

## **Are we receiving Adonai's Blessings?**

Whenever, as a young teenager, I read the Book of Leviticus I reacted in much the same way as most of my peers – boring. At that time of my life I had no understanding of the richness of Adonai's words to us nor of the depth of the promises He made. Today's parashah is an example of both the richness and the depth of Adonai Elohim's living message to us today.

**Pray for our hearts to hear clearly the message Abba wishes for us today.**

In today's Torah reading we are given a list of blessings which will be heaped upon us, when we obey His commands and a series of curses or severe consequences and punishments derived from our disobeying His word. Let's focus on the blessings.

If we obey His commands, He will ensure we have all that we need to live and to live well, not just to be sustained but to flourish. The agricultural analogy is illustrative for our time as much as the literal meaning was for the time of our ancestors.

Can you imagine a time when no one will be hungry, when everyone will be gainfully employed and will be more than adequately compensated for their efforts? Notice what Abba promises the Israelites, if they but follow His commands, *I will give shalom in the land - you will lie down to sleep unafraid of anyone. I will rid the land of wild animals. The sword will not go through your land.* (Leviticus 26:6) Just this past Monday, I had the honour and privilege of speaking to the clients, staff and volunteers of Union Gospel Mission. When I walked into the hall, where I spoke, the fear and anxiety was palpable; even though I could hear joking amongst the audience, I also felt uncertainty, insecurity, I felt anger and anxiety. Perhaps some of that was directed towards

me because I was a stranger or perhaps these emotions I felt from many in the audience were chronic and were not realized at the conscious level. Researchers in Israel have discovered a link between chronic stress and autoimmune disorders. The lead scientist, Dr. Alon Monsonegro, of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev, in a 2013 interview, claimed, "*Stress impairs the immune system and results in low levels of cortisol and when persons are subjected to stressful conditions long-term, their bodies may respond by attacking their own tissues, a hallmark of immune disorders.*" Research has discovered those who live in war zones or who are in constant threat of their safety exhibit elevated levels of anxiety and insecurity, which over time become so deep they are not consciously recognized yet do terrible damage to their physical and mental health. My question: are those in Winnipeg, who experience constant anxiety about the condition of their lives, suffering from mental illness and physical ailments directly attributed to the constant levels of stress and anxiety they endure?

Imagine what might be in Winnipeg and elsewhere, if Adonai's shalom were upon us. Here is some indication of the extent of His Shalom to those who love and obey Him: *You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall before your sword. Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand — your enemies will fall before your sword.* (Leviticus 26:7,8) Adonai Elohim is speaking today to Torah followers, those who attempt to keep His life instructions, particularly those dealing with loving your neighbour. But look at the ratios mentioned here. There is not a direct correlation between five chasing a hundred, which is 1:20 and a hundred chasing ten thousand, which is 1:100. Why the difference? I believe Adonai Tzivaot has provided us with a teaching on the exponential value of gathering together – the larger the group of Torah followers,

the greater will be our impact. Our impact will be exponentially greater, when we focus our group efforts on the tasks He sets before Kehilah.

His promise of protection for those who truly, authentically follow our beloved Abba's commands is also seen actuated in the trust Elisha had, as we see in 2 Kings 6. As we read, Elisha's servant looks out through the city gates and sees an invading army surrounding the city. He is absolutely terrified and almost screams at Elisha, *Oh, my master, this is terrible! What are we going to do?* (2 Kings 6:15) Elisha, who has absolute trust in HaShem prays for his servant's eyes to be opened and, when they are, he suddenly becomes aware of *the mountain was covered with horses and fiery chariots.* (2 Kings 6:17) Certainly what Abba did for His prophets He will do for those who also trust Him implicitly. We've discussed before what it means to trust Adonai Elohim Tzivaot implicitly but this is one concept which requires reinforcement, since trust is a huge issue for human beings, especially those who have been hurt by lack of trust from those who claim love for them.

Our beloved Abba does not love as human beings love. This is a huge understanding! The love Adonai Elohim has for us is unconditional, not because of who we are but because of who He is. His love is not based on any emotion but on His will; He chooses to love us. Abba's will is His essence – Love. When He declares His love for us, which He does innumerable times throughout the Scriptures, He is stating truth. This is truth we can and may bank on. We can reach out to Him and not be rejected. We can reach out to Him and not be slapped down. We can reach out to Him and not be belittled. He, our supreme Father, is Trust. I do understand the difficulty people have in trusting unconditionally; this is not a human trait. He even invites us to test His word, as

we read in Malachai 3: *put me to the test,*” says *ADONAI-Tzva’ot. See if I won’t open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing far beyond your needs.* (Malachi 3:10) Trust must be earned, we all know that. As importantly, Adonai Elohim needs to trust us, as much as we need to trust Him. Fortunately, He knows our trust of Him before we are even born. We don’t and that lack of insight often hampers our growth of trust. It would be much easier for us if we knew we would eventually grow to trust the Ruler of the universe and the Lover of our souls, but we don’t. This is a process of growth we need to experience. However, we do have a promise from Him: the more trust we develop in Him, the more blessings He will pour out on us. This promise is given to us in Jeremiah 17: *Blessed is the man who trusts in ADONAI; ADONAI will be his security.* (Jeremiah 17:7) Listen carefully to this analogy of the impact of His blessings for our trust, *He will be like a tree planted near water; it spreads out its roots by the river; it does not notice when heat comes; and its foliage is luxuriant; it is not anxious in a year of drought but keeps on yielding fruit.* (Jeremiah 17:8) The more we trust our Abba, the closer His provisions, His protection and His abundance will be to us. Please don’t misunderstand me; I am not preaching a prosperity Gospel here. Our lack of wealth is not due to our lack of trust; His provisions available for us are not only material; they are also relational, emotional and health provisions I urge you, beloved, if you currently do not trust God to protect you or to love you unconditionally, please reconsider your stance, for He is the only one you can truly trust. If you choose not to trust Him, then be prepared for the consequences, which we read in Chapter 17, *A curse on the person who trusts in humans, who relies on merely human strength, whose heart turns away from ADONAI.* (Jeremiah 17:5) And in contrast, hear the impact of

not trusting Him: *He will be like a tamarisk in the 'Aravah — when relief comes, it is unaffected; for it lives in the sun-baked desert, in salty, uninhabited land.*

(Jeremiah 17:6) If we rely on our own strength or the strength of others, we will not have the ability to even recognize when Adonai's blessings surround us.

In verse 9 of Leviticus 26, Adonai shares with us, *I will turn toward you, make you productive, increase your numbers and uphold my covenant with you.*

(Leviticus 26:9) What does it mean for Adonai Elohim to turn towards those who are His? Here is His promise of divine protection for those He loves. Nothing will interfere with the Shalom He provides for His children – absolutely nothing.

Again, I ask you to imagine the magnitude of this promise. Adonai Tzivaot, Almighty God has promised nothing will come against us now or ever more, given we, as a nation, walk on His narrow path. And then we receive His promise to make us productive. What might this world be, if we all were believers in the Almighty God? What might our cities look like? Certainly not the quality of urban centres we have today. There would be no crime; there would be no homelessness; there would be no hunger; there would be no child abuse. There would only be peace and tranquility. Right, what I have just postulated is of course, in our current space and time, a pipe-dream. With Winnipeg in its current state, there is no question Adonai's Shalom is not with our city. Oh, yes, each one of His believers experiences the peace He provides us but we are in the minority, not only within our city and our country but also within our world. And that minority state creates for us a huge challenge, for the only way we are going to experience His Shalom as a city, as a province and as a country is to help our families, our neighbours and strangers among us confess their sinfulness and return to His love, walk His path and obey His commands.

And then we receive the early notice of a new covenant being made with us. Even Rashi, the great French rabbi of the 11<sup>th</sup> Century, recognized this portion of Leviticus 26:9 dealt with the New Covenant with Israel and with Judah. Here is how Rashi stated his understanding – *I will uphold my covenant with you, means a new covenant, unlike the first covenant which you broke at the sin of the golden calf, but a new covenant which will not be annulled, as it says in Jeremiah 31:31.*

Many within the Body of Messiah believe the New Covenant has begun; however, I and many others are not of that opinion. I believe Jeremiah is speaking of the Messianic Age, when Adonai Yeshua will reign for one-thousand years in peace and tranquility. At that time, we will all have Torah written on our hearts and we will no longer need to have Torah teachers or Bible study leaders for Adonai, by His Holy Spirit, will enable us to know the deepest meanings of His Word.

What has occurred, though, as Daniel Lancaster writes in Torah Club, Volume 2, . . . *by passing through death and into the eternal resurrected state, Adonai Yeshua has already entered into the New Covenant.* This means you and I and all those who have confessed our love for Adonai Elohim and our fealty to our Messiah will be delivered from this world of sin and receive the promise fulfilled – the new Covenant, upon our resurrection.

If that wasn't blessing enough, listen to what He promises in Leviticus 26:11, 12: *I will put my tabernacle among you, and I will not reject you, but I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.* (Leviticus 26:11,12) We remember Sukkot and celebration of Adonai's dwelling with us, as we wandered through the wilderness of the Sinai, the wilderness of Zin and the Eastern Wilderness of current day Arabia and Jordan. We remember His dwelling with us

for thirty-three years, as Adonai Yeshua in the flesh, carrying out His ministry to His people. Can you imagine the complete peace we will enjoy during those thousand years – we will never lack for anything; there will be agricultural abundance beyond our wildest dreams – we will have to empty our granaries and our bins of food, to make room for the new harvests. His Tabernacle in Jerusalem will be restored and He will once more dwell with us.

As if there were not enough blessings poured upon us, we will live to see His Shechinah, His glorious Presence within the Temple. The ancient rabbis read this passage and drew from it a great promise. Rabbi Obediah Ben Ya'akov Sforno, for example, a 16<sup>th</sup> Century European sage and scribe, wrote about Adonai's Shechinah resting with Jews wherever they lived. Sforno believed the phrase, *I will walk among you and be your God*, meant He would place His Spirit within us. Indeed, many rabbis of that era believed all of His children, those who believed in Him and obeyed His Word, would be closer to Adonai Tzivaot even than the angels.

At this juncture of the message, I'd like to draw something very important to your attention. As Daniel Lancaster has identified, there is striking parallelism between these two verses, Leviticus 26:11 and 12, and Revelation 21 verse 3. Let's look first at Revelation 21. We read, *I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "See! God's Sh'khinah is with mankind, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and he himself, God-with-them, will be their God."* The only response I have to this verse is – HalleluYah!!!

As we read verse 12, I ask you to focus on the level of intimacy which emerges from these words - *I will walk among you*. The only other time Adonai Elohim Tzivaot walked with Humans was in the Garden of Eden, when He walked with

Adom and Chava, Adam and Eve. What a promise this is – the Garden of Eden once more on Earth. All He wants of us is to obey His Word and follow His statutes; these are the ‘good works’ the Apostles Peter James and John wrote about. Rav Sha’ul also focused on this, in Ephesians 2, when he penned, *For we are of God’s making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua for a life of good actions already prepared by God for us to do.* (Ephesians 2:10) And listen to Sha’ul’s words in Colossians 1, *so that you may live lives worthy of the Lord and entirely pleasing to him, being fruitful in every good work and multiplying in the full knowledge of God.* (Colossians 1:10) *being fruitful in every good work*, what a delightful phrase to mean obeying everything He has taught us about loving our Abba with all our hearts, all our souls and all our might and loving our neighbour as we love ourselves. And being fruitful in every good work will cause us to grow closer to the Creator of the Universe and the Lover of our souls, through a fullness of knowledge of Adonai Elohim, the Lord God. It is not as if we only hear this message in the Apostolic Scriptures; in Ezekiel 36, God tells us, *I will put my Spirit inside you and cause you to live by my laws, respect my rulings and obey them.* (Ezekiel 36:27) Oh how I wish that day were here now, for all of mankind. Amen?

Beloved, the time is now. We are at a crossroad in the history of mankind. Adonai Yeshua is poised to return and judge human kind. And there are so many within the faith who are not ready; they do not trust Him, comparing His trust to that of human beings and finding His trust wanting. I urge all of us to open our eyes and our hearts to the truth He is the ultimate in trust and truth. He is the only one to whom we may turn and some of us need to come to this certainty before it is too late. And so I ask you to consider if we are receiving all that

Adonai Elohim wishes to offer us? The question is not are we doing enough to warrant His divine blessings – we could never do that. The question is are we walking with all our hearts on His narrow path or are we walking, as Kehilah, with one foot on the narrow path and the other in the ditch?

**Pray for our coming to an understanding of the magnitude of His devotion to and love for us.**