

A Messianic Jewish Commentary on Parashah

Re'eh ראה (See!)

Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17, Isaiah 54:11-55:5, John 7:37-52

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“Behold (re’eh) ראה, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)

This week’s Torah study, **Re’eh ראה** (See!) begins with an appeal to make right choices that lead to a life of blessing. God set before the people of Israel a clear choice: they could either obey God’s commandments (mitzvot) and enjoy a life of blessing (brachah); or disobey and suffer the resulting curse (klalah).

God has endowed each of us with free-will and given us the ability to make choices – for good or for evil. Two ways are presented before Israel and it is left up to each individual to choose.

The entire future of the nation rests upon their decision. All Moses can do is clearly define the two paths, and point out where each one will eventually lead. The blessing was set on Mount Gerizim and the curse upon Mount Ebal. (Deuteronomy 11:29)



An Israeli road sign points to Har Gerizim

Today, these two mountains are situated in the vicinity of the West Bank city of Nablus (Biblical Shechem). On Mount Gerizim, an Israeli settlement called Har Bracha (Mount of Blessing) is located as well as a Samaritan village called Kiryat Luza.

Years ago, I went up to Har Bracha with a brother in Messiah, Yasu¹, from Japan. Together we sang the Hebrew Tehillim (Psalms) and the children gathered in the park to listen. Since then he has gone to be with the Lord but I still have this wonderful memory of worshipping Adonai on Har Bracha (Mountain of Blessing).

¹ Yasu passed away in Japan at an early age, leaving behind his widow who was at the time expecting their second child, named Yiru’el.

“When *ADONAI* your God brings you into the land you are entering in order to take possession of it, you are to put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount ‘Ebal.” (Deuteronomy 11:29)

The Shomronim (Samaritans) consider this mountain a sacred place and believe that God intended the Holy Temple to be built on Mt. Gerizim, rather than Jerusalem’s Temple Mount.

Most Samaritans today live in close proximity to Har Gerizim; and it is here that they perform their annual Passover sacrifice.



Old city of Nablus and Mount Gerizim in background (Wikipedia)

A life of obedience to God and His commandments leads to blessing but turning away from God into idolatry and sin surely leads to curses upon the individual and upon the nation as a whole.

As followers of Yeshua the Messiah, our deepest heart’s desire is to obey God and to keep His ways. In fact, it is the Spirit of God which compels us towards obedience; but the reality of our human nature is that we all fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

There is only One who is perfect and that is our Heavenly Father. Even Yeshua said that only God is good. **“And Yeshua said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.”** (Mark 10:18)

Paul lamented that although he truly wanted to do what was right and good in God’s sight, the ‘evil inclination’ within him so often caused him to do the opposite.

“Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s Torah; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.” (Romans 7:21-23)

There is only one who can save us from our wretchedness and that is of course Yeshua the Messiah.

“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah) Adoneinu (our Lord)!” (Romans 7:24 25a)

Therefore, although we strive to grow in our faith and character - becoming more and more obedient to the Lord - we must still depend upon the sacrifice of the One Man whose perfect obedience has made us righteous in Him – Yeshua Hamashiach (the Messiah).

“For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

Whether or not we choose to follow our carnal nature (called in Judaism the ‘evil inclination’) or that still, small voice of the Holy Spirit can also depend upon which one we ‘feed’. We can ‘feed’ our spirit through reading the Word of God, listening to faith-filled biblical messages and worship; or we can feed our carnal nature through giving in repeatedly to the demanding dictates of our flesh. Whichever one we feed will naturally grow stronger.

Spirit-led obedience is the heart of our faith and God’s perfect will for each of us since it leads to a life of blessing. Some believe that it is just too difficult to obey God; but actually it is much harder to live with the consequences of disobedience.

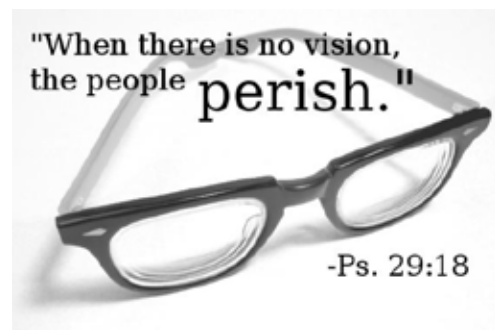
As B.J. Miller said, *“It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is than to face the responsibilities of not doing it.”*

This is not an unimportant subject. Scripture shows us the tremendous importance of heeding God’s commands – not only for reaping a blessing upon ourselves; but also upon future generations.

Write the Vision and Make it Clear

The title of this week’s parashah, Re’eh, means ‘see’. God wants us to have the vision to see that the choices we make in life will create consequences that we will then be required to live with. He sets before us life or death, blessing or cursing; but it is up to us to choose.

The word of God warns us, **“Without a vision, people perish...”** (Proverbs 29:18)



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We do not ‘see’ only with our physical eyes; but also with spiritual sight. Paul prayed that the ‘eyes of our heart’ would be opened to see the hope of our calling in Yeshua Hamashiach.

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,”
(Ephesians 1:18)

God wants to give us a whole new vision for our lives – to ‘*envision*’ the hope and the good future that He has in store for us².

Recently, I went to get my eyes checked, since it seems to be getting more and more difficult to read the fine print in books or on labels. So yes, after more than fifty years of enjoying perfect eyesight, I have succumbed to wearing those little ‘reading glasses.’

Our natural sight is such a gift – to be blind would be a terrible handicap with which some must live; but there is a handicap even worse than blindness – and that is the loss of our spiritual vision.

Some of us may become mired down in so many discouraging circumstances that we may feel trapped in a deep pit of despair from which we have no hope of escape. We may have lost our spiritual vision – or the images have just become kind of ‘fuzzy’. If so, we need to ask God to restore to us *His* vision for our life.



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It is so vitally important that we begin to ‘see’ something beyond the walls of our own pit.

“He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.” (Psalms 40:2)

Trying to build a life without a vision is like attempting to construct a home without first having the blueprints printed. One of the ways to get a new vision for life beyond our present circumstances is to write it down.

“Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so he may run who reads it.” (Habakkuk 2:2)

Enter by the Narrow Gate

We must seek the Lord for His vision for our life and then walk in obedience to the direction He shows us. We need to clearly hear from the Ruach Hakodesh (Holy Spirit) since the entire direction of our life depends on which path we choose – the road to blessing or to the curse.

Yeshua the Messiah also told us of two paths – one that is narrow that leads to life – and the other a broad path that leads to destruction. Unfortunately, it seems that few choose the narrow path; but most walk that broad path to destruction.

² Jeremiah 29:11

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

(Matthew 7:13-14)

Why would God create the only way to life and blessing that is so narrow and difficult to find? Is God trying to make it hard for us to be saved? No, Yeshua is only telling us that the gate to salvation is a narrow one – it is only found through faith in the true Messiah – not through human effort or in any other way.



Gate at Kfar Nahum (Capernaum)

Yeshua said, **"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber."** (John 10:1)

Why is this path to blessing so narrow and difficult? The answer is clear – for to obey God requires that we crucify our flesh daily and make many hard choices between what our carnal nature desires and what is in alignment with the Holy Spirit.

The apostle Paul said, **"I have been crucified with Messiah. It is no longer I who live, but Messiah who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."** (Galatians 2:20)

What stands in the way of us entering into a life of blessing through obedience to God? It is our human pride, love of sin, and opposition from spiritual forces of darkness that keep many walking a broad path to destruction.

Choosing to obey God's commandments is not always easy; especially when the whole world seems to be going in a different direction. Swimming against the current can take a great deal of exertion and determination – whether for spawning salmon or for human beings desiring to live a righteous life.

There are times when making the choice to obey God is not only difficult but can even be excruciatingly painful. Yeshua experienced this in the Garden of Gethsemane when facing the choice of whether to submit to God even to the point of death on the cross – or not. It was here, in the dark valley of decision that the battle was won, when Yeshua said,

"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done."
(Luke 22:42)

This decision was so agonizing for Yeshua that he sweated drops of blood: **“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”** (Luke 22:44)

We may not actually sweat drops of blood; but we may come to a crossroads in our life where we must also decide whether to obey God’s will or to choose our own way – and the cost may seem beyond our ability to bear – but God has promised that His grace will be sufficient for us in every circumstance and situation.

Just as angels came to strengthen Yeshua in the garden, they will come to minister strength to us in our own Garden of Gethsemane when making difficult but obedient choices.



Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane
<http://media.photobucket.com/user/holymusic55/>

Choosing to obey God will lead to blessing; but we may not receive our full reward until Heaven; thus we must always live with an eternal perspective, not allowing the trials of life to weaken our faith.

“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12)

Some seem to believe that coming to faith in Yeshua and living a life of obedience to God will make all the problems and trials of life disappear; but Yeshua did not promise this. In fact, He promised that in this life we will have trouble – but that we can be of good cheer, joyful in the Lord, for He has overcome the world (John 16:33).

One of the most important choices each one of us must make is whether or not to receive Yeshua the Messiah as the atonement for all of our sins and through Him find eternal salvation.

Every Eye Shall See Him - Coming With the Clouds

This parashah begins with the word, ‘Re’eh’ (See or Behold). Our Messianic redemption is not something that we will just ‘hear about’ or read about in a book; but it is something we will ‘see (behold)’ with our own eyes.

When Yeshua comes back for us, He will come on the clouds and every eye will **see** Him:

"Behold, he is coming with the clouds," and "every eye will see him, even those who pierced him"; and all peoples on earth "will mourn because of him." So shall it be! Amen."
(Revelation 1:7)

This New Testament Scripture about the Second Coming of the Messiah is taken from several Old Testament Messianic prophecies in which the Hebrew prophets also foresee Adonai coming with the clouds:



“See, Adonai rides on a swift cloud and is coming to Egypt. The idols of Egypt tremble before him, and the hearts of the Egyptians melt with fear.” (Isaiah 19:1)

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.”
(Daniel 7:13)

One day, we will all see the Son of man coming on the clouds with great power and glory! Until that day comes we must be faithful and diligent to keep the commandments of God.

The Call to Holiness

God placed a special calling upon the nation of Israel to be a ‘**holy nation and royal priesthood**’. They were warned against worshiping the Lord in the ways or customs of the pagans, but were to wipe out all traces of heathenism in the Promised Land - even to the extent of destroying the images and names of all foreign gods. (Deuteronomy 12:2-3)

All Believers in Yeshua (Jesus) are now: “**a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.**” (1 Peter 2:9)

For this reason, all God’s holy people, Jew and Gentile are prohibited from worshiping Him in pagan ways; but rather according to His Word. Many people today seem to believe (just as in

these ancient times) that we should do whatever seems right ‘in our own eyes’; but God’s Word needs to be our standard instead of whatever seems right to us.

“You are not to do as we are doing here today; everyone is doing whatever seems right in his own eyes.” (Deuteronomy 12:8)

Paul in Ephesians 4:1 says: **“I ... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called”**. This means making deliberate daily choices to walk in the ways of God.

Blood Libel

One of the heathen practices forbidden for God’s people is the eating or drinking of blood. **“Only be steadfast in not eating the blood; for the blood is the life; and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.”** (Deuteronomy 12:23)

The Jewish method of slaughter and the salting of meat has, as its main purpose, to drain away the blood. Biblically koshered meat must have all the blood drained out of it before eating.

It is a bitter irony that the one people whose faith forbids the eating of blood would suffer from the ‘*blood libel*’ – false accusations of ritual murder and even the use of human blood for religious purposes, such as using the blood of Christian children in the baking of Matzah (unleavened bread for Passover).

From the Middle Ages until recent times, this satanic lie was used to incite ignorant masses to outrage and even to massacre innocent Jewish people.



Matzah (Unleavened bread)

In 1935, Nazi leaders used this fictitious ritual murder libel in their campaign to spread hatred of the Jewish population of Germany. This lie is now being resurrected again by radical elements of Islam to attack the Jews.

In the Torah it is again written, **“You shall not eat it (the blood);”** Why? **“so that it may go well with you, and with your children after you...”** (Deuteronomy 12:25)

When we do what is right in the eyes of the Lord, not only will it go well with us, but also with our children after us.

For those who may be wondering if this command is relevant for Gentile Believers, it may be worthy to note that the prohibition against eating blood was one of the stipulations of the Jerusalem council. James, half brother of Yeshua, made the following judgment:

“Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.” (Acts 15:19-20)

This command is so important that it is repeated several times in Scripture. In Leviticus 17:11, we read that **“the life is in the blood** and God has given it to us **to make atonement for our soul.”** Why would Scripture devote so much attention to the blood? It is because of Yeshua’s blood, the perfect Lamb of God that atones once and for all for our sins.

Wanted: Loyal Hearts – Beware False Prophets

In this parashah, God warns the people not to follow after the gods or abominable practices of the pagan peoples around them. “...*for even their sons and their daughters do they burn in the fire to their gods.*” (Deuteronomy 12:30-31)

The highest expression of our obedience to God is through **loyalty**. God is actually on the lookout over all the earth for loyal, committed people: **“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is loyal (committed) toward Him.”** (2 Chronicles 16:9)

We must be careful of listening to false prophets – those who give false dreams, visions and messages, who may draw us away from the truth even through signs and wonders. **“If there arise in the midst of thee a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams – and he give thee a sign or a wonder....”** (Deuteronomy 13:1)

God asks for such unwavering allegiance to Him that He says, **“If anyone should try to entice you secretly to seek after and serve other gods, even from amongst our closest family member or friend, you must put him to death.”** (Deuteronomy 13:7-11)

Any attempt to seduce a Jewish person away from the One True God YHVH יהוה carried the most severe penalty in the Old Testament – death by stoning. Since Jesus is widely considered a ‘false god’ that Gentile Christians worship, it may be more easily understood why most Jewish people object so vehemently to any ‘missionary activity’.

The day will come, however, when Yeshua will no longer be seen as a foreign god by the Jewish people, but as their Jewish Messiah and brother.

“Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.” (Zechariah 12:10)

It is interesting to note that this prophecy states specifically that the wives will mourn separately (Zechariah 12:12-14). It is the custom only amongst the Orthodox Jews to separate men and women during religious rituals and worship, therefore we may believe that the Orthodox Jews will also come to recognize that Yeshua is the Messiah.

Kashrut – Biblical Dietary Laws

The rest of this parashah deals with the **laws of holiness**. Israel is a holy nation unto the Lord. The Hebrew word for holy is ‘**kadosh**’, which means to be ‘*set apart or sanctified for dedicated service*’.

God first chose Israel to be His own special treasure out of all the nations on the face of the earth. The Hebrew word for a special treasure is ‘segulah’. Now all true followers of Yeshua are also God’s ‘segulah’.

Through the blood of Yeshua, those who were formerly Gentiles have been grafted into the olive tree, becoming fellow citizens in the family of God. (Ephesians 2:11-13, Romans 11:17)

As a holy people (am kadosh), the first aspect of holiness that God deals with is food! **“You shall not eat any abominable (detestable) thing.”** (Deuteronomy 14:3) I find it strange that God calls pork and shellfish abominable (or detestable) things; while many Christians call these ‘delicious’ things.

Why did God restrict our food choices? Biblical dietary laws (kashrut) serve to maintain the separateness of God’s people from the pagan nations. Certain animals are ‘**clean**’ (**tahor**) and others are ‘**unclean**’ (**tamei**). Unclean meats may be sold to a foreigner but are not permitted for holy people. (Deuteronomy 14:21)

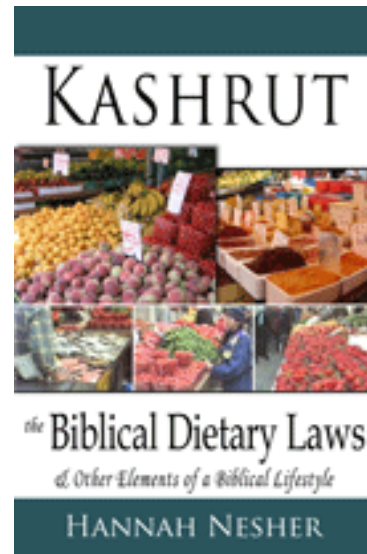
Does God Care about What we Eat?

Since I have written an entire book on the subject of Kashrut, Biblical Dietary Laws³, I am not about to repeat myself here. But the questions remains, “*Does God care about what we eat?*”

Since out of all the books I have written, this has been the best seller; it seems to me that this question is one that many people would like to have answered. To be honest, before I came to faith in the Lord, Yeshua, I didn’t particularly care about what I ate or whether or not I was keeping ‘kosher’. I went into rebellion and lived like the world.



Once I got a taste of bacon and eggs, I was hooked! Like Eve in the garden, I ate it because it tasted good to me and because I doubted God’s word. Even though I was Jewish, I did not see a reason to keep the Biblical laws of kashrut until I came to faith in Yeshua and began to read the Bible for myself.



³ you may order the author’s book, Kashrut, by mail or through website: www.voiceforisrael.net/shop

Are Cheeseburgers Kosher?

When God saved me and I became serious about my relationship with Him, He gave me a new heart and a new spirit that caused me to *'want'* to keep God's commandments; but first I had to sort out which were actually God's laws and which were simply the traditions of man, taught as if doctrines of God.

Coming from an Orthodox Jewish background, I began to see that many of the rules about keeping kosher that my family scrupulously observed, such as having two sets of dishes, cutlery and pots and pans for separating meat and for dairy products, are not Biblical at all. They were, in actuality, man-made rules that even God did not expect us to keep.

The strict separation of meat and dairy products is a tradition that most Jewish people consider the essence of 'keeping kosher'. Hundreds of Rabbinic rules and regulations have been instituted as part of Orthodox Jewish 'kashrut' laws based on a Scripture which is found in today's parashah as well: **"You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."** (Exodus 23:19, 34:26, Deut. 14:21)

Does this mean that we have to stock our kitchens with two separate sets of dishes, cutlery, pots and pans, drain boards, and dish towels (not to mention a third complete set for Passover)? Somehow I think not.

Yeshua also took exception to the religious Jews of his day teaching the rules of men as if they were doctrines of God (Matthew 15:9).

"They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Mark 7:7)

This comes from the Old Testament prophecy: **"The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."** (Isaiah 29:13)

In the 18th chapter of the book of Genesis (B'reisheet), we can read for ourselves that Abraham, along with two holy angels and the Lord Himself ate meat and dairy products together:

"So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them, and he stood by them under the tree and they ate." (Genesis 18:8)

That settled it for me! I figured if it was good enough for Abraham, angels and the Lord, then it must be okay for me too! ☺ Some Messianic Believers however, try to maintain this non-Biblical way of separating meat and milk foods. I have attended Messianic congregations in Israel where they kept these man-made rules of rabbinic kashrut. I have also attended Messianic fellowships that served shrimp without a second thought about it. There is a wide diversity of practice amongst Messianic believers as well as Christians; but God's Word must be our guide.

Although most Orthodox and traditional Jewish people (as well as most Christians) would disagree with me, I had to come to a point in my life where I said, *"I'm no longer going to believe something just because someone 'says it is so' (whatever is right in their own eyes); but I*

will live by the authority of God's written word." So until I see it written differently in God's Word, yes, I will enjoy eating an occasional cheeseburger. 😊

Do not Add or Subtract

"You must be careful to do everything I command you; do not add anything to it or take anything away from it." (Deuteronomy 12:32).

In this portion of Scripture, the Lord says we are not to add to His word, and not to take anything away from it. Many Orthodox religious Jewish people live by the Oral law - a compilation of books of rabbinic commentaries about the Torah.

Jewish tradition believes that besides the written Torah, God also gave Moses oral instructions which were not written down but passed down orally in an unbroken chain from generation to generation until being written down following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE when the Jewish civilization was faced with such a serious existential threat.

The oral law has been codified in the Mishnah, compiled between 200 – 220 CE by [Rabbi Yehudah haNasi](#), and the [Gemara](#), a series of running commentaries and debates concerning the Mishnah, which together are the [Talmud](#), the preeminent text of Rabbinic Judaism. In fact, two "versions" of the Talmud exist: one produced in Jerusalem c. 300-350 CE (the [Jerusalem Talmud](#)), and second, more extensive Talmud compiled in [Babylonia](#) and published c. 450-500 CE (the [Babylonian Talmud](#)).⁴

Even if this were true that God gave Moses extra oral instructions that were not written (which I highly doubt), I have one question to ask you: Have you ever played the 'telephone game'? Surely you remember this hilarious birthday party game we all played where all the kids sit in a circle and one kid whispers something into the next kid's ear and that kid passes along the message to the next kid, and on and on it goes until the message is delivered to the original 'messenger' to the accompaniment of merry fits of laughter. Why are they laughing? Because of course the end message is so completely distorted and twisted from its original form.

Thus, I find it difficult to even comprehend how intelligent people can trust in some supposed message, questionable in the first place, that has been passed down from person to person for centuries. I'm very sorry, I just don't buy it! God's word says, "Do not add to it and do not subtract from it". We do not have the liberty of adding rabbinic commentary as if it were equal authority with the Word of God'; but neither do we have the option of using a 'cut and paste' model of the Bible where we remove all Scriptures that we disagree with or find contrary to what most people today believe and practice.

The WORD of GOD alone must be the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path.⁵

⁴ Wikipedia, Oral Law

⁵ Psalm 119:105

In order for a Jewish person to place their faith and trust in Yeshua as the Messiah, it means overcoming centuries of deeply held Jewish thought, beliefs, and traditions that even most of the ancient Jewish sages taught. It means saying, *“I’m going to think for myself and if someone teaches something that is contrary to God’s word, then I will believe God over man!”*

Christians are coming to a place where they are being required to do the same – to search the Word of God for themselves and not to just believe something because ‘the pastor says so’ or because the majority of Christians believe this is true. Biblical kashrut is one of these issues in which people of God need to search the Scriptures and choose God’s way that leads to life, health and blessing.

Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:3-21 makes it abundantly clear which foods His people are permitted to eat and which ones are not fit for consumption by ‘holy people’. Do we believe that God has changed His mind? He says, **“I, the Lord, do not change.”** (Malachi 3:6)

Not only is pork and shellfish (shrimp, lobster, etc) forbidden; it is called ‘abominable or detestable’ - a very strong word in Hebrew. This same word is used elsewhere in the Bible to describe such abhorrent sins as child sacrifice (Deut. 18:10-12), idolatry, and sexual perversions.



In God’s eyes, eating shellfish (such as this shrimp cocktail in the photo), pork, and other unclean animals) is detestable. God created all creatures and they are all good, but they are not all good for eating. My puppy is cute and I love when he snuggles with me, but it would be ‘detestable’ to think of someone eating him!

Of course, the matter of our diet is not a salvation issue, and we do not gain right standing with God by what we eat or don’t eat. The Kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking, but about righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ruach Hakodesh).⁶ This is true. We must always keep first things first.

But it may also benefit us to remember that it was because of ‘wrong appetites’ that Adam and Eve were forced to leave the Garden of Eden. Food is an issue that is close to our hearts; for some of us it is an emotionally laden issue. Some of us were shown love through food.

We need to see that God is not trying to deny us something that is good; but rather out of love, wanting us to abstain from those food which will not benefit and may actually harm our bodies. And if our bodies are sick and tired from eating wrong foods, it is really hard to even pray or share our faith. We are also tri-une beings: physical, spiritual and emotional. Our physical health affects how we feel spiritually and emotionally as well.

Our food choices really do matter; and God will reward our obedience to His Word.

⁶ Romans 14:17

Tzedakah – Giving to the Poor

Israel is also commanded to be generous in giving to the poor and needy in the Land. **“You shall not harden your heart, nor shut your hand from your needy brother; but you shall surely open your hand unto him...”** (Deuteronomy 15:7-8)

The poor will always be with us, and Scripture is abundantly clear that we are to give generously to the poor and needy in the Land. God promises that if we obey Him in giving to the poor and needy, then: **“The Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you put your hand to.”** (Deuteronomy 15:10)

God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) and to their descendants that He will **bless those who bless us and curse those who curse us.** (Genesis 12:3) Many people do not realize how many people live below the poverty line in Israel; or that there are homeless people simply lying on mats on the streets of Israel.



Sign reads (in Hebrew) *“I am sick man...have seven children...please help!”*

The Church could be missing out on their greatest blessing if they fail to realize the importance of this command. The apostle Paul exhorted the Church to give materially in exchange for all they have received spiritually through the Jews. (Romans 15:27) **“For salvation is of the Jews.”** (John 4:22)

Paul took up an offering for the ‘poor saints (Messianic believers) in Jerusalem’. Would you be willing to open your hand and your heart to your needy brothers and sisters in Jerusalem? May the God of Israel bless you in all your work and in all that you put your hand to. Amen.

An Orthodox Jewish man giving tzedakah to the poor in Jerusalem



Haftarat Re'eh

This prophetic portion of Scripture contains words that we, at times, must cling to like a drowning woman holding onto a lifesaver in the midst of a stormy sea.

“O you afflicted one, lashed and tossed about by storms and not comforted,

I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli.

I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.

All your children will be taught by the LORD, and great will be their peace.

In righteousness you will be established: Tyranny will be far from you; you will have nothing to fear. Terror will be far removed; it will not come near you. If anyone does attack you, it will not be my doing; whoever attacks you will surrender to you.” (Isaiah 54:11-15)



The Storm on the Sea of Galilee by Rembrandt, 1632.

Is there anyone else out there who needs this Word as much as we do in the nation of Israel today, as we battle a war with Islamic terrorism? Not only do we need to hold onto this promise as a nation, but also in our own, individual personal lives.

Sometimes we feel as if we are being tossed about in a stormy sea of afflictions. God promises to rebuild that which has been broken; and to make our foundation not only firm and stable, but also beautiful – full of turquoise, rubies, sparkling jewels and precious stones!

The Word of God says, “**You shall be a crown of beauty and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.**” (Isaiah 62:3) What woman doesn’t want to be thought of as beautiful – if even just to one person for whom love is blind.



Most of us underestimate the value of beauty. If we open our eyes, we will see the amazing beauty of God’s creations in nature.

Each evening, He paints a magnificent portrait just for us at sunset. One trip to the Mediterranean Sea is enough to convince anyone that God loves beauty.

We spend far too much time with our heads in our ‘busy work’ and totally miss out on the masterpieces of God’s glory all around us. Being surrounded by beauty is essential to our soul.



A sunset on the Mediterranean Sea – Kiryat Yam

I asked the Lord to lead and guide us to a beautiful, peaceful, place in the Land of Israel – a place of trees and flowers and birds singing - and He has far exceeded my expectations. I often walk around this little village, ‘drinking in’ the beauty He has created here.

God has a promise not only for ourselves but also for our children - that they will all be taught by the Lord and great will be the peace of our children. Isn’t that really what most of us want? What we most desire in the deepest places of our heart? We long to see that our children are being taught by the Holy Spirit –that they walk in God’s ways and do what is right; and that our households are at peace (Shalom Bayit).

I have heard this from so many people, and it has been the cry of my heart for longer than I can remember, “*All I want is some peace in my life.*” There comes a point when we grow weary of being afflicted and tossed about; we just want our children and families to be at peace. We are being tossed about in the storms of life and it seems Yeshua must be asleep in our little boat.

We are desperately hoping and praying that Yeshua will just wake up, stand up in the middle of the boat and shout **SHECKET!! (QUIET!!)** to the fierce winds and tsunami sized waves that threaten to capsize us into the midst of the sea.

Perhaps the peace we are longing for is not so much a matter of circumstances, but inner peace in the midst of them. Yeshua promised us a peace that passes all understanding. That means it is not a 'normal peace' as we have when we are alone, no one is bothering us, everything is going our way.

No, Yeshua said in this world we will have trouble but that we can still be of good cheer, for He has overcome the world.⁷ The peace that Yeshua gives us is not like the world gives.⁸ It is a decision we make that no matter what others choose for themselves, we are going to hold onto our peace.



Jesus Stilling the Tempest. Painting by James Tissot (Brooklyn Museum)

The Word of God tells us, **“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”** (Romans 12:18) We may think, *‘No, it is impossible for me to live at peace with this person or that one.’* But this is not an excuse. With God all things are possible.

We come back, again, to the issue of deliberate choices. No matter how people act, or what they say, or what choices they make, we can choose a path of peace. It is not always easy or without pain. We cannot always resolve our differences with other people who seem bent on causing strife.

But what we can do is take it to the Lord and leave it with Him, refusing to enter into the fray. We can choose to keep our mouth shut or to walk away or to lock ourselves in the closet (or the bathroom if need be) and pray, leaving their lack of peace between them and God.

Growing Much Good Fruit Takes Fertilizer

This is a process of growth that takes a lifetime and more to complete. It seems that God has me on a steep learning curve right now, as I have been really struggling with trying to stay in peace when the storms rage around me. But like the butterfly that must struggle to emerge transformed out of its cocoon, the Lord allows us to struggle in order that we may also become stronger, more beautiful and free.

⁷ John 16:33

⁸ John 14:27

My wise and gentle mother had a saying, “*What doesn’t kill us can make us stronger.*” It’s the first part of that saying that makes me uncomfortable. ☺

Sometimes it does feel like these trials are ‘killing us’; but it is our flesh that has to die. And God promises never to give us more than we can bear.

Through these trials and storms of life, we can choose to grow in the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, gentleness, kindness, faithfulness and self control.⁹ It may seem at times, that the trials bring out just the opposite, but in the end, they are doing a good work in each of us.



Grapes from our garden in the moshav

The other day, my children and I were talking about what it takes to grow seeds into fruit. It takes not only good soil (The Word), good water (The Spirit) and sunshine (The Light of the World), but to get really choice fruit, it also takes a healthy dose of fertilizer!

Manure doesn’t always smell nice; nor is it pleasant to us, but it helps the trees to produce good fruit. So too do trials and tribulations feel painful or unpleasant to our senses, but God knows what He is doing and He is in control, completing the work He has started in us; that we may much good fruit – for his glory.

God Speaking in our Love Language

Throughout this haftarah, God addresses Israel in the feminine and speaks in the first person masculine. He speaks to His Beloved Bride in her ‘love language’, promising her beautiful gifts of jewels and precious stones, but also love, safety, physical well-being and protection. God asks nothing of Israel, but offers an everlasting covenant of unconditional love.

But in chapter 55, the language changes. In the Hebrew, we can see a switch from addressing Israel collectively to individually. The grammar also changes from the feminine to the masculine. God speaks to each person individually through the Prophet Isaiah saying,

“Whoever is thirsty, come for water; and he that has no money; come buy and eat; Yes, come buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

God tells us that the best things in life, like beauty, and like peace, are free. And the greatest of these is love. The prophet warns us not to waste our money on things that do not satisfy.

“Why do you spend money for that which is not bread? And your gain for that which does not satisfy?” (Isaiah 55:2)

⁹ Galatians 5:22-23

We spend so much money on trying to entertain ourselves or by trying to fill the gaping emptiness in our soul with more and more ‘stuff’ or exciting activities. It is like consuming empty calories by filling ourselves with junk food instead of nourishing our bodies with ‘real food’ that will build health. Pursuing a life of materialism is like this. It is only the things of the spirit which can truly satisfy the deepest longings of our soul.

The Prophet beckons the people to come and buy three things: **water, wine, and milk.**

1. **Water represents life.** It is a drink that literally descends from heaven. We can live for some time without food, but water is the most basic essential for life. Yeshua said to the Samaritan woman at the well that if we would drink of the water that he has, then we would never thirst again.



Yeshua answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:13-14)

By this water, He spoke of the Spirit. It is the Spirit (Ruach) that gives life. On the last day of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles, Yeshua stood up and said in a loud voice,

“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.” (John 7:37-39)

2. **Milk** is also a gift from God that nourishes life, but this gift only comes through the body of a female. The mother does not need to actively ‘do anything’ to create this milk to nourish her young. It is God who has created the feminine to bring life and nourishment to those around her. Milk is a sign of God’s blessing and abundance, as a sign of the Promised Land which flows with milk and honey.



makersdiet.com

3. **Wine** is less essential to life than water or milk, but is a powerful symbol of joy in Jewish traditions. All festivals and joyous occasions are sanctified with wine. Covenantal relationships such as marriage or circumcision are also sealed with wine. Yeshua’s very first miracle at the **Wedding of Cana** involved **changing water into wine.** (John 2:1-11)



When used for sacred purposes and in the right way, wine can gladden the heart and add a dimension of joy to special occasions such as Sabbath or festivals, weddings and bar mitzvahs. We are not to get drunk on wine; but instead drink the new wine of the Spirit which causes us to sing praise to God and truly rejoice.

We need water for life, milk for sustenance, and new wine for joy. Yeshua beckons us to come to Him when we are weary and heavy burdened and He will give us rest. ¹⁰ He will give us the living water, the milk of sustenance and the new wine.

God promises in this haftarah to make an eternal covenant with His people.

“Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you...” (Isaiah 55:3)

We enter into this eternal covenant and receive salvation through Yeshua the Messiah. At the last Passover seder meal, he held up the third cup of wine, the cup of redemption and said, **“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** (Matthew 26:28)

This is the best free gift of all. It is a gift from God which we can receive without money but it has come at a very high cost for Yeshua – it required the sacrifice of His own life on the cross.

May God give us vision, through this study of His word, to **see (re’eh)** beyond the things of this world, which are temporal, to those things which are eternal and of His Spirit, so that we may be truly satisfied.

In Yeshua’s name, Amen. Shabbat Shalom. Love Hannah

Thank you for studying Torah (Bible) with us. Please feel free to share this message with others by e-mail or link us to your website: www.voiceforisrael.net

Re'eh Study Questions

1. Can you think of a time when you chose obedience and your decision led to blessing? Has there been a time when you chose to disobey and it led to negative consequences? Share and discuss.
2. Are you facing a difficult decision at this time? Do you feel at a crossroads in your life and needing to choose a right direction? What can help you make this decision?
3. When making choices and decisions do you consider the consequences it will have on future generations as well as yourself?
4. What can we do about those wrong or sinful choices we have made which have had a negative impact on our own lives or our loved ones? How may we find forgiveness and peace with ourselves, others and God?
5. Do you have a clear vision for your life? If so, have you written it down? If not, are you praying for God to reveal His vision for your life?
6. Why is the path to life and blessing called 'narrow' and 'difficult'? Have you found this to be your experience? How can we make sure we are staying on the narrow path that leads to life? Share and discuss.
7. Are there elements of paganism in your worship of God as practiced in your spiritual community? What steps could you take to address these?
8. Why did God forbid the eating of blood? Do you think this applies to rare meat?
9. Have you ever experienced anyone trying to seduce you away from devotion to the one true God? Have you had experience with false prophets? Discuss.
10. Do you keep biblical dietary laws (kashrut)? Why or why not? Do you keep the rabbinic rules such as separating meat and milk? Discuss (note it does not say 'argue' ☺)
11. Why is the issue of food such an emotional topic with many people? Is it with you?
12. Has what you have read here challenged or confirmed your perspective on what we eat?
13. In which chapter of the Bible is it written that Abraham, the angels and the Lord ate meat and milk together?
14. What is the Talmud? Do you believe it is of equal authority with the written Word of God?
15. Do you give tzedakah (charity) to the poor on a regular basis? Do you believe this is important to God?
16. What is written in the New Testament about Gentile believers' obligation to give materially to the Jewish people, especially the household of faith?
17. Do you feel tossed about by the storms of life? How can we find real peace?
18. What does the prophet Isaiah mean by saying we should buy water, wine and milk? How do these satisfy (in a spiritual sense)?

About the Author:

Hannah Nesher grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith.

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