

VAYELEKH

(HE WENT)

DEUTERONOMY 31:1-30

ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

Yeshua 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 55:6-56:8; Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27

B'rit Chadashah

On YHVH going before you: **Hebrews 13:5**

On be strong and of a good courage: **Romans 8:31,37; Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:13; 1 Peter 5:10**

On YHVH's people turning away from him: **2 Thessalonians 2:3, 10-12; 1 Timothy 4:1; 2 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Peter 2:1-3**

On stiffneckedness: **Acts 7:51**

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

- 31:1 Moses at 120 Years Old Prepares to Takes Leave
- 31:7 The Limelight Shifts to Joshua
- 31:9 The Torah Is Recorded in Writing and Given to the High Priest
- 31:9 Torah to Be Read Every Seven Years at Sukkot
- 31:14 Moses' Death Draws Near
- 31:19 The Torah as a Testimony Against the People

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

1 31:3, *YHVH your Elohim ... will go over before, and he will destroy these nations.* YHVH promised to destroy Israel's enemies before them. Who or what are your enemies? Do you believe YHVH's promises here? Some of the enemies we have are a result of our own sinning and our repentance will bring our deliverance from them. But what about attacks that come against us through no fault of our own? What do you do about them? Do you realize who you are *in* Yeshua, and are you aware of the spiritual power you have as a victorious overcomer by the name and through the blood of Yeshua? (Read Ps 91; Luke 9:1; 10:19; Rom 8:37; Eph 6:10-18; Jas 4:7-10; 1 Pet 5:6-10; 1 John 4:4; Rev 12:11.)

2 31:10-13, *You shall read this Torah before all Israel.* Verses like this tend to expose the theological confusion that occurs in the minds of many Christian Bible teachers. Christian commentator Matthew Henry on this verse writes about the need to read the Word of Elohim and that doing so will "help us to keep his

commandments.” Yet elsewhere he says in the same commentary about the same laws that the commandments or laws of YHVH “are done away with.” Statements like this are representative of a split and incongruous, double-speak thinking on the part of many Christian Bible teachers and leaders when it comes to the commandments or laws of Elohim. Is it possible to have it both ways: to believe that we need to keep his commandments, yet teach they are done away with? If so, then what is the meaning of such biblical phrases pertaining to YHVH’s Torah/Word as “forever,” “for a thousand generations,” “the same yesterday today and forever,” “till heaven and earth pass away,” “I change not,” and “think not that I came to destroy the Torah-law?” Is YHVH’s Word inconsistent and contradictory or is this often the case with the thinking of men? Is YHVH’s immutable character flawed with regard to keeping his Word, promises and standards or is man’s?

Do we have a high enough view of YHVH Elohim and fear him and tremble at his Word (Isa 66:2), or have we tried to demote him and the veracity of his Word by contorting YHVH and his Word to fit the mindset of changeable and inconsistent man (which Scripture defines as idolatry)? Have we bought into the lie that the serpent proffered at the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden when he told the man and the woman that YHVH really did not mean what he said and that humans can take the “have it your own way” and “pick and choose” approach when it comes to obeying the Word of YHVH (a philosophy that forms the basis for the religious movement called *secular humanism*, which is at the heart of all the religions of the world—including much of Christianity—except the true religion of the Bible)?

How many aspects of Christian theology are no more than a thinly veiled version of the religion of humanism in disguise? These are tough questions that we as Messianic Israelites need to ponder seriously. Remember the words of Yeshua in John 14:15, “If you love me, keep my [Torah] commandments” and the words of the Apostle in 1 John 2:5–5, “He that says, ‘I know him,’ and does not keep his [Torah] commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keeps his Word in him truly is the love of Elohim perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.”

3 **31:12**, *Gather together the people. . . and the small children.* A fundamental aspect of Hebrew culture is the teaching of the children. This is the primary responsibility of the parents as stated in the *Shema* (Deut 6:7) and secondarily that of the community of faith. Many parents have all but handed their YHVH-ordained charge in this area over to others: the church and the government educational system, day care, the baby sitter, etc. Additionally, often the children take the backseat in the education in many churches and Messianic congregations. Often pastors struggle to find volunteers to help in the children’s ministry. Is this right? Is this the heart of the Father? It certainly is not the heart of Yeshua who went out of his way to minister to the little children (Mark 10:13–16; see also Matt 18:1–5 and Mark 9:33–37).

4 **31:16**, *This people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land.* Israel’s departure from her covenantal agreements with YHVH was assured. Moses prophesied it. But repentance (verse 2) was always an option—an open door of return back to right relationship with YHVH. Have you repented of your straying from his commands whether out of ignorance or purposely? Have you repented of breaking his Sabbath command, of not observing and sanctifying his annual feasts, of desecrating the temple of your body by not following his biblical dietary laws, to list a few things? Though you may have broken YHVH’s laws in ignorance, doing so is still sin whether in ignorance or not and repentance is still needed.

5 **31:16**, Should this verse read as it is written, “Behold you will lie with your forefathers, but this people will rise up . . .” or, “You will [die and] lie with your forefathers you will [then] rise up.” According to the Talmud this verse is so ambiguous in its grammatical construction that were it not for the Masoretic cantillation marks (which are not found on a Torah scroll, but are based on scribal tradition) the latter reading could just as easily be the correct one and thus giving another scriptural source for the concept of the resurrection of the dead (this is according to the *ArtScroll Kestenbaum Edition Tikkun—the Torah Readers Compendium*, p. 485). Adding additional insight into this passage is the Aramaic *Targum Pseudo Jonathan*, which renders this text as follows: “And YHVH said to Mosheh, ‘Behold, thou wilt lie down in the dust with thy fathers, and thy soul shall be treasured in the treasury of eternal life with thy fathers: but this wicked people will rise up and go astray . . .’” Discuss the implications of the alternate rendering of this verse with regard to the resurrection of the dead.

- 6** **31:18**, *And I will conceal my face.* YHVH making his face to shine upon his people (Num 6:25; Ps 80:3,19) or conversely concealing or turning away his face from his people is a Hebraism meaning “to be in the favor or disfavor of YHVH.” He said that he would hide his face from those who disobey him and do evil (Deut 31:17,18; 32:20; Ps 132:10; Ezek 7:22; 39:29.) Are your prayers being answered? Or do you sense that the heavens are brass (a symbol of judgment)? If things are not going well for you in your life, perhaps you need to search out those areas in your life where evil still exists. Ask him to reveal them to you. Then repent and change and bring your life back into alignment with YHVH’s Word.
- 7** **31:20**, *They shall have eaten and filled themselves.* Compare this verse with Yeshua’s admonition to the believers at Laodicea in Revelation 3:14–22. What are the parallels? To what degrees do these prophetic warnings apply to the American church?
- 8** **31:23**, *He gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge.* YHVH is the author of godly leadership. He prepares and trains leaders and then raises them up to lead his people in the paths of righteousness leading to the spiritual Promised Land. Beware of leaders who raise themselves up and promote themselves. What is the purpose of righteous leadership? (See Eph 4:11–12.) What are the qualifications for leadership? (See 1 Tim 3:1–13.) What is the premise of true, Spirit-ordained leadership? (See Matt 23:11.) Many believers have been hurt by kingdom-building and self-seeking leaders in the church world and now trust no one. They pride themselves on being “independent.” Is this good? Did Yeshua ever speak of his sheep as being “lone rangers” or did he refer to them as “a flock?” Does he ever speak of his flock as being shepherdless? Of course, Yeshua is the Chief Shepherd, but does he speak of undershepherds, as well? (Read John 10:1–18.) Is the flock, under the guidance of a servant shepherd, a place of safety or harm? Is outside the flock a place of safety or harm? (See Matt 18:12.) Yeshua says that those who are outside are “lost” and have “gone astray” and are in danger of perishing (Matt 18:11–14). Are you part of a literal flock of believers, or have you spiritualized this passage away to justify your independent (rebellious?) spirit against YHVH-ordained authority?
- 9** **31:29**, What is the prophetic significance of the phrase *in the latter days* as used in this verse? Moses is prophesying about apostasy (turning away from the truth) here. (Compare this with the prophecies of 2 Thess 2:1–12, 2 Peter 2 and Jude.) How were these prophecies fulfilled in the second century of the common era? How are they being fulfilled now?

HAFTORAH READING—HOSEA 13:16-14:9 [14:2-10]; JOEL 2:15-27; MICAH 7:18-20

Return to YHVH

This Haftorah portion opens with the words “O Israel, Return [Heb. *shuv*] unto YHVH your Elohim, for you have fallen by your iniquity [Heb. *avon* meaning “perversity, depravity].” This Haftorah reading is part of the additional scriptures that are read with Parashat Vayelekh or Parashat Ha’azinu on “Shabbat Shuva,” which is the traditional name given to the Shabbat just prior to Yom Kippur. This Shabbat falls during the time called the forty days of *Teshuvah*, which starts at the beginning of the sixth month (*Elul*) of the biblical calendar and continues through the first day of the seventh month (called *Tishrei* on the traditional Jewish calendar), which is the biblical holy day of Yom Teruah, and ends ten days later at Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), which is the most solemn high holy day of the year for Bible believers.

This forty-day period is characterized by the Hebrew word *teshuvah* (*Strong’s* H8666 meaning “answer, return”), which derives from the common Hebrew verb *shuv* (*Strong’s* H7725) meaning “to turn back, to return, come or go back, restore, refresh, repair, bring back, reverse.” This same word is translated as *return* in the opening verse of our Haftorah portion (Hos 14:1).

In numerous places in Scripture, YHVH speaking through his prophets urges his backslid people to return to him. Why? Because YHVH made man in his image as an object of his love for him to have someone with whom to

commune. The word *commune* means “to share one’s intimate thoughts or feelings, especially when the exchange is on a mental or spiritual level.” The Christian religious service known as *Communion* where the bread and wine are partaken of representing the body and blood of Yeshua derives from this word. The heart of our Almighty Father in heaven is to be one with his people, yet he is totally sinless and righteous, and our sin keeps us from him. So when he asks his people in numerous instances throughout Scripture to return to him, it is out of the Father’s heart of love.

Do those who are spiritually backslid realize the true condition of their spiritual state? They probably do not. The prophets of old who attempted to warn YHVH’s people of their sinful state were rejected, ridiculed, imprisoned, tortured and killed. Do you like it when someone points out your sins to you? What is your response? Probably the same as mine: anger, self-justification and defense, excuses, blaming others, and arrogance. Yet in these last days, YHVH is still urging his people to repent and to return to him. Each year, the faithful of YHVH, in preparation for the fall feasts (which are all prophetic shadow-pictures portending the return of Yeshua), spend forty days searching their hearts for sin, seeking the face of YHVH, and crying out to him for his mercy and grace in preparation for his return and their inclusion in his kingdom.

The sixth month is traditionally referred to by its non-biblical Aramaic name *Elul*. Some rabbinical sources see this word as an acronym for “*Ani l’dodi v’dodi li*,” “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine,” which is a quote from Song of Songs 6:3, where the beloved is YHVH and the “I” is YHVH’s people. In Aramaic (the vernacular of the Jewish people at the time that this month gained its name), the word *Elul* means “search,” which is appropriate, because this is a time of year when we search our hearts (from the web site: <http://www.jewfaq.org/elul.htm>).

During the month of *Elul*, our focus is to be on repentance, restoration and preparation for the coming of the Messiah. The bride must make herself ready. In order to repent one must understand that Scripture defines sins as the violation of YHVH’s Torah, or instructions or teachings in righteousness (1 John 3:4). Leah Lekarev characterizes sin from the Hebrew perspective:

Sin or *chet* in Hebrew, means “a failure in our relationship with Elohim.” Our goal should be to continually move closer to Elohim, but “*chet*” is behavior which causes us to move away from Elohim.

If YHVH requires his people to turn away from sin and turn to righteousness (the act of which is called *repentance*), then what is therefore involved in repentance? Lekarev continues,

Repentance or *teshuvah* in Hebrew, means “return.” In this context, it means “Return to Elohim” and to behavior required of us by Elohim; in other words, return to obedience to his commandments. While we deeply regret our movement away from Elohim, we must not despair, for YHVH has provided the way for our return to him and he tells us that when we repent, he forgives without delay. (from the web site: <http://www.lekarev.org/Learning%20Center/Elul,%20A%20time%20to%20reflect.htm>)

According to Scripture, there are, however, several basic steps to repentance:

1. We must confess our sin before YHVH (Lev 5:5; Num 5:7).
2. We must turn from our sins and resolve to stop sinning.
3. We must manifest heartfelt regret for our wrong actions by evidencing remorse and contrition before YHVH and our fellow man, if applicable.
4. An offering of the legally prescribed sacrifice must be made for the sin (Lev 5:1–19). Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, became that sacrifice for our sin once and for all when he died on the cross (Isa 53:5; Heb 4:14–5:10; 7:14–8:6; 9:11–10:22).
5. When we have sinned against our fellow man, not only is confession and forsaking that sin required, but we must make restitution in full for whatever has been wrongfully obtained or withheld from one’s fellow man (Lev 6:1–7; Matt 5:23–25).
6. We must then accept our Heavenly Father’s unconditional mercy and grace (Ps 103:3–4, 10–17).

What are the benefits of repentance? Repentance leads to a restoring of relationship with YHVH Elohim, our fellow man, and a cleared conscience for us. Furthermore, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that the doctrine of repentance is one of the foundational doctrines of biblical faith (Heb 6:1). There are tremendous spiritual benefits from repentance. Verses four through nine of Hosea 14 give some additional blessings that are the result of repentance.

