

פרשת כי תבוא Parashat Ki Tavo

*Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8, Isaiah 60:1-22
Luke 23:26-56*

Being Dull in Heart, Mind, and Spirit

In the opening verses in Parashat Ki Tavo, we read about the giving of the tithe of the first fruits *Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:1-4*, א והיה כי-תבוא אל-הארץ אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך נחלה וירשתה וישבת בה: ב ולקחת מראשית | כל-פרי האדמה אשר תביא מארצה אשר יהוה אלהיך נתן לך ושמת בטנא והלכת אל-המקום אשר יבחר יהוה אלהיך לשכון שמו שם: ג ובאת אל-הפנה אשר יהיה בימים ההם ואמרת אליו הגדתי היום ליהוה אלהיך כי-באתי אל-הארץ אשר נשבע יהוה לאבותינו: 26:1 לתת לנו: ד ולקח הפנה הטנא מיידה והניחו לפני מזבח יהוה אלהיך: *“Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, 26:2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name. 26:3 You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, ‘I declare this day to the Lord my God that I have entered the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’ 26:4 Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. (NASB)* This concept of giving God produce sounds similar to how the pagans

functioned in bringing fruits and vegetables to their gods. In Greek mythology, *“those described in the Homer ate meat by contrast to the fruits, fish, and vegetable diet of the coastal peoples and this distinction is embodied in the different foods brought to sacrifice.”* (*A History of Pagan Europe, By Prudence Jones, Nigel Pennick, Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1995, pp.11*) The point of the pagan religions bringing their sacrifices of fruits, vegetables, and meats were meant to appease their gods so they would find favor in their eyes. These things remind us of the differences between Cain and Abel bringing their sacrifices to God in *Bereshit / Genesis 4*, where Abel’s sacrifice was accepted because he took from the flock, and Cain’s sacrifice was not because he took from the produce of the land. It is interesting to read however later on in the Torah about of the grain offering, and of the first fruits that are spoken of here in Parashat Ki Tavo. What is commanded here in the Torah to bring the first fruits is not something that is being done to appease our God. This is meant for something more, as we see Moshe further describing according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:12-13*, *יב כי תכלה לעשר את-כל-מעשר תבואתך בשנה השלישית, שנת המעשר ונתתה ללוי לגר ליתום ולאלמנה ואכלו בשעריך ושבעו: יג ואמרת לפני יהוה אלהיך בערתי הקדש מן-הבית וגם נתתיו ללוי ולגר ליתום ולאלמנה ככל-מצותך אשר צויתני לא-עברתי ממצותיך ולא שכחתי: 26:12 “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, 26:13 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. (ESV)* The words *“to the stranger / proselyte, the orphan and the widow”* refers to the third and sixth year of the Shemitah (שמטה) cycle, the farmer would set aside the tithe for the poor and distribute according to how he saw fit. The stranger / proselyte, the orphan, and the widow were the most likely ones needing this help. After having obeyed all the commandments pertaining to gifts to the priest, the Levite, and to the poor, he is to re-

cite the declaration recorded here affirming that he has done his duty and that as a result he looks forward to being in God's good graces meaning that he looks forward to watching the Lord God Almighty bless all that he has and the work of his hand (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:5*). (*Rabbeinu Bahya, Devarim 26:13 Part 1*) In the Rabbinic literature we also find the following conclusion, "*Anyone who has failed to distribute the various tithes by that time must remove them from his house (destroy them). This is why we are told in the Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:12 that certain disasters (pestilence) which occur in the fourth year of the cycle are due to the failure of the farmers to discharge their obligations of tithing properly. (a plague in the fourth year indicates failure to distribute the tithe to the poor in the third year, whereas a plague in the seventh year is indicative of the tithe for the poor not having been distributed during the sixth year of the cycle). The destruction of the leftover tithes occurred on the penultimate day of the Passover so that the confessional could be recited on the afternoon of the last day*" (*Maimonides Hilchot Maasser Sheyni 11,7*) The rabbis describe the act of removing the tithe which was set apart for the poor, if this was not removed from the home a plague would come as a result. The point may be the tithe which was set apart as holy to the Lord might have then been eaten and not distributed, there was then a direct correlation to a plague of pestilence against the farm because of having not obeyed the command to distribute what was set apart. This then was paralleled to the removal of the leaven from one's home on the last day before Passover which is paralleled to the removal of sin in our lives.

Rashi's commentary states the following concerning these things:

Rashi on Deuteronomy 26:12 Part 1

כי תכלה לעשר את כל מעשר תבואתך בשנה השלישית
WHEN THOU HAST FINISHED TITHING ALL THE TITHES OF THY INCREASE IN THE THIRD YEAR
 — *this means: when you have finished the setting apart of the tithes of the third year. It (Scripture) has fixed the time for removing the tithes from the house (ביעור) and the confession regarding their proper disposition (ודוי) for the eve of the Passover festival of the fourth*

year, because it is stated, (Deuteronomy 14:28) “At the end (מקצה) of three years thou shalt bring forth [all the tithe of thy increase in the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates]”. It uses here (in the verse just quoted) the words “at the end of” (מקצה) and it states further (Deuteronomy 31:10—11): “At the end of every seven years ... [in the festival of Tabernacles, ... thou shalt read this law before Israel]” with reference to the law of “public assembly”, in order to suggest an analogy. How is it in the case further on? It takes place at a festival period as stated! So, too, here, the rite takes place at a festival period. If so, one might argue: What is the case there? It takes place on the festival of Tabernacles; so, too, here the rite takes place on Tabernacles! Scripture, however, states here: When thou hast finished tithing the tithes of the third year, which thus points to a festival on which all tithes are finished and this is the Passover festival, for there are many trees the fruits of which are gathered after Tabernacles, and consequently the setting apart of tithes of the third year is at an end on Passover of the fourth year. And whoever had delayed his tithes until then Scripture declares him bound to clear them out by that time from his house (cf. Sifrei Devarim 302; Talmud Yerushalmi Maaser Sheni 5:6).

Rashi makes an conclusion of the tithing on the third and sixth years has being connected to the festival of Passover and Succot, which draws in the context of the leaven and removing sin and the temporary dwelling place. In the context of Succot, feeding the poor is coupled to providing a place for them to rest, a home, and they can be well fed, etc. The provision of food for the poor is the end goal for the command to bring the first fruits according to Parashat Ki Tavo. The bringing of this tithe is connected to having compassion towards others and if we do not have this, the Scriptures speak of a plague being the result of our calloused hearts.

This week we are looking at the Scriptures from *Devarim / Deu-*

teronomy 28:1-68.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:1-53

28:1 'Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 28:2 'All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God: 28:3 'Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. 28:4 'Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 28:5 'Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 28:6 'Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. 28:7 'The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. 28:8 'The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. 28:9 'The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. 28:10 'So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will be afraid of you. 28:11 'The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. 28:12 'The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. 28:13 'The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully, 28:14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. 28:15 'But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His

statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you: 28:16 'Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. 28:17 'Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. 28:18 'Cursed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock. 28:19 'Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. 28:20 'The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. 28:21 'The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. 28:22 'The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. 28:23 'The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. 28:24 'The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. 28:25 'The Lord shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 28:26 'Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. 28:27 'The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. 28:28 'The Lord will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; 28:29 and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you. 28:30 'You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit. 28:31 'Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it; your donkey shall be torn away from you, and will not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you will have none to

save you. 28:32 *'Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and yearn for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do.* 28:33 *'A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually.* 28:34 *'You shall be driven mad by the sight of what you see.* 28:35 *'The Lord will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.* 28:36 *'The Lord will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone.* 28:37 *'You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the Lord drives you.* 28:38 *'You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it.* 28:39 *'You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm will devour them.* 28:40 *'You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off.* 28:41 *'You shall have sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity.* 28:42 *'The cricket shall possess all your trees and the produce of your ground.* 28:43 *'The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower.* 28:44 *'He shall lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you will be the tail.* 28:45 *'So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you.* 28:46 *'They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever.* 28:47 *'Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; 28:48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.* 28:49 *'The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language*

you shall not understand, 28:50 a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. 28:51 'Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. 28:52 'It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the Lord your God has given you. 28:53 'Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the Lord your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you. (NASB)

In this week's Torah Portion (Ki Tavo) we also read about the blessings and the curses that were to be pronounced upon two mountains in the land of Israel (mount Ebal and Gerizim). We read the following according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 27:9-26*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 27:9-26

27:9 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. 27:10 You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today." 27:11 That day Moses charged the people, saying, 27:12 "When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 27:13 And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. 27:14 And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice: 27:15 "'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.' 27:16 "'Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 27:17 "'Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor's landmark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 27:18 "'Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.' And all the people shall

say, 'Amen.' 27:19 “‘Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:20 “‘Cursed be anyone who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s nakedness.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:21 “‘Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:22 “‘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.’ 27:23 “‘Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:24 “‘Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:25 “‘Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ 27:26 “‘Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.’ And all the people shall say, 'Amen.’ (ESV)

Moshe speaks of the people becoming the children of the Lord God in heaven, and gives them the command to speak curses and blessings listed in the Torah after they cross over the Jordan river. The curses consist of only a short list of eleven things, (i) making an idol, (ii) dishonoring mother and father, (iii) moving neighbors land mark, (iv) misleading the blind, (v) perverting justice, (vi) laying with fathers wife, (vii) laying with one’s sister, (viii) laying with mother-in-law, (ix) striking a neighbor in secret, (x) taking a bribe leading to murder, and (xi) not confirming all the words of the Torah by doing them. The people knew that what the God of Israel offered them was much more than freedom from slavery. They had personally saw all of the miracles God had brought against Egypt, even the parting of the Red Sea. Moshe said that if you will simply obey God’s Word, then everything that was promised to Abraham would be brought to its fulfillment for the nation. This is what is meant when Moshe wrote that the Lord God will “*command*” the blessing to come. (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:8*) It is at this point that the Lord God is bringing the people into the Promised Land. He had already delivered them from slavery, He had set them free. He gave them his instructions for living a good life, and the nations would know that there is a God in heaven as a result of the blessing the Lord would bring upon His people. Moshe describes obedience in the context that no enemy would ever overtake them or threaten their borders, because the Lord God himself would

defend them. What happened in reality was something quite different due to sin and disobedience. Studying the history of the Bible, we see the marked contrast to what Moshe is describing here. We read that the Lord God never breaks his promises, he pledged that his covenant with Abraham would last forever. According to the Torah, there are two sides to the promises, for those who keep God's commands, as opposed to those who choose to walk their own way. If one chooses to disobey the command, the Lord God through Moshe wrote the following:

“Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field.”

“Cursed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough.”

“Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy cows, and the flocks of thy sheep.”

“Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out”.

A man will have hostility towards another, his brother, his wife, his children (28:54) this is something that is given from the Lord. The enemy will attack and because of the siege, a man will eat the flesh of his own children. (28:55) Moshe says this will be the end result if one is not careful to observe all the words of the Torah. (28:58) The Lord will bring plagues, not just against the one who disobeys, but also against his descendants with plagues, diseases, and chronic illnesses. (28:59) This is an important point here because our sins can hurt others, and even future generations. The number of the people will be reduced and the Lord will delight in reducing the number of people, (28:62-63) to scatter the people amongst the nations (28:64) and there will be no rest while living in the midst of these nations as one will be forced to worship and serve false gods. (28:64) Moshe writes, *“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes*

which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.” Israel was given a choice here in the Scriptures at this point in history, and we too are given a choice today, for those who place their faith in Yeshua making a covenant with God in heaven. As we choose to believe, live, and obey, God has promised to command the blessing to come to us. On the other hand, if we turn to our own ways to serve the flesh, turning away from God’s instruction, it is assured there would be a future filled with confusion and trouble. This is the meaning of the blessing and the curse that was placed before the people on this day.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:1-8

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. 29:2 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, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 29:3 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. 29:4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. 29:5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet. 29:6 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. 29:7 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. 29:8 We took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. (ESV)

Notice how Moshe speaks of the great wonders God performed for the people delivering them from the Land of Egypt and bringing them into the Promised Land. Miracles such as the plagues brought upon Egypt,

the parting of the Red Sea, the presence of the Lord on the mountain of Sinai, how their cloths and shoes did not wear out, and the Lord giving the people kingdoms as an inheritance. All of these things were given, the people witnessed them, enjoyed the blessing, but yet Moshe says, *29:4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. (ESV)* Having a heart to understand, eyes to see, and ears to hear is something that only God in heaven can give. Paul describes this in the following way:

2 Corinthians 3:13-18

3:13 We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. 3:14 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. 3:15 Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. 3:16 But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (NIV)

Paul writes of the mind (heart) being dull, and of a veil remaining over the heart when the Torah is read, and only because of the Messiah Yeshua is this veil taken away. He then speaks of the Spirit of God giving freedom, the freedom from sin and disobedience in our lives. In the wilderness, this principle cost the people forty years before being allowed to enter the Land. Being faithful to the Lord would have brought the people to the Promised Land in only two weeks travel time. Rebellion however caused the Lord to revise His plans and then an entire generation of people died. Only two individuals, Caleb and Joshua, out of the whole community of adults who came out of Egypt were allowed to enter the Promised Land. It is the Spirit of God that gives life, sets us free from the burden of sin, and empowers us en-

abling us to have a heart to listen and obey. This description reveals to use Moshe's words in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:15* *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. (NASB)* After Yeshua fed the five thousand, the people concluded from this miracle that he was "the Prophet" who had been spoken of in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 18*. *John 6:11-15* states "Therefore when the people saw the sign which he had performed, they said, 'This is truly the prophet who is to come into the world.' So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the mountain by himself alone." The things Yeshua did in his life are strikingly similar to Moshe, Yeshua was sent by God to deliver his people (*Matthew 1:21*), he was pursued as an infant by a murderous king/ruler (*Matthew 2:16*), and he was spared from death in Egypt through providential means (*Matthew 2:13*). We are told Yeshua then comes out of Egypt, and enters the wilderness for forty days of testing (*Matthew 4:1-11*), and then goes up on a mountain to teach, instruct, and expound upon the Torah of God (see *Matthew 5:1-7:27*). The book of Matthew also tells us that Yeshua was known to miraculously feed large crowds of people in desolate, wilderness-like places (*Matthew 14:13-21*) and we also read about his countenance radiating with the glory of God in *Matthew 17:1-8*. These events in Yeshua's life echo the life of Moshe in the Torah. This could be non-other than the long anticipated Prophet and Messiah of God! These things speak of the Messiah of God and of our having faith and being faithful before God believing in His deliverer. It is in this way that we know Yeshua is the Messiah sent of God, the one spoken of by Moshe (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 18:18*). This is why we are all called to live our lives according to the Word of God, and from a Torah perspective (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6*) we can only do this by God's help, and His living in and through us, by faith in Yeshua. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message are connected!