

# PARASHAT D'VARIM

(WORDS)

## DEUTERONOMY 1:1–3:22

### ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

**Y**eshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

### Haftorah Reading

Isaiah 1:1–27

### B'rit Chadashah

On the qualifications for spiritual leaders: **1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9**

On the levels of spiritual leadership: **Ephesians 2:20; 4:11–14**

On spiritual leaders judging: **1 Corinthians 6:1–5**

On not being a respecter of persons: **James 2:1–9**

On Israel's wilderness journey: **Acts 7:38–45; 13:18**

On Israel's faithlessness and hardened heart: **Hebrews 3:7–4:11**

On not fearing our enemies: **2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18**

On spiritual warfare: **Luke 9:1; 10:19; Romans 8:37; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Ephesians 6:10–18; James 4:7**

### Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 1:1 Moses' Veiled Rebuke of Israel
- 1:9 The Appointment of Judges (Establishment of a Judicial System) Over the Israelites
- 1:19 The Appointment of Spies and the Resulting Consequences
- 2:1–3:11 Moses Recalls the Major Events of the 38 Years of Wandering
- 2:2 Respect Esau and Leave Them Alone
- 2:9 Do Not Distress Moab
- 2:17 YHVH Commands Israel to March Toward the Promised Land
- 3:1 The Conquest of the Kingdom of Og
- 3:12 The Inheritance of Reuben, Gad, and Half of Manasseh on the East Side of the Jordan River

### Sefer Devarim—The Book of Deuteronomy: Outline of Moses' Farewell Address

☞ **Chapter 1:1–5**, Introduction

☞ **Chapters 1:6–4:40**, First Discourse:

Moses gives a veiled rebuke for sin and disobedience, and gives a review of the journey from Mount Sinai to Kadesh with exhortations to obedience.

☞ **Chapters 4:44–11**, Second Discourse, Part 1:

The religious foundations of the covenant, the spirit in which it is to be kept and the motives to right obedience are discussed. Moses shows how the covenant defines the relationship between YHVH and Israel and emphasizes the basic spiritual demands that such a relationship imposes upon Israel.

☞ **Chapters 12–26**, Second Discourse, Part 2:

The code of law dealing with:

Worship, Chapters 12:1–16:17

Government, Chapters 16:18–18

Criminal Law, Chapters 19:1–21:9

Domestic Life, Chapters 21:10–25

Rituals and the Sanctuary, Chapter 26

☞ **Chapters 27–30**, Third Discourse:

The enforcement of the Torah-law with its blessings and cursings; establishment of a fresh covenant between YHVH and Israel (i.e., the younger generation).

☞ **Chapters 31–34**, The Last Days of Moses:

Chapter 31, Committal of the law to the keeping of the priests.

Chapter 32, The Song of Moses (a prophecy about Israel's future).

Chapter 33, Moses' patriarchal blessing over the tribes of Israel.

Chapter 34, The death of Moses.

**Study Questions For This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):**

- 1 **1:2**, Horeb (Mount Sinai) was but 11-days' journey to the edge of the Promised Land (*Kadesh Barnea*), yet because of Israel's bad conduct (disobedience to YHVH's commands, lack of trust and faith in YHVH's Word evidenced by complaining, murmuring and even outright rebellion) they were made to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. What is holding you back from going forward in your spiritual walk? What sin, what fear, what wrong beliefs or false religious concepts are you refusing to let go that are hindering you? If you are serious about serving YHVH it is time to repent and go onward and upward in Yeshua!
- 2 **1:11**, *Add to you a thousand times yourselves*. If the children of Israel numbered between several million (there were approximately 600,000 men of fighting age numbered among the Israelites), then when was this prophetic promise of YHVH ever fulfilled in Israel's history? Where are the several billion Israelites (1000 times two to three million) today? (See Gen 26:4; 32:12; Exod 32:13 cp. Hos 7:8; 8:8.)
- 3 **1:13 and 15**, *Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known ... so I took ... of your tribes distinguished men, who were wise and well known*. Compare the two lists. What character trait is not listed in the second list? Why? The word *understanding* (*biyn*, Strong's H995/TWOT 239) means "discerning, perceptive, discreet, intelligent, observant and prudent." Why did Moses have such a difficult time finding such men to be leaders in Israel? Are people any different today?
- 4 **1:26–28**, Many times in our spiritual walk we are just at the point of spiritual breakthrough, but we receive an evil report about some spiritual giants in front of us and our resolve to go forward melts. It seems sometimes that if we could just see what the future holds for us that it would be much easier for us to go forward! Yet Yeshua said, Blessed are those who haven't seen, yet still believe in YHVH's promises (John 20:29). Do you have what it takes to go on without being deterred by the world, the flesh and the devil? How can one go forward in faith if one cannot see where one is going? It gets down to personal and intimate relationship with your Heavenly Father, through Yeshua. He directs us through his Spirit. Can you hear his voice with your spirit when he tells you, "This is the way, walk you in it," (Isa 30:21)?
- 5 **2:2–9**, Edom (another name for Esau, brother of Jacob) and Moab and Ammon (sons of Lot) were blood relatives of the Israelites. Often those of our own family will stand in our way as we go in to possess our

spiritual, Elohim-given inheritance and spiritual destiny. What is the lesson from this passage of Scripture on how to deal with less-than-cooperative family members who fail to recognize the calling on your life? Are we to make war with them? Are we in any way to be beholden to or dependent on them for our physical needs? If we became dependent upon them could this help or hinder our chances of entering our own spiritual destiny or “Promised Land”? Does YHVH desire our families to be saved? (See Acts 16:31; 2 Pet 3:9.) How can we be a light to our families if we are fighting and attempting to destroy those who would spiritually stand in our way?

- 6** On the other hand, YHVH instructed the Israelites to make war with and to destroy some of the Canaanites who were not relatives of Israel. The believer’s battle to enter into the Promised Land is a spiritual one (2 Cor 10:3–5 and Eph 6:10–18). Who and what are enemies with whom we must constantly do battle and by the power of the Spirit of Elohim utterly destroy their influence in our lives? (See 1 John 2:15–17; 1 Pet 5:8; Jas 5:7 to name a few.)
- 7** **2:31**, *Begin to possess [the Promised Land]*. Possession of the Promised Land was a process. What does this mean? Why didn’t YHVH give it to Israel all at once? What did Israel have to do to “possess” the land? What do we have to do to possess our spiritual inheritance? Does YHVH just hand it to us, or do we have to persevere, overcome and fight for it? We are not talking about salvation here, but spiritual rewards and inheritance. Leaving Egypt is a picture of a Believer’s *salvation*, while entering the Promised Land is a picture of a Believer’s *eternal inheritance* or *reward for obedience*. Discuss the difference between the two and what is involved in obtaining both.
- 8** **3:1–11**, YHVH gave victory to the Israelites over King Og and the 60 cities of his kingdom. When YHVH gives us a mandate to encounter the spiritual forces of this world and the devil nothing will stand in our way. What are the weapons of our warfare? (See 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–18; 1 John 5:4; Luke 9:1; 10:19.) Israel fought with swords and spears to possess a physical kingdom. We are taking possession of a spiritual kingdom. The warfare is just as intense, but the weapons are spiritual. How do we fight? Have you experienced spiritual victories in your life? Are you engaging the enemy, or are you in retreat? Those who are not moving forward spiritually will not encounter the enemy. Are you moving forward, or are you complacent and lukewarm and not growing spiritually? At the very least, one should be overcoming the flesh. That is the greatest battle of all—to put on the mind of Messiah and to be conformed into his image. Are you just playing at “religion” or are you seriously engaged in possessing the land and overcoming those forces that would hinder you?

## THE SEVEN MAIN SINS OF ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS THAT KEPT THEM FROM THEIR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

### A Study Of Deuteronomy 1:1-11

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The Book of Deuteronomy (*Devarim*) is a commentary on the first four books of Torah. Deuteronomy is not just a repetition of the Torah Law as the name *Deuteronomy* (meaning “second law”) suggests, for of Deuteronomy’s 100 *mitzvot* (commandments) 70 are new, having not been previously mentioned in the other books of the Torah. Therefore, the Jewish sages suggest that the added *mitzvot* (commandments) found in Deuteronomy help to clarify and explain the rest of the Torah, hence the alternate name for Deuteronomy: *Mishneh Torah* or explanation of Torah; i.e. commentary on Torah.

Deuteronomy is largely for the benefit of the younger generation of Israelites who did not have a clear recollection of what went on in Egypt or in the wilderness either because they were too young or because they had not been born yet. It was a recitation or synopsis of the Torah commands to prepare the younger generation for entering the Promised Land.

- **Verse 1**, *These words that Moses spoke*. Here Moses delivers a sermon containing strong words of rebuke against Israel. Deuteronomy is Moses' last words before his death—a sort of last will and testament. Also in verse one, we find a list of place names that various Jewish sages take as code words for the main sins, which Israel had committed during its time in the wilderness. (See *ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*, p. 939, notes on verse 1.) These are the seven most egregious sins, which resulted in Israel being condemned to wander the wilderness for 40 years.

What spiritual lesson can we learn from verse one? We need to be reminded of our sins and challenged to grow and overcome them or else we will wander in a spiritual wilderness never entering into our spiritual inheritance. Let us not become like the Laodiceans of Revelation 3. We are told that they were rich and increased with goods, yet poor, blind, miserable, naked and lukewarm.

One of the main purposes of Torah community (the local congregation) is to provoke one another to good works (Heb 10:24–25).

We must be constantly overcoming and striving against sin. There is no place for complacency, apathy, lukewarmness or indifference. That is why many of us are searching out the Hebrew roots of our spiritual faith. This is in part due to the fact that the status quo in the Christian church has not been acceptable. We are called to be overcomers and more than conquerors through Yeshua. There is nothing in Scripture to justify simply being a “pew warmer.” (See John 16:33; 1 John 5:4; Rev 2:7,11,26; 3:5,12.)

## Moses Recounts the Seven Main Sins Israel Committed

In Deuteronomy 1:1, Moses lists seven place names. The meanings of the names and what happened there is significant since they give us clues to Israel's spiritually stumblings in the wilderness en route to the Promised Land. We can learn some valuable lessons from the journeyings of ancient Israel, since we as modern redeemed Israelites will encounter some of the same difficulties in our spiritual walk.

**Wilderness of Sin** (meaning “thorns,” located near Mount Sinai)

Here Israel complained about lack of food (Exod 16:1–3)

### The Israelites Lacked Trust or Faith in YHVH

- Their perspective was skewed by their carnality. If YHVH had wanted to kill them he could have easily done so at the Red Sea, but rather he miraculously preserved them there. How much more so now? They did not trust the consistency of the character of YHVH.
- They encountered their first spiritual “pothole” in the wilderness road and their faith melted.
- They accused Moses of planning to starve them. It often happens that a faithless and carnal people will turn the good intents of selfless and self-sacrificing leadership into evil and malicious intent against them.
- They undervalued their deliverance and wished they had died in Egypt. Where would we be if YHVH had not delivered us from our past? Think about it! A praiseworthy and thankful heart-attitude will carry us safely through to the other side of many of life's trials and adversities. Never take your eyes off of the goodness of YHVH and focus them on the complaints of the flesh.

**The Plain or Arabah** (meaning “desert plain, sterility, wilderness”)

This was a steppe or narrow plain or valley near the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee extending to the Gulf of Aqaba and to the highlands of the east). Here Israel was seduced by Midianite women (Num 36:13).

### Spiritual and Physical Whoredoms

- Israel was enticed by the lusts and appetites of the flesh. Up to this point, Israel had resisted many frontal military attacks and would have done so again had King Balak tried this means to overcome Israel. But the enemies of Israel attacked her (with help from Balaam, the false prophet) through subtlety and seduction. If the enemy can't destroy us one way, he'll try another! The lusts of the flesh can be a real snare, especially sexual enticements for men. Remember Solomon's many wives led him astray spiritually, Delilah seduced and then betrayed Samson, or how Eve misled Adam?

### 3 Opposite the Red Sea

Here Israel complains that they're going to die. They manifest sarcasm and cynicism against Elohim in their statement against Moses: "... because there were no graves in Egypt...?!" (Exod 14:11)

#### **Fear, Faithlessness, False Accusation and Discontentment**

- The straits of their physical circumstances propelled them into fear and accusation (i.e. faithlessness) against Elohim and Moses. The comforts of slavery, servitude and bondage in Egypt seemed good to them now, though a short time earlier while suffering in Egypt they had cried out to Elohim for deliverance from the very thing to which they now wanted to return. O the fickleness and vicissitudes of human nature! The grass is always greener on the other side; man is never content with his circumstances.

### 4 Between Paran (meaning "beauty")

This is the incident where the twelve went in to spy out the Promised Land. (Num 13–14)

#### **Again, Walking By Sight and Not By Faith**

- Though Moses had charged them "to be of good courage," they gave in to fear and doubt. Courage springs from strong faith, which Caleb and Joshua alone possessed. They distrusted Elohim's power and promises. Unbelief overlooks the greatness, goodness and power of Elohim and focuses on the human plane. Fear/faithlessness/unbelief magnifies every danger and difficulty and fills the heart with discouragement and hopelessness. We must resist that within ourselves.

### 5 Tophel (meaning "calumny," a reference to the false charges or misrepresentation maliciously calculated to damage another's reputation) and Laban (meaning "white," a reference to the color of manna [Exod 16:14])

Scripture does not record any geographical locations by these names where Israel camped. To answer this dilemma, the rabbis teach us that these names are references to Israel complaining twice about manna (Num 10:12; 21:5; 11:6).

#### **Lust, Ungratefulness and False Accusation**

- Manna, Elohim's supernatural answer to one of Israel's first complaints, itself becomes a source of complaint and contempt. There is no pleasing a lustful, carnal, faithless and ungrateful heart!

### 6 Hazeroth (meaning "enclosures")

This is a reference to Miriam's and Korah's rebellion (Num 12:1–16 and 16:1–50).

#### **Rebellion Against Elohim-Ordained Authority**

### 7 Di-zahab (meaning "gold")

YHVH blessed Israel with an abundance of gold when they left Egypt and they used his gracious gifts (their wages for servitude in Egypt) to make the golden calf.

#### **Riches Lead to Idolatry**

- Elohim's overabundant blessings can become a snare. We become "rich and increased with goods having need of nothing" including YHVH. This was the case with the Laodicean believers in Revelation 3.

### **Conclusion**

Moses reminded the Israelites of how, because of their shortcomings (sin, pride, rebellion, murmuring, faithlessness, idolatry, greed), an 11-day journey from Sinai to Canaan resulted in a 40-year trek just on the outskirts of the Promised Land (Deut 1:2). That journey took Israel from Sinai to across the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

Israel went from *Horeb* (meaning "waste"; another name for Mount Sinai) to *Kadesh Barnea* (meaning "set-apart fruitful fields")—a reference to the Promised Land. To enter their promised inheritance they had to cross the Jordan River, which is a spiritual metaphor for the river of life from YHVH's throne containing his perfect, good and acceptable will. (See Rom 12:2.) Sin and disobedience keep us out of his perfect will and the anointed place of the fast, clear and deep current of YHVH's spiritual river.

## What Was the Purpose of the Torah?

*Moses took it upon himself to expound this Torah... (Deut 1:5)*

The name *Deuteronomy* means “second law.” The purpose of the law or Torah (YHVH’s instructions in righteousness) needs to be reiterated again and again! The reason our Heavenly Creator gave man the Torah was to show man how to walk in right relationship (or righteousness) with his Creator.

Loving YHVH with all one’s heart, soul, mind and strength (Deut 6:5; Mark 12:30) and loving one’s neighbor as oneself (Lev 19:18) is the summation of the Torah’s teachings (Mark 12:29–31). Once one is saved by grace through faith (See *The Abrahamic Covenant: The Covenant of Salvation* at <http://www.hoshanarabbah.org/pdfs/abracov.pdf>), the Torah helps to show man *how* to walk in the straight and narrow path, which leads to blessings and life and avoidance of curses brought on by disobedience to YHVH’s commands (Deut 30:15; 32:47). The Torah also shows man how to avoid sin (which is the violation of YHVH’s Torah-commandments, 1John 3:4), which is walking contrary to YHVH’s instructions in righteousness that are for our blessing and benefit.

The Torah *does not* set an impossible standard by which to live. We must ask ourselves this important question: would a righteous and just Creator and a loving Heavenly Father give to his chosen people and children a set of standards that were humanly impossible to perform, and then curse them for their inability to meet these standards? Of course not. Rather, the Torah sets a standard of faith and trusting in Elohim (as outlined in the Abrahamic Covenant part of the Torah), and then by following its system of repentance and sacrifice (which was later fulfilled by the atoning death of Yeshua at the cross) for obtaining forgiveness from Elohim and restoring a condition of being considered righteous in his sight (as revealed in the Mosaic Covenant part of the Torah). After all, Moses, the human instrument through which YHVH revealed the Torah to the Children of Israel, states in Deuteronomy 30:11–14:

For this [Torah] commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it.

Paul quotes this very passage in Romans 10:6–8 where he relates the written Torah to Yeshua, the Living Torah or Word of Elohim incarnate (in the flesh). (See also John 1:1,14.) Paul goes on to show that they are one in the same and that Messiah Yeshua came to live out the Torah and reveal to us the righteousness of the Torah-law (Rom 10:4) that is available to us if we will only have a heartfelt faith in him (verses 4,9–10) and allow him to live out his righteousness in us through the empowering work of the Spirit of Elohim. In verses 11 through 21 of the same chapter, Paul goes on to relate this very truth to being the central message of the gospel that Isaiah prophesied (Isa 52:7) would be preached to redeem both houses of Israel to Yeshua their Messiah.

It might be said that in a sense the Torah itself is neutral—neither positive nor negative. It is like a mirror simply reflecting the image portrayed in it. Torah reacts according to human action. Those who obey it are blessed and those who disobey it are cursed. David Stern in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary* lists both some of the “negative” and some of the positive functions of the Torah.

On the “negative” side:

- 1) The Torah “has the capacity to stir up sin in an individual.... This capacity of the Torah to make us sin is not a fault in the Torah but a fault in ourselves. A healthy person thrives in an environment deadly to someone who is ill; likewise, the Torah, beneficial to a believer living by faith, is an instrument of death to those controlled by their sinful nature” (p. 375).
- 2) “The Torah can still produce guilt feelings in a believer—as it rightly should whenever he contemplates how his behavior falls short of the standard [Elohim] sets in the Torah. But these feelings are not irremediable. The remedy is once-and-for-all trust in Yeshua the Messiah’s final atonement for sin (Rom 3:21–26), followed by ongoing confession of and repentance from sins (1John 1:9–2:2)” (Ibid.).
- 3) The Torah also provides a framework of justice by which Elohim, the Just Judge of the universe, will judge the actions of men to determine both their level of punishment for its violation and their level of reward for obedience to it.

- 4) Because of the righteous standards the Torah sets out, for the sinner it points out the fact that they have sinned and how far they have fallen short of the glory of YHVH (Rom 3:23) and hence their need for a Savior or Redeemer. The Torah actually points the way to Yeshua as Paul points out in the book of Galatians (3:25).

On the positive side:

- 1) The Torah provides a framework of grace in which one can live. As Stern points out, YHVH's people are to live "within the framework of" Torah, but they are not to be "in subjection to" [or *under*] the Torah in a legalistic fashion. YHVH's giving of the Torah was in itself an act of grace that the Renewed Covenant (NT) compares with his sending Yeshua (John 1:17) (Ibid., p. 374). Ariel Berkowitz, in his book, *Torah Rediscovered*, states it this way, "[Torah] function[s] as a protective border for the people of [Elohim]." He goes on to show that there are two opposing spiritual realities in the universe: the kingdom of light (YHVH's kingdom) and the kingdom of darkness (Satan's kingdom). Torah acts as a protective border to keep those wanting to abide in the kingdom of light/life/blessing/relationship with YHVH safe and secure. The Torah tells us what is truth as opposed to error, light as opposed to darkness, clean as opposed to unclean, holy (*kadosh* or set-apart) as opposed to profane or polluted, life as opposed to death (pp. 26–27).
- 2) The Torah, as understood and applied through the Spirit, thereby gives life in union with Messiah (Stern, p. 381) who is the Living Torah, or Word of Elohim incarnate (in human or flesh form).
- 3) Obeying the Torah brings us eternal rewards (not eternal life, which is by grace through faith alone, see Eph 2:8) in the world to come (Matt 5:19).
- 4) Obeying the Torah helps deepen a loving and intimate relationship with YHVH-Yeshua and helps us to abide in Yeshua (John 14:15; 1John 2:3–6).
- 5) Obeying the Torah helps us to stay spiritually pure (1John 3:3–6).
- 6) Obeying the Torah (i.e., not sinning, which is the violation the Torah, see 1John 3:4) protects us from the influence of the devil (1John 3:8).
- 7) Obeying the Torah-Word of YHVH helps to perfect YHVH-Yeshua's love in us (1John 2:5).

## HAFTORAH READING – ISAIAH 1:1-27

### A Sinful Nation Then and Now

**B**ased on this passage in Isaiah, can we see any spiritual parallels between Judah and America (and most other nations, for that matter)? Some might ask what a prophecy given by a Hebrew prophet to the Jewish nation some 2600 years ago has to do with us today? To answer that question we would pose several questions: Have YHVH's standards of righteousness and law and order ever changed? Is sin still sin today as it was then? Is there a day coming when YHVH will hold men accountable for their sinful action? Is there a heavenly judgment seat before which all must eventually appear? Is there a day coming at the end of the age when Elohim will pour out his wrath and man will be punished for his sins against his Creator? With these things in mind, let's see if the sinful activities of men have changed much in 2600 years since Isaiah's time.

**1 1:2, *They have rebelled against me.*** What is the scriptural definition of rebellion? Rebellion against what? For the concept of rebellion to be relevant and applicable there has to be a standard or rule of law the violation of which constitutes rebellion. What is YHVH's standard of righteousness by which he will judge nations and individuals? Has that standard ever changed? Make no mistake, it is his immutable Word that will judge us. There is no escaping this fact. (Read John 12:48 and Deuteronomy 18:19.)

**2 1:3, *The ox knows its owner.*** Apostasy and spiritual degradation leads to one place: a complete loss of one's spiritual identity. One forgets one's spiritual heritage and relationship with their Creator, and becomes, in a sense, worse than an animal. (See 2Pet 2:12 and Jude 1:10.)

As an interesting side note, Scripture prophesied that Israel would become animalistic in its apostate condition as it sought to imitate the heathen nations around it. As a result and in judgment, YHVH would

allow Israel to be taken over and swallowed up by the same nations that Scripture refers to as “the beasts of the field.” In Deuteronomy 7:22, we see that the term “beasts of the field” represent the nations of the earth from which Israel was to stay separate. (See also Jer 12:9; 27:6; Dan 7:3.) The Children of Israel were scattered or exiled and became meat for all the beasts of the field (Isa 56:9; Ezek 34:5; Hos 2:12). Scripture likens exiled Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom), who fell into idolatry and mixed with the beast (Gentile) nations, to beasts of the field themselves (Hos 2:16–19 cp. Acts 10:12). In the future, YHVH will make a covenant (a marriage betrothal agreement or ketubah) with Israel who had themselves become “beasts of the field” (Hos 2:18; see also Jer 31:31–33 cp. Rom 1:23,18–25).

Can you see America in this? This nation was once a predominately Christian nation, but now many reject and scorn our spiritual heritage. What has been the result of our spiritual and moral declension? What is the current state of Christianity in America compared to the foreign religions and ideologies that have been infiltrating and spreading here? Which one is growing and which one is declining in influence and respectability?

- 3** **1:4**, *A sinful nation*. The word *nation* is the Hebrew word *goy* (*Strong's* H1471) meaning “gentile” or, in a spiritual sense, “worldly or secular.” This is one of a number of passages in Scripture where Israel actually is referred to as being *gentile*. This is not the only place in Scripture where Israel is referred to as *gentile*. *Goy* is translated in the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) as *nation* 374 times, as *heathen* 143 times, as *Gentiles* 30 times, and *people* 11 times. Whenever the word *gentile* is used in the KJV it is the word *goy*. According to *Strong's Concordance*, the meaning of *goy* is “a foreign nation; hence a Gentile; also (fig.) a troop of animals, or a flight of locusts.” According to *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, the word *goy* means “a people, a confluence of men,” and “contextually in holy Scripture it is used to refer to the other nations besides Israel, the foes of Israel, and strangers to the true religion of Israel.” There are times when this word refers specifically to Israel (e.g., the descendants of Joseph in general: Gen 48:19; of the Southern Kingdom of Judah when it forsook Elohim and its covenant with him and became like the surrounding heathen nations: Isa 1:4; of the Southern Kingdom: Isa 9:1; of Israel in general: Isa 26:2; 49:7; Ps 33:12; Gen 12:2; 35:11). There are numerous other instances in Scripture where the words *goy* or *goyim* are applied to the descendants of Abraham. Scripture’s use of the term is unbiased and lacks any of the pejorative implications that have been applied to the term subsequently (e.g., Gen 17:4,5,6,16; 18:18; 25:23; 46:3; Exod 19:6; 33:13; Deut 4:6,7,8,34; Ezek 37:22). As already noted, *goy* simply means “people group.” The Greek word *ethnos* (*Strong's* G1484) as found in the Apostolic Scriptures is equivalent in meaning to the Hebrew word *goyim*.
- 4** **1:4**, *They have forsaken YHVH*. As a society, have we in the west forsaken our biblical heritage, and have we turned our backs on YHVH? A popular bumper sticker reads, “God Bless America.” Many want YHVH’s blessing, but how can he bless us when we have become an irreligious, amoral, irreverent, rebellious and hedonistic people? He will not bless wickedness! That bumper sticker instead should read, “Bless God America!” or perhaps even humbly beg, “Please God, bless America.” It is only when we begin blessing him through worshipping him and obeying him that he can then truly bless us. We will then show him by our righteous actions that we are not forsaking him.
- 5** **1:5–6**, *The whole head is sick ... no soundness ... putrefying sores*. In general, what is the state of the political and spiritual leadership in America and other western nations?
- 6** **1:7**, *Your land ... is overcome by strangers*. Two major issues are facing America right now: the threat of Islam and the millions of illegal aliens that live in our land and are sucking its resources dry. Our political leaders would have us to believe that this is a blessing. But what does Isaiah have to say about this condition? For him, it is clearly a hallmark of a sinful nation.
- 7** **1:10**, *You rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the Torah*. Israel had become spiritual Sodom. What was the sin of Sodom and how does this apply to western civilization today? Is it possible that the Christian church’s forsaking of YHVH’s Torah (YHVH’s standards of righteousness) is directly related to the rise in the acceptance and even exaltation of sexual perversity in our nation?

- 8** **1:14**, *Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates.* To whose new moons and feasts is YHVH referring? His set-apart Torah feasts that he divinely revealed to Israel at Sinai, *or* YHVH's feasts that men had corrupted through syncretism with pagan religious customs thus desecrating that which was pure and set-apart making these paganized holidays contemptible to YHVH? Has the Christian church exchanged YHVH's biblical feasts for man-made celebration or holidays of dubious—definitely not biblical—origins?
- 9** **1:15**, *Your hands are full of blood.* YHVH is talking here to the nation of Israel, his people, and not to the world. How many believers are guilty of infanticide through the acts of abortion and various birth control methods (such as the IUD and “the pill”), which result in the murder of the unborn? Those who have practiced this and who have not repented of their sin, YHVH says he will not hear their prayers!
- 10** **1:17**, *Relieve the oppressed.* Numerous passages in Scripture reveal the Father's concern for the oppressed, the fatherless and the widows. Does your love for others stop at the front door of your house or your congregation? We are duty bound by the Word of YHVH to be charitable toward this class of people. The Torah even commands Israelites to help the poor through what the rabbis call the third tithe (Deut 14:28). The poor include the Levite (those who instructed Israel in the ways of YHVH), the stranger, the fatherless and the widow (Deut 26:12). What did Yeshua teach about helping those in need who are our neighbors? (See Luke 10:25–36; please note Yeshua's command to you and me in verse 37; Matt 25:31–46.) What did the apostles have to say about this? (See Jas 1:27; 1John 3:17–18.) When was the last time you reached out to the needy in the love of Yeshua with your time, talent or treasure?
- 11** **1:18**, *Though your sins be as scarlet.* Though the words of prophets are uncompromising with regard to the evils of sin and the punishment that will befall the repentant of heart, the message of YHVH's grace and forgiveness comes through loudly and clearly time and again! What must YHVH's people do to receive that heavenly mercy? (Read verses 19 and 20!)
- 12** **1:19–20**, *Willing and obedient ... refuse and rebel.* Nearly all of YHVH's judgments are conditional and are based on the response of the recipient to the message of YHVH's prophets to repent and return to Torah. These two verses have applied to all of us at some point in our spiritual walk, and will continue to apply to us from time to time as we have to make choices to obey YHVH, or to obey the dictates of the world, flesh and the devil. What do these verses reveal about the end consequences of the choices we make? Compare this with what YHVH reveals through Moses' writings in Deuteronomy 11:26–28 and 30:15–20.
- 13** **1:21**, *The faithful city become a whore.* How does a righteous city or nation that obeys the instructions and teachings of YHVH become a whore? How can this idea be applied in our day to a modern-day nation, such as America, and to religious systems, such as Christianity? Relate this to YHVH's admonition to his people in Revelation 18:4 to exit religious or spiritual Babylon. What is spiritual Babylon that “his people” are a part of?
- 14** **1:22**, *Your silver [kesef] has become dross [waste, refuse, impurity].* Silver is the Hebrew word *kesef* (Strong's H3701) meaning “money.” Isaiah could be referencing, in this passage, to the state of Israel's economic system that, due to Israel's turning from the paths of righteousness, had brought a curse upon itself and had gone from a lender nation to a debtor nation. Indeed, Deuteronomy 28:44 states that indebtedness (and by inference, economic inflation) would be the result of the nation which turns away from YHVH's righteous biblical standards. Has this happened in America? Silver is also a biblical symbol for spiritual redemption. This same verse speaks of the wine being diluted. In Hebraic thought, wine is a picture of the Torah. In Christian thought, wine is a picture of the blood of Yeshua. To what might the prophet be referring in this passage concerning the spiritual state of Israel in his day? How about to us in our day?
- 15** **1:23**, *Your princes are rebellious.* In ancient Israel, the princes were the governmental leaders and judges. In biblical Hebraic thought, the idea of rebellion involves turning away from YHVH's Torah or instructions in righteousness. In our day, how many political leaders and judges can you name who live and govern according to principles found in the Word of YHVH?

**16** 1:24–27, The state of the nation was not hopeless. What (or who) was the one source of Israel's hope? Is it any different in our day? Can we really expect anything to change in this nation and in the world short of a divinely initiated spiritual revival? What are you doing to light the fires of revival in your life, and in your family, and in your spiritual community? If enough small fires of revival are started can a difference be made world wide helping to prepare the way for Messiah to come?

