

**Ki Tavo**                      **When You Enter In**    **Abundance or Complete Desolation: Your Choice**

**Torah:**                      Deuteronomy 26:1-29:9 (8)

**Haftarah:**                Isaiah 60:1-22

**Brit Chadashah:**      Luke 24:44-53

When I determined the level of complexity for each portion in the annual Reading Cycle, I marked Ki Tavo (When you enter in) as technical, not so much its level of difficulty, but because of the abundance of content and the substantial use of poetic language and symbols. In fact, both the Torah Portion and the Haftarah Portion each have enough content to do at least five meditations and five sermons. It contains some of the most poetic imagery in the Bible which in Chapter 28 is used to describe, in graphic detail, the curses which will come upon the people if they do not observe the Commandments or put them into practise.

The Bible teaches that YHVH is not really mad at sinners because He wants to reach out and draw them into the faith. But the Bible does state that YHVH is furious with backsliders and will grind them into dust, if they do not repent. In fact, in most cases, the Bible says that the last condition of a backslider is worse than the condition they were in, when they first came to faith (2 Pe. 2:20).

Most of this portion is taken up with a description of both the blessings which YHVH reserves for those who walk with Him in complete faith and total obedience and the amazing curses YHVH will pour out in great abundance upon those who have abandoned His Word and have turned their backs on His Commandments.

The Portion divides neatly into four sections and I will deal with the main parts of each section. I usually write up notes for the Mediation and the sermon long hand and then put together a document on the computer. This time, I had 12 pages of notes, which is the most I have ever had, so far.

The first section, Ch. 26:1-19, deals with tithes and offerings, after giving a brief recitation of both the miseries they suffered and how YHVH delivered them and is going to bring them into this abundant land. Mention is also made of the tithes of the third year, which are to be designated for the Levites and the less fortunate in their midst. It also stipulates that all the incredible blessing of YHVH are reserved for those who observe all that is written. In such a state of complete observance, Israel will be superior over all the nations of the earth in magnificent glory as the holy people of G-d.

Next comes the commandment to cover two big stones with plaster and write on them all the words of this Law. What this is referring to is another copy of the Ten Commandments for all to see, because the first copy was kept out of sight in the Ark. These stones were to be placed on Mount Ebal and an altar was to be built on Mount Gerizim. Because of their commitment to obey all that G-d has told them, Moses says that they have become the people of YHVH their G-d.

When they get into the land, they are to divide into two groups of six tribes each. One group is to bless the people from Mount Gerizim, the other group is pronounce curses from Mount Ebal. Ch. 27:15-26 lists twelve curses upon specific categories of sin.

There is a curse against those who practice idolatry. Four curses are placed on those who practise forbidden sexuality which violates both kinship and species. The last curse is for those who do not accomplish all the words of this law.

The first section of chapter 28 (28:1-14), deals with ten categories of blessing for those who walk with YHVH and keep the stipulation of His Word. Every major category of their lives will be blessed, from their offspring and livestock to their crops. They will have victory in battle and will be prosperous in all their economic activities. All of this depends on their complete obedience to all the stipulations of the Commandments of YHVH.

The next section (28:15-68) outlines seven categories of curses that will punish them until they are destroyed. (28:20; 28:22; 28:45; 28:48; 28:51; 28:61 and 28:63). Time would not permit me to outline all of the curses, but twice the curses come in groups of seven (28:22 and 28:27), which means they come from YHVH and are not just bad luck. I want to select examples of the kinds of curses which will come upon the people and I will let you read about the rest. The language is both very poetic and incredibly graphic and even terrifying.

In 28:26, it says that the dead bodies of the people will become food for the scavenging birds because there will be no one left to bury them. YHVH's curse will be both amazing and even glorious (28:58) as He brings more plagues on His backsliding people than the Egyptians experienced, until the people are destroyed.

They will be forced to serve other gods and will never have a moment of peace as they are chased to the ends of the earth. Their heart will be agitated, their eyes will be exhausted by weeping and their souls will greatly suffer because they will be cursed both on the outside and on the inside (28:64, 65). They will tremble night and day and when it is morning, they ask for the evening to come, but when it comes they shall ask for the morning to come because they will be in complete and constant, total distress.

They will be so oppressed that they will eat their own children and not share their flesh with anyone else (28:53-55). It gets worse, because a woman who gives birth will hide the afterbirth, so she can eat it all herself and not have to share it with anyone (28:56, 57). They will be perpetually hungry, thirsty, naked and poor among enemies who will show no respect for the aged and no mercy for the young (28:48-50).

They will be reduced to a very small number and YHVH will take great pleasure in causing them to perish and be destroyed, because they have forsaken His Word (28:63). Instead of rain, they will get dust, as they are defeated by their enemies and scattered (28:23, 24). When you come to YHVH, your life will be blessed beyond measure. If you turn your back on Him, your life will be cursed as it crumbles and completely falls apart.

Chapter 29 reviews how the people were blessed in their wilderness wandering. Neither their clothes nor their sandals wore out and they did not drink alcohol, so that they could know Adonai. The discussion moves to the complete destruction of the two strongest kings among the Canaanites: Sihon and Og. Their fertile grazing lands were to be given to the 2 1/2 tribes who had lots of livestock.

The portion ends with a reminder that if you keep the Word and put the covenant into practice, you will succeed in everything that you do. What will you choose?

## **Sermon: Getting Ready For Messiah's Soon Coming Kingdom (Isaiah 60:1-22)**

For those captives who were carried away into exile, their world had completely fallen apart and they thought their lives were over. They had lost everything and had seen so many of their people slaughtered. It appeared as if it was game over for Israel and that all that was left was to dwell as perpetual (permanent) strangers among the Gentile nations.

They had to be reminded that as a nation, they had a mission to be a blessing to all nations, but how could this be done if they were no longer a great nation? They knew that they were being punished for abandoning YHVH, but they also knew that the only place they really belonged was in the land which YHVH had promised to give to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Their homeland was devastated and was filling with strangers to whom it did not belong. Their situation appeared completely hopeless.

Isaiah and the other prophets who lived during the time of the captivity had to rally the people and get them to refrain from any of the paganism that now surrounded them. The promises given to their people were neither cancelled nor overthrown, but coming home now seemed like an impossible task.

But the prophets did not want just to encourage the people and speak of a return to the land they were exiled from. Israel still had an international mission which was to announce the coming Kingdom of the Messiah, who would reign over all the nations and generations of mankind. Even as the people of G-d, there was a far larger picture that they were only a part of. YHVH wants to call all the scattered children of Adam and Eve to come to faith in Him.

They were to rise from the ashes and return to the land and rebuild. This time they were not being called to fight, either with their captors or with the people who now occupied the land which was once theirs. They were to lead the Gentiles in their land to faith and then to watch as this faith was taken to the ends of the earth. Both Jews and their converts were to be emissaries of YHVH's Kingdom. They had to be made to see that even though YHVH was their G-d, He was also the G-d of the scattered children of Adam and Eve. He wanted everybody to come home, not just to the land, but also to the L-rd of all the earth.

This is the second last Sabbath of Consolation and in two weeks, we will observe the Fall Feasts, but have these passages of comfort accomplished their mission? Ever since the Pharisees took over the remnants of Judaism, they wanted to change the narrative which the Bible teaches both about the Messiah and His coming Kingdom. It is amazing that they have tried put a fence around the Torah, not to protect it, but to prevent the people from seeing what it actually says.

I am reading a book, translated from Hebrew which aims to debunk the myth of the Oral Law and go back to what the Bible actually says. The Oral Law is contained in the Talmud and the rabbis falsely claim that you have to study the Oral Law if you want to truly understand the Written Law. The written Law explains itself and our faith and observance does not need to be choked and buried between centuries of traditions which are not found in the Bible. The biblical new year comes on the first day of the month of Nissan and not on the seventh month at the Feast of Trumpets. Calling this feast the new year for the year is a custom they picked up in Babylon, along with other pagan traditions which clog and obscure the clear and simple teachings of the scriptures.

Next Shabbat, I will give my annual introduction to our Messianic Makzor and you will see that even though I include many features of a traditional observance of the Fall Feasts, I come at them from a uniquely Messianic perspective. There are chants in our Siddur which are rabbinic in origin and our Passover Seder also follows the traditional rabbinic format. This does not mean to say that we accept the Pharisees possess any judicial authenticity in the least or that we want to begin the process of assimilating back into Pharisaic, Talmudic Judaism. We celebrate the Festivals in a way which would be meaningful and recognizable to Jews who come from the rabbinic, Talmudic perspective. But we focus on the Messiah and use everything we agree to do, so that He is given the central position and focus which has always been His.

Today portion in Isaiah is heavily Messianic and we need to understand that our people were allowed to come home so that they could rebuild their homeland and learn to patiently wait for the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom. This Messianic Kingdom is the whole point of biblical Judaism and it is what the Bible clearly teaches.

Let me take you through it so that you may be comforted in the promise of the coming of His Kingdom to reign over all the nations and generations of all mankind, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

Even as they were wallowing in the darkness of pagan exile, they were told their light arrives (60:1). It does not come through them, comes to them and we know that this light is the Messiah (John 8:12). We are to be a light to the world, but it has to be Messiah' light shining through us as we see the glory of YHVH rising up on us. This verse is talking about the coming Kingdom and not just a return from exile. His Word is also part of this light and it will always show us how to walk in the light, even as we wander through the darkness of this world (Ps. 119:105).

Next, Isaiah says that darkness covers the world and that the nations dwell in obscurity (60:2). He is expressing a radical monotheism (belief in only one G-d) which leaves no room for other gods. There are no other gods. The glory of YHVH will rise and His glory will appear. Nations will walk in His light and the kings will see clearly because of the beams of this light (60:3).

This is saying that paganism is on the way out and that faith in the only true G-d is on the rise (Act 17:30, 31). Both the exiles and the nations will be gathered and Israel will jump for joy when she sees all the riches of the nations come her way (60:5). These riches will exceed those which Solomon gathered, when he made silver as common as rocks in his kingdom (see 2 Chron. 6:18) and they will not be temporary, as Solomon's riches were. The riches of the sea refer to the return of profitable trade which will be carried around the world by ships. The global supply chain not will be destroyed and will no longer have to be disrupted.

Massive wealth shall come their way and all of it will publish the praises of YHVH (20:6). There is reference to a rebuilt temple where blood sacrifices will once again be offered as YHVH glorifies the house of His glory (20:7). All and any earthly temples should be seen as models of the true celestial temple and in our day, the only temple G-d will recognize is our bodies, because His glory resides in our hearts and souls (spirits). The second temple was relevant until Messiah was born and walked among us. There is no need for a third temple to be built. So much of what is taught about the return of the Messiah does not come from the Bible, but from human traditions about the end of the world. You will never go wrong when you stick to what the Bible teaches. Nothing more, nothing less.

His captive people will fly like the clouds and be as doves who are returning to their nests. There is nothing that can hold back or delay the arrival of the Messianic Kingdom and as the long exile ends, Jews will return home from every corner of the world. This also refers to mass

conversions to the only true G-d, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from among the nation of the world.

Coming home to Zion is stage one in the Jewish mission to take the message of YHVH and His coming Messiah to the ends of the earth, as people from the ends of the earth help to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. They will act as servants because their glory is temporal, while the glory of G-d is eternal and will never pass away (60:10). He disciplined Israel in His wrath, when our people broke their word and forsook His Word, as they engaged in all kinds of criminal idolatry. But in His mercy, He has taken pity on them and will bring them home (see Exodus 34:5-7).

The doors of a rebuilt Jerusalem will never be shut, day or night, in order to let the treasures of the nations come in to the city (60:11). This is also a reference to the New Jerusalem because any nation which refuses to serve will perish and be exterminated (60:12). This means that one day the Kingdom of Messiah will rule over all the earth and those who try and resist it, will not succeed. This does not mean that the world will be ruled as part of a worldwide Jewish empire, but that the world will come under the control of the Messiah and His kingdom. This will happen on the new earth and under the new Heavens, once all the nations and their power has been overthrown forever.

The prophets give us partial pictures of the future and of the coming Kingdom which we can put together from the words of other prophets and apostles as they teach us about the power of the coming Kingdom.

The L-rd will cause construction materials to come in order that His sanctuary can be rebuilt and once again become the place where His feet rest (60:3.see also 2 Chron. 6:18). Both the tabernacle and the temple were symbolic reflections of heavenly wonders and the temple will be rebuilt and serve as a temporary sanctuary, until the actual glory of G-d appears in the face of His Messiah.

The last part of this chapter begins to move us away from the joy of the return of the exiles, to the joy of the coming of Messiah's eternal Kingdom. The coming of this kingdom is the only thing we should be preparing for during our pilgrimage through this fading world towards the one which is to come.

Those who formerly oppressed captive Israel will come and bow down at her feet and call Jerusalem the city of YHVH, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. This picture starts out talking about the return from exile and ends up talking about the Heavenly Jerusalem which is the eternal Zion of YHVH (60:14).

Israel shall go from being abandoned and neglected to become an ornament forever, a subject of joy from generation to generation (60:15). Even though we know the Messianic Kingdom is coming, we also know that it might take many generations, until all the purposes of G-d are fulfilled, as the message of His Messiah is taken to the ends of the earth. This is so that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, can come to faith and break out of the darkness where they have dwelt in too long.

60:16 has a very poignant, symbolic picture where the nations and their kings go from being oppressors of Israel, to become her nurse amid. The prophet says that Israel will feed upon the milk of the nations as she is taken to their breast. This will not happen literally because,

except for the ladies, neither the nations nor their kings have actual breasts. They will go from oppressing to nurturing.

When this begins to happen, Israel will know from personal experience that YHVH is their Saviour and Redeemer, the powerful One of Jacob. YHVH has not lost track of His people and He will call them back to their land and back to faith in Him, even as we wait and patiently anticipate the eventual arrival of Messiah's glorious heavenly kingdom.

The treasures of returning Israel will surpass the riches that Solomon had filled his kingdom with (see 2 Chron. 9:22,23 and 27). This is also a teaser which goes beyond and temporal riches returning Israel may acquire and begins to build a picture of the eternal treasures of Messiah's coming heavenly kingdom (60:17). It is in this coming Kingdom where YHVH will cause peace to reign and righteousness to dominate.

Isaiah moves on to describe the wonder of the Messianic Kingdom, where there will never again be any violence in the land and the land will never again be ravaged and filled with ruins (60:18). The walls of the heavenly city will be called salvation and her doors will be called glory and it gets even better.

When the eternal Messianic Kingdom comes, the sun will not serve as light during the day, nor the moonshine to shine at night because YHVH will be your light forever. Your G-d shall be your glory (60:19) When the people read this, they must have understood that their return was not a return to the former status quo, but a firm step forwards to the coming Kingdom where this dark, fading world would cease to exist, as YHVH brings the new one into existence.

The prophet goes on to say the sun will never set and the moon shall never wane and stop shining, because they will no longer be needed because YHVH, through His beloved Messiah will be our light forever. Also the days of Israel's mourning for all they had lost, will be over (60:20) as the wonder and the treasures of the Messianic Kingdom will one day be theirs. It does not matter where we are in this life and it does not really matter what we are going through. One day very soon, in G-d's perfect timing, Messiah's Kingdom will burst forth and all the power, folly and pain of this fading age will be over and gone forever.

There will only be righteous people among the people because the coming Kingdom will also be the final victory of the global righteous core of mankind and they will take possession of the land and never be dispossessed again. They will be permanent citizens of the immovable and indestructible Messianic Kingdom (60:21). This will be accomplished through the righteous root, which shall rise up and bring glory to YHVH (60:21). There are other places in the Bible where the Messiah is called the root (see Is. 11:1 and Zach. 3:8) and now that Israel was returning to the Holy Land, the Messianic Kingdom was drawing nearer and they could rest in the assurance that nothing could ever stop or hinder or slow down its arrival. The remnant of the people shall again become a great nation and YHVH will hasten the arrival of these things in their appointed time (60:22). As we approach the Fall Feasts, it will be a time to make sure that we are ready for Messiah's soon coming Kingdom, whether it arrives in our lifetime or not. I am content to wait. How about you? Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov.