



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Ki Tavo (כִּי־תָבוֹא, "When you go in")**
- **Chapters: Deut. 26:1-29:8**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah portion (Ki Teitzei) listed no less than 74 of the Torah's 613 commandments, covering a wide assortment of rules related to social life in Israel. In this week's portion, Moses concludes the legal section of his discourse by first ordaining that the first fruits of the crops (called "bikkurim") were to be brought to the priests in a prescribed ritual. To fulfill this commandment, each Jewish farmer was required to travel to the Sanctuary with the best samples of his new crops to present before the altar. He would then recite a brief history of the Jewish people concerning Jacob's wanderings, the experience of slavery in Egypt, the great Exodus, and their present possession of the promised land. When he was finished, he would sacrifice peace offerings to celebrate God's provision with his family and friends.

After explaining the law of first fruits, Moses again reviewed the laws of tithing. An individual's yearly tithe is one-tenth of the harvest (or its equivalent), which was to be distributed among the Levites. From the remainder, an additional one-tenth was to be set apart for use at the Sanctuary during holidays, or – during the third and sixth years of the seven-year Sabbatical cycle – distributed locally to the poor. All tithes were to be given on the "honor system" and were not enforced by religious authorities. Instead, a formal vow was made every three years stating that the proper amounts had been separated and given as tithes.

Moses then instructed that the people were to set up twelve stones on Mount Ebal, near the city of Shechem, after they crossed the Jordan River. These stones were to be covered with plaster and inscribed with the laws the people were to obey in the promised land. After the stones were set up, the people were to build an altar made of uncut stones and offer whole burnt offerings and peace offerings to commemorate the occasion of entering the land as God's chosen nation.

Moses then gave further instructions regarding how to proclaim the blessings and the curses of the covenant in the Promised Land (as mentioned earlier in parashat Re'eh). After crossing the Jordan and entering Shechem, the tribes were to be divided into two groups, with six tribes on Mount Gerizim shouting "Amen!" after blessings were announced by the Levites, and six tribes shouting "Amen!" after various curses were announced. After describing this ritual, Moses delivered the *tochechah* ("Rebuke") in which he foretold a terrible litany of curses, including the prospect of being scattered among the nations, because of the people's future disobedience. Moses concluded by declaring that the people had not yet attained "a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear."



Parashah Questions

1. What does the phrase *ki tavo* (כִּי־תָבוֹא) mean? (Deut. 26:1) ¹
2. How long did it take for Israel to take possession of the land and to settle in it? (Deut. 26:1) ²
3. What was to be done with the “first of all the fruit” of the land that was harvested? (Deut. 26:2) ³
4. Were all the first fruits to be offered at the sanctuary? ⁴
5. How did a farmer designate first fruits of his harvest? ⁵
6. List *shivat ha-minim* - the seven species of fruit found in the promised land (Deut. 8:8). ⁶
7. When were first fruits offered at the sanctuary? ⁷
8. What was to be done with the first fruits of the harvest? (Deut. 26:3) ⁸
9. What did the priest do with the basket of first fruits? (Deut. 26:4) ⁹
10. What was required of the one who offered the first fruits? (Deut. 26:5) ¹⁰



¹ Ki tavo means “when you (singular) come in,” from the imperfect form of the verb *bo* (בָּא), “to come/go.” This implied that the following instructions regarding first fruits applied to each *individual* who entered the land.

² 14 years. According to Jewish tradition, it took seven years to conquer the land, and seven years to settle it, and therefore the obligation to offer first fruits was operational only after all the Jews had obtained an inheritance.

³ Some of the first fruits were to be set aside and put in a basket to be presented to the LORD at the sanctuary.

⁴ No, only the choicest of fruits were to be offered.

⁵ As soon as the fruit began to ripen, he would tie a reed around the fruit to indicate they were *bikkurim*, “first ones.”

⁶ Wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates (or honey made from dates). Note that the sages identified these fruits as *bikkurim* (first fruits).

⁷ Only *after* Shavuot, which is sometimes called *chag bikkurim* – the “festival of firstfruits.” Bikkurim were associated with the harvest season, though they could be presented at the sanctuary until the time of Sukkot (fall harvest).

⁸ They were to be collected into a basket that was taken to the officiating priest at the sanctuary. The offerer was to declare that they are first fruit offerings and to recite words of gratitude for inheriting the land as God had promised.

⁹ The priest would place his hand beneath the owner’s hand and waved the fruit before setting it before the altar.

¹⁰ He was required to offer a “response” (תְּשׁוּבָה) by making a formal declaration of his identity as a redeemed Jew who was brought to the land by the grace and kindness of the LORD. This involved a brief review of the essential history of the Jewish people leading up to the time of the offering of the firstfruits at the sanctuary. The recitation of history described in verses 25:5-11 later formed the basis of the Passover haggadah in Jewish history.



11. Who was the “wandering Aramean” mentioned in Deut. 26:5? ¹¹
12. How do the verses found in Deut. 26:6-9 summarize the events of the Exodus? ¹²
13. After the declaration was made, what was required? (Deut. 26:10-11) ¹³
14. What is the Sabbatical Year? ¹⁴
15. How much of a tithe is required to be given to the Levites? (Deut. 14:22) ¹⁵
16. What tithe is required every third year of Shemittah? (Deut. 26:12) ¹⁶
17. Who enforced the tithe for the poor? (Deut. 26:13-14) ¹⁷
18. How important was the tithe to the poor? (Deut. 26:15) ¹⁸
19. What declaration is referred to in Deut. 26:16-19? ¹⁹



- ¹¹ The word “Aramean” (אַרְמִי) means one from “Aram,” which later was known as Syria, where the city of Aleppo now stands (the word “Aramaic” comes from this word). Rashi thought the Aramean mentioned here was Laban, the nefarious uncle of Jacob, and therefore translated this as “An Aramean [Laban] sought to *destroy* (oved) my father.” Rashbam thought the Aramean was Abraham, since he was born and raised in the easternmost part of Aram (i.e., Ur of Mesopotamia). Ibn Ezra thought it referred to Jacob who “went down to Egypt (יִיְרָד מִצְרַיִם) few in number... and there became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.”
- ¹² These verses are the essence of the “maggid” section of the Passover Seder. The Egyptians were cruel to the Jews and made them suffer through forced labor. The Jews cried out to the LORD, and God heard their cries. God saw our suffering, harsh labor and distress and brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand and outstretched arm, with great visions, signs, and miracles. God then brought us to “this place” (ha-makom – the sanctuary) and gave us “this land” (i.e., the promised land), which flows with milk and honey (zavat chalav u’devash: זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדֵבַשׁ).
- ¹³ The basket (which as being “waved” during the declaration, was set down before the altar and the person would bow and worship the LORD. After this, peace offerings (shelamim) were sacrificed and a simchah (festive meal) was shared with family members, the Levites, and the sojourners (gerim). “You shall rejoice in all the good that the LORD your God has given to you and your household.”
- ¹⁴ In the agricultural cycle of years, the seventh year is a “Sabbatical for the land,” called *shemittah* (שְׁמִטָּה), “release.”
- ¹⁵ A tenth part. Note, however, that after harvesting, 1/50th of the yield is separated for the kohen as *terumah*. After this, the tenth is given to the Levite. This is called *ma’aser rishon*, “the first tithe.” Besides this, *another* tenth is separated to be eaten at the sanctuary during celebrations. This is called *ma’aser sheni*, “the second tithe.” Note that during the 3rd and 6th years of the Shemittah cycle, the second tithe is given to the poor among us (Deut. 14:28). This is called *ma’aser ani*, “poor tithe.” Finally, on the Shemittah year (7th year of the cycle), none of the tithing laws are applied. This implies that we should donate 1/5 of our resources to fulfill the mitzvah of charity. Note that money is also acceptable form of tithing (called *ma’aser kesafim*).
- ¹⁶ The *ma’aser ani*, or “tithe for the poor,” which replaces *ma’aser sheni* (the “second tithe”).
- ¹⁷ The individual farmer would make a pledge before the LORD as described in this verse.
- ¹⁸ Very important, since the fruitfulness of the land itself depended upon its observance. The declaration itself was made in a “low voice” until the words “Look down from Your Holy Habitation...” which was proclaimed loudly (Sotah). In a year of blight, the sages turned to an individual who was scrupulous in separating his tithes: “Recite the declaration connected with tithes; surely God will listen and bless His people Israel” (Ta’anit 1:4).
- ¹⁹ This “pledge of allegiance” concludes the preceding legal material and presumably refers to a ratification of the covenant while in the plains of Moab, yet before crossing the Jordan.



20. What does “am segulah” mean? (Deut. 26:18-19) ²⁰
21. Why did the seventy elders join Moses by telling the people to “keep the entire commandment” at this time? (Deut. 27:1) ²¹
22. When the people finally crossed the Jordan into the promised and, what was the first thing they were required to do? (Deut. 27:2-3) ²²
23. Where were the stones to be set up? (Deut. 27:4) ²³
24. Where was the city of Shechem located? ²⁴
25. What was required of the altar on Mount Ebal? (Deut. 27:5-7) ²⁵
26. The requirement to write the Torah “in a clear script” (ba’er hetev) suggested that translation of the text was problematic (Deut. 27:8). ²⁶
27. Why did Moses and the priests declare, “Today you have become a nation” to the people in the plains of Moab? (Deut. 27:9-10) ²⁷
28. Which mountain was designated for the blessing? (Deut. 27:12) ²⁸

²⁰ Am segulah (עַם סִגְלָה) means a “select nation,” or a treasured people. The idea that the Jewish people are “chosen” by God was first mentioned when the LORD said to the elders at Sinai, “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my possession more than all other peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:5-6). Note that the grammar in this verse implies that the Jewish people were chosen *for the sake of* keeping all the commandments (וְלִשְׁמֵר כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי). By doing so, Israel would be honored above all other nations and made holy unto the LORD.

²¹ Because the elders would cross the Jordan with the people, but without Moses. Notice that the phrase, “guard the entire commandment” (שָׁמַר אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּצְוָה) may refer to either the entire Torah or to the instruction to inscribe the various laws on the stones (as described in the following verses).

²² The people were to locate and set up large stones and to plastered them over with lime so they could be inscribed with “all the words of this law” (כָּל-דִּבְרֵי הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת). Notice that the words of the Torah were to be written in a “clear script” (בְּאֵר הֵיטֵב), as mentioned later in Deut. 27:8.

²³ They were to be set up on Mount Ebal, near Shechem. Interestingly, Mount Ebal was the mountain upon which the curse was directed (Deut. 11:29).

²⁴ Shechem was located between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (presently the city of Nablus in the West Bank).

²⁵ The altar was to be made of uncut stones. The prohibition of using tools comes from the association of iron with instruments for warfare – the opposite of the altar’s purpose. Upon the altar were to be sacrificed whole burnt offerings (*olot*) and peace offerings (*shelamim*). Note that this altar appears to be different than the brazen altar at the sanctuary.

²⁶ This is a discussion topic. The Talmud states, “one who translates a verse literally misrepresents the text; one who adds anything of his own is a blasphemer” (Kiddushin 49a).

²⁷ On this day Moses began preparing for his death and he gave the scroll of the Torah he had written to the Levites for safekeeping (see Deut. 31:9). The sages link the idea of becoming a nation with the study of the Torah, since the phrase *haseket u’shema Yisrael* (הִשְׁכַּח וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל), “keep silent and hear, O Israel” implied Torah knowledge with their identity as God’s chosen nation. This is similar to the Sinai revelation 40 years earlier...

²⁸ Mount Gerizim (הַר גֵּרִיזִים) near Shechem. Apparently *gerizim* means “cutting off.”



29. What tribes were to stand on (or near) Mount Gerizim? (Deut. 27:12) ²⁹
30. What tribes were to stand on (or near) Mount Ebal? (Deut. 27:13) ³⁰
31. Who were to recite the blessings and curses? (Deut. 27:14) ³¹
32. What does the word “blessed” mean? (Deut. 11:27; Deut. 27:14) ³²
33. What does the word “cursed” mean? (Deut. 27:14) ³³
34. In Joshua 8:33, we read that the priests and Levites stood in the valley between the mountains, so how could they stand at Gerizim? ³⁴
35. If both blessings and curses were to be recited before the mountains, why are only *curses* mentioned in Deut. 27:15-26? ³⁵
36. The list of curses in Deut. 27:15-26 is sometimes called the “Decalogue of Shechem.” How do these compare to the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus 20:1-17 or Deuteronomy 5:1-21? ³⁶
37. What is the first curse mentioned? (Deut. 27:15) ³⁷

²⁹ Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. Note that these were all descendants of Leah and Rachel (not descendants of the concubines Zilpah and Bilhah).

³⁰ Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. Note that apart from Reuben and Zebulun (of Leah), all these were descendants of the concubines Zilpah and Bilhah.

³¹ The Levites were to declare them with a “loud voice,” *kol ram*, which some of the sages say means “in the voice of the Most High,” that is, God’s voice was “mixed in” with the pronouncements of the Levites.

³² The Hebrew word used to “bless” is *barakh* (בָּרַךְ), meaning to bestow favor and protection. The noun “blessing” is *berakhah* (בְּרָכָה), which generally refers to a list of good things - from “Aleph to Tav” – as given in Lev. 26:3-13. Being in a blessed state means being under God’s favor and protection.

³³ The Hebrew word used to “curse” is *arar* (אָרַר), meaning to “to snare, bind,” which is often used as an antonym for “blessed.” In English, the closest counterpart would be the word “damned.” The first person who was put under divine curse was *not* Adam, but rather the *nachash* (Gen. 3:14). Later Cain came under the general curse of the land (Gen. 4:11). Another verb meaning “to curse” is *kallal* (קָלַל), which refers more to speaking evil, “hexing,” wishing evil on others by means of words, etc. The noun form is *kellalah* (קִלְלָה) which introduces the series of curses that would come for disobedience to God’s covenant (Deut. 28:15). In Genesis 12:3, both words for “curse” likewise appear: “The one who curses (kallal) you, I will curse (arar).”

³⁴ The younger Levites and those unfit for service ascended Mount Gerizim, while the rest remained in the valley before the Ark of the Covenant reciting the blessings and curses.

³⁵ This is unclear. Some of the sages say that the blessings were to be logically inferred from the enumerated curses. Others say that before reciting the curse, the Levites recited each verse in the form of a blessing (Sotah). Some have said that the blessings are not mentioned to allude to the idea that the principal reward for obedience is not seen in this world but only in the world to come. Others have said that this follows the order of Psalm 34:14: “Turn away from evil and do good.” When we turn away from the curse, in other words, we find God’s blessing waiting for us.

³⁶ This is a discussion question. Read and compare the three lists and discuss.

³⁷ The first curse is upon those who make graven images or idols to worship them in secret. This corresponds to the first commandment not to have any other gods before the LORD God of Israel. Transgressing this commandment is the equivalent of denying all the Torah, since it negates the principle: “I AM the LORD thy God (אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ).”



38. What does the word “amen” (אָמֵן) mean? (Deut. 27:15) ³⁸
39. What is the second curse? (Deut. 27:16) ³⁹
40. What is the third curse? (Deut. 27:17) ⁴⁰
41. What does it mean to “place a stumbling block before the blind”? (Deut. 27:18) ⁴¹
42. What is the penalty for perverting justice against the poor? (Deut. 27:19) ⁴²
43. What are the penalties for various forms of sexual deviancy? (Deut. 27:20-23) ⁴³
44. What is meant by someone who “strikes his neighbor in secret”? (Deut. 27:24) ⁴⁴
45. What did Judas Iscariot and the Sanhedrin have in common? (Deut. 27:25) ⁴⁵
46. Where did James the Righteous get the idea that “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty for violating it all”? (James 2:20) ⁴⁶
47. If the nation of Israel obeyed the LORD, what was promised to them? (Deut. 28:1) ⁴⁷

³⁸ The word “amen” comes from the verb *aman* (אָמַן), meaning to confirm, establish, or uphold. The word for “faith” (i.e., *emunah*: אֱמוּנָה) comes from the same root, as does the word for “truth” (i.e., *emet*: אֱמֶת). “Amen” is therefore an affirmation and confession of the truth: “Let it be so!” The Jewish sages say that “amen” serves as an declaration of the Kingship of God (often said quietly before the reciting the Shema) that may be understood as an acronym for the phrase *El Melekh Ne’eman* (אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ נֶאֱמָן), “God is a faithful king.”

³⁹ The second curse comes from disrespecting your parents. This corresponds to the 5th commandment (Exod. 20:12; 21:17; Lev. 19:3; Deut. 5:16).

⁴⁰ The third curse is directed to those who attempt to steal the inheritance rights of others. This corresponds to the 8th commandment (Exod. 20:15; see also Deut. 19:14), though others have extended it to apply to the 7th commandment (not to commit adultery).

⁴¹ In addition to its literal meaning, the word “blind” figuratively refers to someone who is unaware of all the facts or is otherwise perplexed. Someone who misdirects the blind is therefore deceiving them (Lev. 19:14). This corresponds to the 9th commandment not to bear false witness against your neighbor (Exod. 20:16; 23:1).

⁴² The divine curse is promised to those who pervert justice or take bribes. See also Exod. 22:21-22; Deut. 10:18.

⁴³ “Sexual deviancy” is defined as any form of sexual expression outside the bonds of marriage. The divine curse is promised to those who commit fornication, adultery, commit incest, engage in bestiality, and so on. This also applies to homosexual acts as revealed elsewhere in the Scriptures (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9, 1 Tim. 1:9).

⁴⁴ Not only physical blows, but injuring your neighbor through *lashon hara* (slander, gossip, etc.).

⁴⁵ They were cursed for taking bribes to put an innocent man to death. This judgment applies to both judges and to the false witnesses in criminal cases.

⁴⁶ From Deut. 27:26: “Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them” (see James 2:20; Gal. 3:10; Rom. 4:15; Jer. 11:3, etc.). The ratification using “amen” to this pronouncement implied an oath to observe the entire Torah with all its rules (*mishpatim*) and decrees (*chukkim*).

⁴⁷ Israel was promised that they would be elevated above the other nations of the earth and filled with blessings. Note that the Hebrew text repeats the verb “obey” in this verse (אֲשֶׁר־שָׁמַעַתְּ תִשְׁמָעַתְּ) – that is, obedience leads to *further* obedience and blessing. The same can be said of disobedience as well: one sin leads to another...



48. What does the word “tochechah” (תוֹכְחָה) mean? ⁴⁸
49. Before the great rebuke is delivered, Moses lists a series of blessings that will result from observing the Torah. List some of these blessings (Deut. 28:1-14). ⁴⁹
50. Are these blessings given *unconditionally* to Israel? ⁵⁰
51. What are some differences between the tochechot (rebukes) given in Leviticus (Lev. 26:14-46) and the one given in Deuteronomy? (Deut. 28:15-68) ⁵¹
52. What, above all else, is the cause of falling under the curses? (Deut. 28:15) ⁵²
53. What are the “troubles of love” (yissurim shel ahavah)? ⁵³
54. What does the phrase “gam zu l’tovah” (גַּם זוֹ לְטוֹבָה) mean? ⁵⁴

⁴⁸ The word means “rebuke” or “reproof” for the sake of correction. Tochechah is a confrontation over sin – whether an actual sin or the possibility of sinning (Lev. 19:17). When applied to Israel, it refers to a warning and prophecy of certain fearful judgment and progressively painful punishments if the terms of the covenant are unfulfilled.

⁴⁹ Various forms of prosperity will “pursue and overtake” the people if they obey the Torah, including the fruitfulness of the land, the abundance of children, a surplus of food provisions, the establishment of Israel as God’s holy nation that would be invincible among the nations in warfare, and an overall peace, protection, and power that comes from God.

⁵⁰ No, the blessings will be bestowed only if the people obeyed the commandments of God. (Note that the only way out of the terms of the Sinai covenant (as renewed in the plains of Moab) would be through the institution of an entirely new covenant (בְּרִית הַרְשָׁא); otherwise, the older covenant remains in force).

⁵¹ There are two main *tochechot* (“rebukes”) given to Israel in the Torah. The first is given at the end of Leviticus (Lev. 26:14-46) and the second (and longer one) is given during Moses’ farewell speech (Deut. 28:15-68). The rebuke in Leviticus ends with some hope: “Nevertheless, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not have rejected them, nor will I have abhorred them, to destroy them, to break My covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God” (Lev. 26:44), but the rebuke in Deuteronomy intensifies without any sense of reprieve. The first tochechah is stated in the *plural* and was delivered to the nation as a whole directly from the mouth of God; the second is stated in the *singular* and was delivered to individuals from the mouth of Moses. The longer rebuke given by Moses contains 98 curses - exactly twice as many as the 49 curses listed in Leviticus. According to the sages, the first rebuke concerns the destruction of the First Temple and the Babylonian exile, whereas the second rebuke concerns the destruction of the Second Temple and the Roman exile (which continues to this day in the Diaspora). Ezra the Scribe decided that the curses in Leviticus were to be read before Shavuot (the time of the giving of the Torah), and the curses in Deuteronomy were to be read before Rosh Hashanah (so that the year and its curses can conclude” (Megillah 31b). It is often difficult to find volunteers to publicly read this portion during synagogue services.

⁵² Disregarding the voice of the LORD (לֹא תִשְׁמַע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה) and failing to perform his commandments (mitzvot) and decrees (chukkim) will eventually bring about all the curses (הַקְלָלוֹת) listed in Deut. 28:15-68.

⁵³ It has been said that the opposite of love is not hate, but rather indifference, and that explains why the punishments would come if the people “left their first love.” The punishments given to Israel are intended to help the people return to the LORD and to re-embrace His love.

⁵⁴ “This too is for good,” expressing the idea that all things – including various curses in our lives – ultimately help us return to the Lord for healing and life (Rom. 8:28). The son of a Torah sage was away from home during the Shabbat of Ki Tavo, so he went to a different synagogue to hear it read. Startled at the severity of the curses, he fainted in the middle of the reading. After he was revived he was asked if this happens to him every year, to which he replied, “No, when my father reads the Torah, the curses sound like blessings.”



55. Does the New Testament speak of “tochechah”? ⁵⁵
56. Are the Jewish people cursed of God? ⁵⁶
57. How does anyone escape the curse of God? (Gal. 3:13) ⁵⁷
58. What is the role of discipline in our lives as followers of Yeshua? ⁵⁸
59. What is meant by the statement, “Every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will bring upon you, until you are destroyed”? (Deut. 28:61) ⁵⁹

For Next Week:

- Read Parashat **Nitzavim** (Deut. 29:10-30:20)
- Read the Haftarah (Isaiah 61:10-63:9)
- Read the New Testament (Rom. 10:1-12)



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- ⁵⁵ Yes. The New Testament warns us that God will punish those who likewise walk *carelessly* before Him. Have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as God’s children? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary by his reproof (tochechah). For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and *reproves* every child whom he receives” (Heb. 12:5-6; Prov. 3:11-12). “God is not mocked (μυκτηρίζω - lit., “to turn up the nose at”), and what a man sows, he also reaps” (Gal. 6:7; Psalm 39:11). Each of us is therefore responsible to live before God in holiness and to remind others to fear the LORD and His coming judgment. Despite the propaganda of this evil world, the Scriptures repeatedly state there are abiding consequences for the choices we make in our lives. “For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (Eph. 5:6-7).
- ⁵⁶ Yes and no. The Jewish people will always be astonishing and set apart from the nations. If they follow God’s will, they will be blessed and rewarded above all peoples; conversely, if they violate His desires, God will punish them with privations that no other nation will suffer (Eichah Rabbah).
- ⁵⁷ We escape the curses listed in the Sinai covenant by means of Yeshua, who died on the cross as a surrogate for us. “God made the One who did not know sin [i.e., Yeshua] to be sin for us, so that we would become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). We are no longer bound by the terms of the Sinai Covenant (i.e., the *sefer ha-brit* that was sprinkled with the blood of bulls and ratified by the 70 elders of Israel: Exod. 24:7-11), and therefore the role of the Torah itself has necessarily *changed* (Heb. 7:12). We have a new and better covenant with Yeshua (Heb. 8:6), and that implies a different yoke and Torah (instruction). People are still free to attempt to justify themselves according to the terms of the Sinai Covenant, but then they are liable to the provisions of punishment stated in that older covenant... The new covenant operates according to the “law of the Spirit of Life” by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who enables us to obey the inner meaning of the Torah by the power and glory of God. Messiah in you is the hope...
- ⁵⁸ Discipline centers on faith in Yeshua. “For whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23; Heb. 11:6). The question is not whether or not we have kept certain ordinances, but whether or not Yeshua lives in our heart, i.e., that we submit to His rule in our lives. We are disciplined and corrected if we forget this, but we find inner peace when we walk in faith, according to the law of the Spirit of Life in Yeshua... We find discipline (and curse) whenever we revert back to the idea of “law” in the sense of self-justification or self-empowerment. This is the law of death. When we move “past” the law of death by means of the cross, we experience resurrection power and life...
- ⁵⁹ The end of the law is the destruction of the “principle of the flesh.” “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24).