

Deut. 11:26-16:17; Is. 54:11-55:5; Jn. 7:37-52

1. **Deut 11:26 “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse — 27 the blessing, if you listen to the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am giving you today; 28 and the curse, if you don’t listen to the mitzvot of Adonai your God, but turn aside from the way I am ordering you today and follow other gods that you have not known.**
2. **Deut. 11:8 You will not do things the way we do them here today, where everyone does whatever in his own opinion seems right;**
3. In the last portion the state of the heart of the people is established...circumcised and set apart for His purposes. In this portion God shows how to live, how to put feet to feelings, works to faith. About to enter the Promised Land with no background in living for God, coming out of the wilderness where everyone does what is right in his own opinion; there is a need for instruction. We have been there, ready to do God’s will, having already been broken, forgiven, cleansed and set back on our feet, but not quite sure how to proceed or what this new life looks like. So God lays out the choices....the blessing or the curse. Notice there is a choice to be made. What is a choice?

4. noun: choice

a: an act of selecting or making a decision when faced with two or more possibilities;

synonyms: option, alternative, possible course of action

b. the right or ability to make, or possibility of making, such a selection.

c. a range of possibilities from which one or more may be selected.

d. a course of action, thing, or person that is selected or decided upon.

5. And what is the choice? Whether or not to listen to the mitzvot of God. What is a mitzvot? Mitzvot: divine commandment. Mitzvot are the expression of the will of God and include not only an order to do something, but also the moral imperative or obligation to do it. In Jewish thinking, mitzvot are not burdensome things, but rather opportunities to express gratitude to God for the gift of life....The commandments of God are not burdensome but rather designed to help us walk through this life with a minimum of pain and distress. When we keep the commandments of the Lord we are actually acting in our best interest, as well as the best interests of all of the people in our lives. (Condensed from Hebrew 4 Christians)

6. Deut 12:28 ²⁸ “Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God.

7. So in the rest of the portion God instructs about building this new life. The first step is to remove the rubbish, all the vestiges of that which would be a reminder of a broken and sinful way, that which might also serve as stumbling blocks, distractions or temptations in the process of building.

Then instructions concerning the practicalities of worshipping the One God, what, when, how and where...always in a place which God chooses, with the admonition still ringing, "Not how we do them here today, with everyone doing what is right in his own opinion." Training His people to look outside themselves, past all preconceived notions and previous ways of doing things, and to refocus on Him, asking, "What does God say? How does Almighty God want this?"

Next, how to deal with naysayers, those who would lead the hearts of the people away from God, back to the slavery of a former life, or off to some new fascination/abomination. Notice how close the relationships are....family, friends, and members of the community.

Then - the nitty-gritty of everyday life...what to eat, payment of spiritual leaders, debt, slavery, poverty, community life.

Our passage ends with instructions for the feasts and holy days, creating a rhythm to the year, special times set apart to celebrate and focus on God. A perfect system designed by a perfect God.

But there is this issue of choices. Imperfect people do not always choose wisely or well. Even with mountains of reminders, there is the possibility of choosing the curse. There is the possibility that choices will be made that will be contrary to the commands of God and that the consequences of those choice will curse, or bring hardship on the people who make them and the people around them. The blessings and the curses are not separate entities rained down by God. They are inherent in the choices we make. Living the way God commands will not bring blessing....it is the blessing!

In our next passage God uses Isaiah to ask some hard questions and gives a generous and merciful invitation to His broken, distressed, afflicted people.

Isaiah 5:13 Therefore My people go into exile for their lack of knowledge; And their honorable men are famished, And their multitude is parched with thirst. Another definition for you: thirst-

- a. a sensation of dryness in the mouth and throat caused by need of liquid.
- b. the physical condition resulting from this need, in any of various degrees:
- c. strong or eager desire; craving: a thirst for knowledge

How can God's people go from joy, hope and anticipation of all that He will accomplish for them and through them to this place of destitution? God says here from lack of knowledge. How many generations failed to pass on the knowledge that there is a

choice to be made, that there is a set of instructions available to give enough information to make a choice between the blessings and the curses?

8. Isaiah 55:1 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Again, as in the first time God calls, “Listen to me.”

9 . John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.”³⁸ **He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From ^[c]his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’** On the last day of Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles, Yeshua reiterates the invitation. Come with me to the celebration. It is the last day of exuberant celebration, the last day water would be drawn from the pool of Siloam, and poured out over the altar. The water libation ceremony in which the water from the pool that anointed kings and saw the return of sight of the blind, and represented all the hope of the coming of the Messiah and the promised pouring out if His Spirit would be over for another year....and then ...the invitation! Not just to have parched and thirsty souls satisfied with living eternal water but so full that it overflows and runs over, blessing all in its path. Drink deeply, precious friends, we are richly blessed!