eminence or that all the exiled Israelites will return to the Land. After the promise that יְהוָה will remember the covenant, the very next verse speaks again of the violated Sabbaticals and the Land bereft of its children. Indeed, when the Babylonian exile ended, Israel did not become a free country; it was a vassal state of Persia, and later of Syria and Rome. When King Cyrus of Persia gave permission to the Israelites to return to the Land, only 42,360 people did return, a pitifully small percentage of the nation, and all through the years of the Second Temple, the majority of Israelites lived elsewhere.



Question: Should we despise the discipline of יהוה? Should we be angry when bad things happen to us?

Job 5:17 Surely, happy is the man who Eloah corrects; therefore, despise not you the chastening of the Almighty. 18 For He makes sore and binds up; He wounds and His hands make whole. 19 He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven there shall no evil touch you. 20 In famine He will redeem you from death; and in war from the power of the sword. 21 You shall be hid from the scourge of the tongue; neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes. 22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh; neither shall you be afraid of the beasts of the earth. 23 For you shall be in league with the stones of the field; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. 24 And you shall know that your tent is in peace; and you shall visit your fold and shall miss nothing. 25 You shall know also that your seed shall be great and your offspring as the grass of the earth. 26 You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of grain comes in its season. C-MATS

Psalms 94:12 Blessed is the man who You chasten, O Yah and teach out of Your Torah; 13 That You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be dug for the wicked. 14 For יהוה will not cast off His people; neither will He forsake His inheritance. 15 For judgment shall return to righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it. C-MATS

Proverb 3:11 My son, despise not the chastening of יהוה; neither be weary of His reproof: 12 For אה whom יהוה loves He reproves; Even as a father אה son in whom he delights. C-MATS

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the Torah is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: **24** To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattery of the foreigners tongue. **25** Lust not after her beauty in your heart; neither let her take you with her eyelids. **26** For on account of a harlot *a man is brought* to a piece of bread; and the adulteress hunts for the precious life. C-MATS

Hebrews 12:7 If you endure chastening, Elohim deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? **8** But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are you bastards, and not sons. **9** Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? **10** For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. **11** Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised. C-MATS

Question: What is this verse saying? According to this part of scripture, יהוה is giving us the discipline so that we have a life of peace and make us righteous like him. יהוה wants each of his sons away from the things of this world and everything that keeps us from יהוה as the word “holy” means to be separated from what takes us away from יהוה. So when we suffer a tragedy or something that we see and recognize as a discipline of יהוה, then it is because he wants us to come to him and obey his word!

Revelations 3:119 **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the assemblies.** C-MATS



Question: Does יהוה discipline unfairly?

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O יהוה, אלה You are our Father; we are the clay אלה and You our potter; and we all are the work of Your hand. C-MATS

Jeremiah 30:11 11 For I am אלה with you, says יהוה, to save you: for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have scattered you, but I will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you in measure and will in no wise leave you unpunished. C-MATS

Question: What happens to the man who ignores יהוה's discipline?

Psalms 39:11 When You with rebukes do correct man for iniquity, You made his beauty to consume away like a moth: Surely every man is vanity. C-MATS

Proverb 13:18 Poverty and shame *shall come to him that refuses correction*; but he that regards correction shall be honored. C-MATS

Proverb 15:10 There is grievous correction for him that forsakes the way; and he that hates reproof shall die. C-MATS

Proverb 15:31 The ear that listens to the reproof of life shall abide among the wise. 32 He that refuses correction despises his own soul; but he that listens to reproof gets understanding. 33 The אלה fear of יהוה is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor goes humility. C-MATS

Question: Should a father discipline his child like יהוה disciplines us?

Proverb 23:13 Withhold not correction from the child; *for* if you beat him with the rod, he will not die. 14 אלה You shall beat him with the rod and shall deliver his soul from Sheol. C-MATS

Proverb 29:17 Correct your son and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul. C-MATS

Proverb 15:5 A fool despises his father's correction; but he that regards reproof gets prudence. C-MATS

Leviticus 27:1 And יהוה spoke to Moses saying 2 Speak to the Children of Israel אלה and you say to them, When a man makes a *clearly defined* vow (*promise*) to ליהוה to give him an amount equal to the value of a human being. 3 The value you are to assign to a man between the ages of 20 and 60 years is to be 50 shekels of silver (*1 ¼ pounds*) with the sanctuary shekel being the standard. C-MATS

Question: How much is 1 ¼ pounds of silver worth today? \$20.00 an ounce. 20 ounces (1 ¼ pounds) of silver today would equal \$400.00.

Question: What gives a person value and makes him important? Is it his wealth? His looks or talents? According to the Torah, a person is important and valuable just because he's a person created by יהוה. When somebody wanted to donate his 'value' in silver to the Tabernacle, each person in every age group was told to give the same amount, implying that they all had equal value in the eyes of יהוה. We learn from here to treat each and everyone we meet with true respect, no matter how important or not they seem on the outside.

Question: We shouldn't look down on any person, as there is nobody who doesn't have his moment. What does this statement mean to you? There is a temptation to look at the world from a very limited viewpoint, and see people in terms of 'haves' and 'have-nots.' It can seem that only those who have whatever society values are worthy of our respect. We should adopt a higher, more spiritual perspective, and realize that if someone weren't an important part of יהוה's plan for the world, he wouldn't be here. Each person has his 'moment,' his unique reason for being put here, and therefore is just as important in the big scheme of things as anyone else.

Question: Are all men created equal? Yes, and no. In the ultimate sense, as יהוה's children we are all equally valuable and necessary parts of creation. Yet each of us has been given a role to play, and the assets needed to play that role, which can be vastly different. The ideal is to respect the intrinsic spiritual value of every human being, but not make the mistake of thinking that we should somehow discourage, or prevent people from being their unique selves, and playing the roles for which they are especially suited.

Question: Would you say there is any difference between being polite and showing respect? On the surface, they can appear quite similar, but really, they are miles apart. Politeness is merely a set code of actions and patterns of speech that a given society deems acceptable. As long as one follows the rules, he is being polite, regardless of how he feels inside about the other person. Respect comes from within. It requires us to truly care about the other person's feelings, and realize that every person we meet is a special creation of יהוה, and for that reason alone deserves our utmost respect.

Question: Why do you think it is often harder to treat family and close friends with respect than it is to treat strangers? Ironically, it is because we feel so close to them. We let our guard down and feel they will accept us with our imperfections, and a stranger would not. Yet, although this may be true, we must overcome the temptation to lower our level of behavior. Someone's tolerance of our imperfections doesn't justify our failure to try to improve. While we need not be formal to those closest to us, we should always be respectful.

Leviticus 27:4 And if a female, assign a value of 30 shekels. **5** And if *it is a child* 5 to 20 years old, assign a value of 20 shekels for a male and 10 shekels for a female. **6** And if *it is a child* from one month old to 5 years old, assign a value of 5 shekels of silver for a male and 3 shekels of silver for a female. **7** And if *it is a person past 60 years old*, if *it is a male*, assign a value of 15 shekels and for the female 10 shekels. **8** But if he *is too poor to be evaluated*, then he will present himself before the priest and the priest will value אָתָּה *him* in keeping with the means of the person who made the vow. **9** And if the vow is for the value of an animal of the kind that men bring as an offering to ליהוה, all that a person gives of such to ליהוה will be sacred. C-MATS

Leviticus 27:10 He will not exchange or replace **אתו** it (*him*) by substituting a good animal for a bad animal, or a bad animal for a good animal: and if he does make a substitution, then the animal and the one he has exchanged will be sacred. 11 And if *it is* any unclean animal that they do not offer as a sacrifice to ליהוה, then he will present **את** the animal before the priest: 12 And the priest will value **אתה** it (*him*), whether *it is* good or bad: the value set by the priest will stand. 13 But if *the person making the vow* wants to redeem it, then he will add one-fifth to your valuation. 14 And when a man consecrates **את** his house to be sacred to ליהוה, then the priest will set a value based on whether it is good or bad: the value of **אתו** it (*him*) set by the priest will stand. 15 And if he that consecrates *it* will redeem (*purchase, ransom*) **את** his house, then he will add *one* fifth to the value you have set on it and it will revert back to him. 16 And if a man consecrates (*sanctifies*) to ליהוה a part of a field belonging to his tribe's possession, you are to value it according to the production of it: a homer (5 bushels) of barley seed being valued at 50 shekels of silver. 17 If he consecrates his field during the year of Jubilee, this valuation will stand. 18 But if he consecrates his field after the Jubilee, then shall *he* calculate to him the priest **את** the money according to the years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee and it will be deducted from your valuation. 19 And if the anyone wants to redeem **את** the field, then he that sanctified **אתו** it (*him*) will add *one* fifth to your evaluation and the field will be set aside to revert back to him. 20 And if the seller does not want to redeem **את** the field, or if he has sold **את** the field to another man, it will not be redeemed any more. 21 But when the purchaser of the field has to vacate during the Jubilee, it will be sacred to ליהוה, as a field unconditionally consecrated; it will belong to the priest. 22 And if *he consecrates* **את** a field to ליהוה which he has bought, which is not a field from his tribe's possession; 23 then the priest **את** the worth of will *he* calculate according to the years remaining until the Year of Jubilee: and the man will pay **את** the amount on that same day, since it is sacred to ליהוה. 24 In the Year of Jubilee the field will returned **גארתו** from him to whom it was bought, to the person to whose tribal ארצות you held of (*possession*) it belongs. 25 And all your valuations will be according to the shekel (2/5 of an ounce) of the sanctuary: 20 gerahs to the shekel. C-MATS



Paying vows in the Temple



Shekel

Question: How was the value of the field calculated? The Torah gives a fifty-shekel assessment for a field big enough to require one chomer of barley seed or approximately 300,000 square feet. Smaller or larger fields would be redeemed for proportionate amounts. If the field was consecrated at the start of the fifty-year cycle -- and it is redeemed before any crop-years have elapsed -- the redeemer pays the full valuation of fifty shekels. The valuation goes down according to the number of elapsed years. *Chumash*

Leviticus 27:26 Only the firstborn of the animals, which should be ליהוה firstborn, no man will consecrate (*sanctify*) אתו *it (him)*; whether *it is an* ox or sheep: *it is* to ליהוה. **27** And if *it is* an unclean animal, then he will redeem *it* according to your valuation and will add one fifth to it: or if the man does not want to redeem it, then it will be sold according to your valuation. **28** However nothing consecrated unconditionally which a man may consecrate to יהוה from all he owns-person, animal and a field he owns, is to be sold or redeemed: because everything consecrated unconditional *is* most sacred to יהוה. **29** No person sentenced to die, who is unconditionally consecrated, will be redeemed; *but* will certainly be put to death. **30** And all the tithe of the land, *whether* the seed of the land *or* the fruit of the tree, *is* to ליהוה: *it is* sacred to ליהוה. **31** And if a man wants to redeem his tithes, he must add a fifth to it. **32** And concerning the tithe from the herd or flock, the tenth *animal* that passes under the *shepherd's* staff will be sacred to ליהוה. **33** *The owner* will not inquire whether *it is* good *or* bad and he will not exchange *it for another animal*: if the owner exchanges it at all, then *both* it and *the one* he exchanged for it will be sacred; it cannot be redeemed. C-MATS

Question: How does a man count what animals belong to יהוה? Every tenth animal of those born during the current season must be sanctified as an offering. The entire newborn herd or flock is put into a corral with a narrow opening, and the animals are allowed to leave one by one. The owner or his designee touches each tenth one with a paint-daubed stick, marking it as maaser, or the tithe. Unlike other offerings, for which it is meritorious to choose only the best animals, the tithe must be left purely to chance; whichever one exits tenth is given to יהוה. The maaser-animal is brought as an offering. Its fats are offered upon the Altar and all of its meat is eaten by the owners and their guests. None of the meat need be given to the Kohanim. *Chumash*

Spiritual Exercise: Give a tenth of what you earn to יהוה today.



"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse."—*Mat' iii, 10.*

Man bringing in his tenth to the Temple

Leviticus 27:34 These *are* the commandments, which commanded אלהי יהוה Moses for *the* Children of Israel in Mount Sinai. C-MATS

Question: How can we tell if a man is righteous? A man is righteous if his household is righteous. A person who has been able to raise children who are filled with a spirit of righteousness and devotion to יהוה must be righteous himself. *Chumash*

Question: Why do you think people make the mistake of thinking they can act differently when they are dealing with money and business? Many times a person can feel a desire for something, and only afterwards come up with a reason, or rationalization why it's okay. The prospect of wealth of any sort can be extremely tempting, and cause a normally ethical person to find a reason to put his values on hold. The Torah realizes this, and goes out of the way to tell us to remain kind and honest, even in the face of this kind of temptation.

Question: But if nearly everyone around us is acting unscrupulously, won't we lose out unless we do act the same way? We might think so, and it even might look that way in the short run. But in the end, fairness and honesty will always win out. יהוה is really the one who is running the show, and He wants us to be fair. So we can be sure that somehow He will make sure a person won't lose, but only gain by doing things the right way.

Question: How do a person's business scruples reflect on the closeness of his relationship with יהוה? A great Torah leader once said that even if a person appears on the outside very religious, if he is dishonest in his business dealings it is a sign that deep down he really does not believe in יהוה. We can understand this, as our concept of belief in יהוה includes within it the belief that יהוה is the only source of a person's success - including business success. Therefore one who truly believes in יהוה would never imagine that he would have to do something against His will, like act dishonestly, for יהוה to supply him with success. The mark of a close relationship to יהוה is one who trusts Him enough to act the way He wants him to act.

Question: Is there ever an exception, when one is justified in abandoning his ethical values? Although what is ethical can change depending on the circumstance, once the ethical course is determined, there is never a justification to abandon it. However, it is often difficult to know exactly what the ethical option at any given moment is, and the Torah is a comprehensive but brief account of יהוה-given ethics which goes into great detail to present virtually every conceivable life situation, and a guide to its ethical response.

Do You Know?

1. יהוה rewards those who keep His ____.
2. He will give you ____ in the land and no one will attack you.
3. יהוה punishes you ____ for ____ if you do not keep His commandments.
4. יהוה will break the ____ you have in your own power.
5. יהוה has scattered us to the ____ nations because of the sins of our ancestors.
6. The Israelites were exiled to ____ because they did not give the land its ____ rest.
7. Even in ____ we are still cared for by יהוה.
8. Everyone has the same ____ in יהוה's eyes.
9. A man must give יהוה a ____ of what he earns, grows, or produces.
10. If a man wants to redeem his tithes, he must add a ____ to it.

Bonus: What 35 curses will come upon you if you sin against יהוה? How many can you name?

Answers:

1. commandments
2. peace
3. measure, measure
4. pride
5. gentile
6. Babylon, Sabbath
7. exile
8. value
9. tenth
10. fifth

Bonus:

1. swelling lesions
2. burning fever
3. frustrated longing
4. sowing seeds that will produce crops for the enemy
5. being struck down before the enemy
6. being under enemy control
7. fleeing with no one in pursuit
8. destruction of the Temple
9. the heaven will be like iron
10. the earth will be like copper
11. you will work hard in vain
12. the earth will not yield crops
13. trees will not yield fruit
14. fruit will drop from the tree before maturity
15. wild beasts
16. domestic animals
17. poisonous snakes
18. death of children
19. loss of livestock
20. decrease of population
21. destruction of roads
22. cannibalism
23. destruction of defense structures (city walls)
24. death of people
25. loss of the Shechinah
26. destruction of cities
27. desolation of the sanctuaries
28. יהוה's refusal to accept offerings
29. the sword of foreign invaders
30. siege, forcing people into the cities
31. plague
32. food shortage
33. lack of fuel
34. crumbling bread
35. constant hunger

Haftorah

Jeremiah 16:9 For so says יהוה of צְבָאוֹת *Hosts*, the Elohim of Israel: Surely, I will cause to cease out of this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. 10 And it shall come to pass, when you shall show this people אֵת all these words and they shall say to you, Why has יהוה pronounced against us אֵת all הַזֹּאת *this* great evil? Or what is our iniquity? Or what is our sin that we have committed to יהוה our Elohim? 11 וְאָמַרְתָּ *And you say* to them, Because אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם *your fathers* have forsaken אֹתִי *Me*, says יהוה and have walked after other gods and have served them and have worshipped them וְאֹתִי *and Me* they have forsaken וְאֵת־ *and My Torah* they have not kept; 12 וְאַתֶּם *And you* have done evil more than your fathers; for, surely, you walk everyone after the stubbornness of his evil heart, so that you listen not to Me: 13 Therefore, will I cast אֶתְכֶם *you* forth out of הַזֹּאת *this* land into the land that you have not known, neither אֶתְכֶם *you* nor your forefathers; and there shall you serve their אֱלֹהֵי־ *gods* day and night; for אֶתְךָ *I will give* you no favor. *Prophecy of Greater Exodus 16:14-15.* 14 Therefore, surely, the days come, says יהוה, that it shall no more be said, As יהוה lives, that brought up אֶת־ *Children of Israel* out of the land of Egypt; 15 But, as יהוה lives, that brought up אֶת־ *Children of Israel* from the land of the north and from all the countries where He had driven (*scattered*) them. And I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers. 16 Surely, I will send for many fishermen, says יהוה and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters and they shall hunt them from every mountain and from every hill and out of the clefts of the rocks. 17 For My eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hid from My face, neither is their iniquity concealed from My eyes. 18 And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double, because they have polluted אֶת־ *My land* with the carcasses of their detestable things and have filled אֶת־ *My inheritance* with their abominations. 19 O יהוה, my strength and my stronghold and my refuge in the day of affliction, to you shall the nations come from the ends of the earth and shall say, Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, *even* vanity and things in which there is no profit. 20 Shall a man make to himself gods, which are not gods? 21 Therefore, surely, I will cause them to know, הַזֹּאת *this* once will I cause them to know אֶת־ *My hand* וְאֵת־ *and My might*; and they shall know that My name is יהוה. Jeremiah 17:1 The חַטָּאת *sin* of Judah is written with a pen of iron and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the tablet of their heart and upon the horns of your altars; 2 While their children remember their altars and their Asherim by the green trees upon the high hills. 3 O My mountain in the field, אֶתְךָ *I will give* your substance and all your treasures for a spoil and your high places, because of sin, throughout all your borders. 4 And you, even of yourself, shall discontinue from your heritage that I gave you; and I will cause you to serve אֶת־ *your enemies* in the land which you know not: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever. 5 So says יהוה: Cursed is the man that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm and whose heart departs from יהוה. 6 For he shall be like the bush in the desert and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, a salt land and not inhabited. 7 Blessed is the man that trust in בִּיהוה and whose trust יהוה is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, that spreads out its roots by the river and shall not fear when heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. 9 The heart is deceitful above all things and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it? 10 I, יהוה, search the mind, I try the heart, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings. 11 As the partridge that sits on *eggs* which she has not laid, so is he that gets riches and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him and at his end he shall be a fool. 12 A glorious throne, *set* on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. C-MATS

Jeremiah 17:13 O יהוה, the Hope of Israel, all that forsake you shall be put to shame. They that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken, *the* fountain of living waters יהוה אתה. 14 Heal me, O יהוה and I shall be healed; save me and I shall be saved: for אתה You are my praise. C-MATS

Brit Chadasha

2 Corinthians 6:14 Be you not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? 15 And what concord has Mashiach with Belial? or what part has he that believes with an infidel? 16 And what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? for you are the temple of the living Elohim; as Elohim has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says יהוה, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says יהוה Almighty. C-MATS

Question: What Scripture is Paul quoting in these verses?

Ezekiel 37:27 My Tabernacle also will be with them: indeed, I will be their Elohim and they will be My people. C-MATS

Isaiah 52:11 Depart you, depart you, go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go you out of the midst of her; cleanse yourselves, you that bear the vessels of יהוה. C-MATS

Ezekiel 20:34 And I will bring אתכם you out from the peoples and will gather אתכם you out of the countries in which you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out. C-MATS

Discuss: How are you separate from the others around you? Do others see you as different or do you just act like everyone else around you?

Spiritual Exercise: Do something this week to come out of the world and be separate.

John 14:15 **If you love me, keep my commandments.** 16 **And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;** 17 **Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you.** 18 **I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.** 19 **Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me: because I live, you shall live also.** 20 **At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.** 21 **He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.** John 15:10 **If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.** 11 **These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.** 12 **This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you.** C-MATS

Question: What commandments was Yahusha referring to in these verses? The commandments that He gave Moses for His People.

Spiritual Exercise: Do you love יהוה enough to obey His commandments? What can you change in your life this week show יהוה that you love Him?

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; **2** For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; **3** That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Yahusha haMashiach. **4** And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. **5** This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that Elohim is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Yahusha haMashiach his Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. C-MATS

Spiritual Exercise: Do not say that you are not in sin this week, but confess your sins and be purified from your wrongdoing.

Matthew 16:24 Then said Yahusha unto his disciples, **If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his stake, and follow me. 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. 28 Verily I say unto you, There are some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. C-MATS**

PAYING RESPECTS

Another fun-filled summer at Camp Wallabee was in full swing. The campers had settled in, and were really enjoying the long, lazy days of sports, nature walks, and especially swimming and boating on Lake Wallabee.

One day, Jay and his friends were chatting and joking as they made their way back from the lake on their way to lunch. They walked quickly past the old janitor's shack, paying it no attention. Only Jay stopped for a moment to greet the small, wrinkled man half-dozing inside.

"Hi Ed, have a good day!" Jay said, with a big smile. He exchanged a few pleasant words with the man, and ran to catch up with his friends who had already reached the lunchroom.

"Hey Jay, what took you so long?" teased Adam. "Having another deep conversation with your friend, the janitor?" he laughed derisively.

Jay blushed, embarrassed by the boy's comment. Old Ed was a plain, simple man without much of an education, doing what the boys considered an unimportant job. They would sometimes laugh and make fun of him behind his back, but usually just ignored him, as if he didn't even exist.

But Jay's parents had always taught him to show respect to everyone he met. His dad would always say, "If יהוה felt somebody was important enough to put into His world, certainly he's important enough for us to treat decently."

Jay dug into his lunch, trying to ignore his friend's barb, and the incident was soon forgotten.

The next day was boating day. The excited campers trotted down the path to the lake, each running past Ed, the janitor, without giving him a second look. As Jay passed by, he felt tempted to do the same. Maybe the other kids were right, and it was just foolish to pay so much attention to someone like that.

He was about to fly by like the rest, but something inside wouldn't let him. "A person is a person," he thought. "Just because he's not someone people consider so important, that doesn't mean I should ignore him." He stopped and greeted Ed, who as usual smiled back at him and mumbled a few friendly words.

Jay and Adam, who had teamed up, felt like ancient explorers as they rowed their boat to the far end of the lake. But they got a little carried away, and rowed a bit too close to the rocky shore. Suddenly there was a big bump and a loud ripping sound. The boys were shocked to hear those sounds, and even more shocked to see water gushing into the boat.

"A sharp rock must have pierced the bottom of our boat!" yelled Jay.

Fortunately they were very close to the edge of the lake, and they were able to row the leaking boat quickly to the nearby shore.

"What do we do now?" asked Adam, panic in his voice.

"Don't worry," Jay said. "When the counselors check the list of boats, and notice that the one you signed out didn't come back in time, they'll for sure come and find us."

But Adam didn't look relieved. In fact he looked terrified. "Oh, no!" he gasped. "I was in such a hurry, I forgot to sign us out for the boat this time. No one knows we're here. We'll be stuck here forever!"

Sure enough, hours passed with no sign of help on the way. It was now starting to get dark. The boys had no idea what to do and were on the verge of despair.

Suddenly they heard the sound of an approaching motorboat. They were relieved to see chief water counselor who spotted them with his searchlight. "Wow, thanks for saving us!" cried out the grateful boys.

The counselor shook his head. "Don't thank me," he said with a stern look. "Without your names on the sign-out list, I had no idea you were out there."

The boys looked confused. "So how did you know we were missing?"

"You can thank old Ed, the janitor," the counselor said. "I was about to lock up the dock for the night, when he came running over and told me that all of the boys hadn't come back. I assured him they had, but he insisted, saying that he had been in his shack all afternoon, and one boy, the only boy who ever spoke to him, had greeted him on the way to the lake, but not on the way back. I counted the boats again, and sure enough, we discovered he was right."

The boys stood there with mouths wide open. They both saw very clearly just how important the 'unimportant' man that Jay had properly treated with respect had really been in their lives.

Question: How did most of the boys feel about Ed the Janitor? They felt that since he wasn't very smart or rich, he wasn't important enough to talk to.

Question: How did Jay feel differently? He felt that every single person is important because he was made by יהוה.

Question: Why do you think Ed the janitor noticed that Jay hadn't returned and went out of his way to tell the water counselor? Unlike his friends, Jay made a special effort to greet Ed every day, and treat him with dignity. Because Jay cared about the janitor, Ed, in turn, cared about Jay. It was only natural that he would notice that Jay hadn't passed him and greeted him again on his way back from the lake. When we go out of our way to treat each and every person we meet in a way that lets them know we feel they are important, we bring a lot of light into their lives, and do our part to make the world a better place.

Seeing Things Differently

Brad looked at the list on the classroom wall and frowned. The teacher, Mr. Gable, had split the class into research teams to work together on their month-long science project about the five senses, and from the looks of it, it was going to be a month of misery. His group was supposed to study the sense of sight. The problem was who he'd been assigned to work with. First on the list was that bossy kid Kevin who just couldn't stop telling everyone what to do. Next, and even worse, was Larry, who drove him crazy by always asking a million questions about everything. Then -- oh, no! -- was Jack the joker -- how were they ever going to get any work done with him cracking jokes all the time? He scanned the rest of the names. The only decent kid on the whole list was his pal, Mike. "Mr. Gable, you've got to switch me to a different team!" Brad begged. "Switch me to Hearing, Smell, Touch! I don't care which. But I just can't work a whole month with those guys on the Vision team. I'll go nuts!" "Going nuts, that would be quite serious, Brad," the teacher agreed, with a bemused look over the tops of his glasses. "But do you think you could retain your sanity for just one day? Class is just about to start. Come see me again after class and we'll discuss it further, okay?" Without much of a choice, Brad glumly nodded and shuffled over to the corner of the classroom where his team was supposed to meet. He grabbed the chair next to Mike -- at least his friend could help share in his misery.

Sure enough, things went as expected, as bossy Kevin stood up, appointed himself group leader and began giving a speech. That is, when he didn't have to stop every two minutes to answer one of Larry's constant questions or to wait for the group to stop cracking up over one of Jack's jokes. "Pretty bad, huh?" Brad whispered into Mike's ear. "What do you mean?" "I mean it stinks that we got stuck on the terrible research team. The teacher said that I could maybe switch tomorrow -- maybe we can ask if you can too." Brad expected Mike to readily agree, but instead the kid gave him a confused look. "Why do you want to switch? This is a great team. Kevin's already agreed to take charge, which will make sure things get done. Larry's questions will keep everything clear and make sure we stay on track. And in case it gets too heavy, we've got a guy like Jack around to keep things light. All the other kids fit in perfectly too, so why in the world would you want to switch?" "Um, well, I guess when you look at it that way..." Just then, the bell rang to go to the next class. Brad gathered his stuff and began dashing out when the teacher waved him over to his desk. "Okay, Brad, you mentioned that you wanted to switch teams. Let's see, there's..." "Uh, that's okay, Mr. Gable," Brad cut in with a nervous smile. "I don't need to switch anymore." "You mean you want to stay on the 'Vision' team, after all?" "Yeah," Brad smiled. "I'm learning so much about vision. Just one day on the team, and I'm already seeing things differently!"

Question: Should we always try to see the good in others? It's good to try to see the good in everyone. We should always try to see the good in what people do even when at first it's not apparent.

Question: What life-lesson do you think Brad learned that day? He'd been focusing on what was bad about the traits of the kids on his research team. But from the way his friend was able to see the good in each kid and how he acted, Brad learned a valuable new and positive way of seeing things.

Question: How do you think focusing on people's good traits could enhance your life? A lot of the way we feel comes from how we look at the world. If we try to see the good in others, we will find ourselves surrounded by people we enjoy being around. Also, positivity is contagious-the more we see the good in others, the more they will see the good in us.

Question: Whose way of looking at things was more accurate- Brad's or Mike? Why? In one sense, they both were accurate. The kids had the traits they observed in them. Yet their interpretations were very different. By choosing a positive interpretation, we are creating a brighter world for ourselves and the positive energy we emit helps the people around us bring out their best, too.

Question: Is there ever a time when we shouldn't strive to see the good in others? While searching for the good in others is generally a positive value, we mustn't try to find good in people or situations, which could place others or ourselves in danger.

Spiritual exercise: At least one time today, try to see something good in a person around you.

Resources:

The Stone Edition of The Chumash

The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures **C-MATS** www.AlephTavScriptures.com

“Weekly Torah Portion” from www.aish.com (stories)