

38 – Re’eh - Outline

Re’eh Summary

- “Re’eh” = “See”
 - “See, I am setting before you today 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 that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28)
- Moses now begins his detailed recitation of the legal matter contained in the previous three books of the Torah
- We can divide the portion into three sections according to the salvation pattern
 - about the Salvation Pattern
 - it occurs everywhere in the Word and world on all zoom levels because it is all made through Yeshua, Whose name means “Salvation of God”
 - God does a very spiritual work at the beginning, and by the end, He helps us to fashion clean PHYSICAL vessels through which the Spirit of God can act
 - so we see a movement from spiritual to physical, from light to darkness
 - at the end, WE become the light in the darkness as the Spirit burns up the physical vessel like a candle (pictured at Hanukkah)
 - Spirit, Soul, Body in Re’eh
 - **spirit:** chs. 11b and 12:
 - 11b: life and death decision – life if you choose God by obeying His commandments, death if you go after other gods
 - the initial choice to make God our sole object of worship and service
 - 12: proper worship of God and refraining from idolatry
 - worship is a function of the spirit
 - **soul** (the spirit-body bridge): ch. 13:
 - 13a – testing a prophet
 - the “soulish” phase of salvation includes a filling of the mind which involves the communication of the Word of God, a time of learning from a teacher; the prophet is the instrument of God’s Word
 - 13b – laws regarding a city that is swayed into idolatry
 - for their spiritual adultery, they are to be killed and all of their physical stuff is to be devoted to God by burning
 - the physical city is destroyed because of the peoples’ spiritual act of worship (bridge)
 - **body:** chs. 14-16:16):

- clean and unclean foods, tithes (resources), and time (mo'edim)
 - keeping the body clean from unclean foods
 - the dedication of our resources
 - the sanctification of time (physical is especially space + time)

Placing Re'eh

- Re'eh in the flow of the portions
 - Moses' big task to this point: use the experience of the 40-year journey to MAKE THE CASE THAT THERE ARE TWO PATHS, two choices, life and death, blessing and curse
 - he appeals to victories when they followed God's word to them (Sihon and Og in parsha Devarim)
 - he appeals to the death that results when they step off the path of obedience and onto the path of disobedience, as with the incident of Beth Peor mentioned in chapter 4
 - along the way, Moses hits the failures hard in order to humble Israel, which is a great parting gift to Israel
 - he is not concerned about his reputation but with preparing Israel as best he can for the next phase of their journey
 - he uses the verb "see" here regarding the two paths because this is what the people know firmly from their own experience; they can "look" back on the journey
 - sight doesn't require faith, while hearing is the beginning of faith
 - after making the case for the Torah, bringing them to this point of being able to "see" the two paths before them, Moses then begins his detailed recitation of the Torah commandments in Re'eh
 - as a good teacher, he knows that convincing the people of the benefits of the Torah is useless if they can't remember the Torah commandments, so he reviews
 - a good teacher also begins with the thousand-foot view, which Moses does in Va'Etchanan by repeating the 10 Commandments, which is also how God begins giving over the Torah
- Re'eh in the flow of the calendar
 - So far: Passover – early salvation work; Shavuot – becoming personally responsible for our relationship with God through Torah; summer and 3 Weeks – stumbling, falling, seeing our lack followed by *feeling* our lack on Tisha B'Av, feeling the separation from God as the Temples are destroyed
 - the calendar has led us to a moment where we are ready to see two choices in front of us – life and death, because we have experienced both at this point in our journey

The Daily Two Paths

- the two paths are part of every moment as we choose what to dwell on in our minds and how to use our time and how to use our money and other resources
- God comes to us all day long hiding inside many gloves and bringing tests to us (the glove of a needy child or a neighbor in need, the glove of a coworker who wants to gossip, etc.)
 - since we don't see God directly behind these tests, part of our challenge is to see Him (re'eh); it's ALL God and each moment we have a choice to see Him in the moment and walk with Him or not see Him and walk apart from Him
- we can also choose to see God in the design of what we're reading in the Torah at different times in the calendar
 - a suggestion for how we can approach this recitation of the Torah in these several Torah portions at this point in the calendar: try to see in this repetition of the commandments what the heart of love is in each commandment; having seen our lack and our need, and as we approach God's gracious gift of the Torah on the heart in the 7th month, God wants us to ASK that in His mercy He show us and give us the heart of love:
 - "Lord, help us to see what these commandments look like when they are being done from a heart of love in my life situation. Have mercy on us and forgive us for having fallen short of that love and pour out your mercy on us through Your Son, Yeshua!"

Lessons from Moses' First Topic Choices

- by placing certain topics first, Moses is making choices for what he wants to emphasize as being particularly foundational to the life of the Believer
 - Grant: be adamant where the Torah is adamant and less so when the Torah does not emphasize something
- very first instructions here have to do with destroying the Canaanite places of idolatry and proper worship of God
 - seems logical to be first
- the next topics are a bit surprising:
 - food laws, tithes, 7th-year release of debts and release of servants after 6 years of service, the annual mo'edim
- the importance of the kosher laws
 - after describing how to properly bring God "food" (sacrifices), Moses continues by addressing food we feed ourselves
 - food carries vast potential for us spiritually
 - it's a daily constant
 - constant victory in this area strengthens us spiritually
 - constant failing in this area wakens us spiritually
 - according to the Sages, eating unclean foods causes a spiritual fog
 - foods impart something of their nature beyond what is detectable by scientists – "you are what you eat"- so we need to be careful

- one reason we are basically forbidden to eat scavengers and predators, which live off of death
- even kosher animals that were mistreated in life carry an impure element with them
- the importance of tithing laws
 - speak to fundamental issues of TRUSTING God for our own wellbeing and are foundational to our ultimate purpose here, becoming a channel for God's goodness, becoming a giver as He is the Giver
 - giving is not the inclination we're born with
 - many Jewish parents have a tzedakah box in a baby's room so that they are being trained to give from the first moments of the child's life
- the importance of the mo'edim
 - foundational to how we structure our week and month and year
 - the rhythm within which we grow (develop)
 - the root of how a community comes together to be a community

On the Mo'edim: See and Be Seen

- last two verses of the portion:
 - "Three times a year all your males **shall appear** before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Matzah, at the Feast of Shavuot, and at the Feast of Sukkot. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that He has given you" (Deuteronomy 16:16-17)
 - "shall appear" is literally "shall be seen" by God
 - we need to prepare for the inspection and not appear empty-handed
 - "shall appear" can also be understood here as "shall see" God
 - we are seen by Him and we also see Him
 - these are appointments to meet with Him
 - R'Trugman says that the Shekinah of God was palpable for pilgrims especially when the Temple stood (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYmGIFQIvM> 31:45)
 - the stately grounds and building
 - the thousands streaming in with their holy sacrifices
 - the Levitical choir
 - the incense that permeated the city
 - same letters for "shall appear" (yud-resh-aleph-heh) spell the word "awe/fear:" seeing God at the Temple is an experience of awe for Him

The Parsha of Tzedakah

- Re'eh is called the parsha of charity, the parsha of tzedakah (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EID-NKbKhHY> 4:10m)
- areas in the portion focused on giving:
 - the giving of tithes, which includes giving to the priests and Levites and to the poor;
 - the idea of forgiving loans in the Shmitta year
 - sending away a servant with generous gifts when his or her service is completed
 - bringing gifts to God at the mo'edim
- frequently discussed tzedakah points
 - it's not equivalent to the word "charity," which is voluntary; "tzedakah" is obligatory, not voluntary, so we have no English equivalent
 - R'Sacks says "social justice" gets a little close
 - maybe: redistribution
 - tzedakah carries a great power with it, maybe partly because it's difficult for us
 - one of the greatest keys to opening the pathway to physical blessing in your life
 - "more than the giver does for the recipient, the recipient does for the giver," meaning that the needy person is actually giving much by asking for help; the giver's reward is great
 - by putting yourself in a less secure position financially, God becomes your financial partner - no better partner than the Creator of the Universe.
 - R'Anava says that God actually gives us BEYOND THE MEASURE WE NEED so that we will have the tzedakah to give when the opportunity is presented to us
 - if God determines that your need is \$100, He will give you \$115 so that you have \$15 to give
 - the tzedakah was never really intended for you in the first place. So hold it lightly; it's just meant to pass through your hands.
- a "giving story:" Pastor's Act of Kindness Saves Three (<https://christianpf.com/extraordinary-stories-about-giving/>)
- there's a PSYCHOLOGY OF POVERTY
 - R'Sacks: poverty brings a loss of human dignity, so when we give, we need to be aware of this. The halachah stipulates that when we give, we give in such a way that we don't humiliate someone (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CBz8NeuAXs> 4m)

Yeshua

- as Moses launches us off into a repetition of the Torah, let's think about one way Yeshua and the Torah relate: Yeshua is described as The Word Made Flesh
 - we relate to God THROUGH the Torah, and we relate to God THROUGH Yeshua
 - "For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many 'gods' and many 'lords'— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and

one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, THROUGH Whom are all things and THROUGH Whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6).

- the way people relate to the Word is a window into how they relate to Yeshua
 - if we approach the Torah legalistically, without the proper heart, we end up breaking the Torah, and the same is true for the Son
 - the religious leaders of Yeshua’s generation approached both with a legalism that caused them to trample upon both the Torah (ignoring the weightier matters of the Torah) and Yeshua (insisting that He be crucified)
- we have to always keep in mind that the heart of the Torah is love and that the Torah is meant for life, and these ideas must balance us when we start to put up a great many protections for walking out the Torah and when we are observing others in their Torah walk.
 - we must ask, “Are these protections bringing life?” or is this just getting a bit ridiculous and even becoming so unattractive that it pushes others away from Torah observance
 - and we must take great care when insisting that others abide by a fence that mankind has added to the Torah; we must be people of grace

38 – Re’eh – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and the Spiritual Seasons series. In this group of teachings we are studying each Torah portion in the light of the pattern of salvation we can see in the overall calendar. This week, we are in parsha Re’eh, from near the end of Deuteronomy 11 to near the end of chapter 16.

Re’eh means “see.” In the opening passage, Moses says to Israel, “See, I am setting before you today 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 that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). It is in parsha Re’eh that Moses begins his detailed recitation of the Torah’s commandments.

As we summarize the various Torah topics in the portion, I want to bring out the salvation pattern that is evident here. (It will probably be easier to follow this section if you are looking at the notes. I will put a link to an outline of the teaching below the video.) I keep saying that the pattern of salvation is everywhere in creation on every level of both the Bible and the world. The more we zoom in, we continue to see the same shape of salvation, and this includes on the level of any given Torah portion, though we can draw it out from some portions easier than others. In the same way, as we zoom out to the level of a whole book of the Bible or a whole section of the Bible or the Bible in general, we see the same picture of salvation emerge. And this must be so because everything in creation is made through Yeshua; it all bears the mark of the One through Whom it is made, and His name means “salvation of God,” “Yeshua.”

We can trace this salvation pattern in different ways. Here, I want to do so through the progression of spirit, soul, and body, the movement from the intangible to the tangible, from the invisible to the visible through the topics addressed over the course of the portion. By the end of salvation, God has helped us to fashion holy PHYSICAL vessels, vessels made of the stuff of earth that are purged and pure and that are then used for spiritual purposes. So the salvation pattern moves from God focusing on doing a primarily spiritual work in our lives to God helping us to truly master the physical and employ it for good, the filling of the physical with the Spirit of God. So, again, in the process of salvation, we will see a general movement from spiritual to physical, from light to darkness, a darkness where WE become the light as the Spirit burns up our physical resources.

So we ask what we see at the beginning of this portion that speaks to us of a particularly spiritual and intangible focus. How do we see the spiritual side in particular addressed at the beginning of our portion? Well, the beginning of walking with God comes with the choice to follow Him, the choice to make Him our God Who is the sole object of our worship and service. The end verses of chapter 11 put forward this very decision to choose God by means of choosing to obey the commandments or not. It is shown to us as a life or death decision, a blessing or a curse. Choosing God and experiencing new life, rebirth, is the beginning of our salvation journey. After this stark choice is given, in chapter 12, Israel is told the proper way to worship God. Moses says that when they get into the Land, they are to tear down the pagan worship places of the Canaanites. If they want to worship God by bringing a sacrificial offering, they can only do that at the one special place that He will choose. Chapter 12 ends with a further warning against falling into the trap of idolatry.

In other words, we can say the portion opens in chapters 11 and 12 by talking about 1) choosing God and 2) proper worship of God, and worship is first and foremost a function of the spirit.

As we move forward into the portion, we move into the area of the soul, the bridge region between the spirit and the flesh that touches both sides. Here we are particularly looking for this blend of spiritual and physical especially expressed through the human intellect, the emotions, and the animal drives. Other important symbols of this middle area are the word, the communication of the Word of God both orally and in writing, and the idea of learning, education, learning God's holiness and His ways.

Well, what do we see next in our portion? The subject of the first half of chapter 13 is the test of one purporting to be a prophet, how to determine if one who claims to be speaking the WORD of God is a false TEACHER or a true TEACHER of God. So we see the connection here to idea of the Word of God and to teaching. The prophet purports to have a special spiritual connection to God that allows him to bring the Word of the Lord to the people; he or she is the vessel through which God communicates to the people.

The second half of the chapter gives instructions for what to do with a city that has been led astray, a city that has wandered into idolatry. If it is determined that, indeed, this has happened, then the inhabitants and the cattle of the city are to be killed and all the physical spoil of the city is to be collected in the town square and devoted to God with fire. Near the end of this topic, we read, “None of the devoted THINGS shall stick to your hand, that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his ANGER and show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you, as he swore to your fathers...” (Deuteronomy 13:17). So the second half of chapter 13 ends by telling us how to appease the anger of God by properly handling the physical stuff of a people who have veered away spiritually by worshiping other gods. You see, then, these two elements of spiritual and physical coming together in this command regarding the idolatrous city. The city is destroyed because of their act of improper worship.

In the third section of the portion, we are looking for particularly tangible topics. And we find these topics in chapter 14 to the end of the portion: 1) clean and unclean foods, 2) tithes, and 3) sacred time, a listing of the appointed times starting with the 7th-year Shmittah and progressing through the spring and fall festivals. In other words, the topics in this third section deal with keeping the holy vessels of our BODIES clean by not putting uncleanness into them, the dedication of our RESOURCES to God through our tithes, and the sanctification of TIME via the mo’edim.

Placing Re’eh in the Flow of the Portions

Let’s move now to thinking about where Re’eh fits into both the flow of the portions and the flow of the calendar, starting with the portions. Moses has one big task before him as he thinks about Israel going on without him: he wants to use the EXPERIENCE OF THE JOURNEY they have all just taken together through the wilderness to firmly establish that there are TWO PATHS to travel in this world, the path of life and the path of death. The path of life is the way of relationship with God through His Word. The way of death is following other gods, including the god of self. Whereas we worship God and have relationship with Him through His Word, including His Torah, we worship other gods especially by elevating in our lives the laws of the fallen natural realm.

All that we have read in Deuteronomy so far has been making the case that as they journeyed these last 40 years, when Israel stayed faithful inwardly to God and walked that out by following His commandments, they had victory, like the victories over Sihon and Og that are mentioned in parsha Devarim. But when they turned away from Him in their hearts and put something else in God’s place, when they elevated their own intellects and fears above God and His Word, or when they allowed their flesh to overtake them such that they elevated other gods as with the incident of Beth Peor mentioned in chapter 4, they experienced death. Moses is making his case by laying out the evidence of their own journey, especially emphasizing what the people from THIS generation standing before him experienced.

In the process of making his case, Moses pulls no punches but uses the opportunity to teach the people to see themselves in the fullness of truth, humbling them, bringing them down a few notches. This humbling is among the greatest gifts Moses can give Israel at this point. Moses’

stark honesty here won't win him any friends as he reminds them of their missteps in the wilderness, but Moses is not seeking friends at this point. He's putting his reputation aside in order to purchase the chance to humble the nation before he goes home to be with God.

All of that in the preceding portions has brought us to Re'eh, where Moses sums up by saying, "See the two paths I'm laying out here for you Israel. The one path is blessing, and the other path is curse." Moses uses the verb "see" here because he's appealing to what they walked through personally, what they experienced. "Look back on what you lived through, Israel. It's not pie-in-the sky. It doesn't require faith. It's what you actually experienced with God and what you know with certainty. Let's look it over together. See the two paths."

All of this evidence and this summation moment are meant to get the people to admit that the way of God and the way of life and the way of blessing must include the way of Torah. And that's the point Moses wants to get them to before he launches into his detailed review of the Torah commandments. Moses is a good teacher, and he is not only going to give the people the evidence from their own experience for the life that comes when we choose God through obedience to the commandments, but he is also going to review the commandments, themselves, because it doesn't do them much good if they're convinced but can't remember the commandments. Review is so important, and good teachers review often because all of us are prone to forgetting. Moses demonstrates another good teaching quality in parsha Va'Etchanan when he begins addressing the commandments with a summary, the 10 Commandments. After that evidence and the summary and a bit of humbling of the people in Ekev, they are open and ready to receive the details of the Torah.

Re'eh in the Flow of the Calendar

After that look back at the progression of the portions from Devarim to Re'eh, let's look now at the content here through the lens of the calendar. Starting all the way back at the first month, we've had the early seeds and early work of salvation at Passover; we've become personally responsible for our relationship with God through the Word at Shavuot; and we've stumbled with that covenant during the summer. As a result of the journey so far, we have seen ourselves by a new light, and we have not only seen but then we FELT the impact of our wayward heart during the 3 Weeks and especially on the 9th of Av. What did we feel? We felt the SEPARATION from the Father, the separation from the Av, as the Temples are destroyed on Tisha B'Av.

So again, in the calendar, the story has led us to this moment where we are ready to see the two choices in front of us, life and death, blessing and curse. We are told to look at it. We look both behind at the consequences of our choices and ahead because the two paths go in both directions. Moses is saying to Israel, "Freedom from Egypt, victory in the wilderness, rebellion in the wilderness, birth and death in the wilderness, all of this has brought us now to this place where we can see the two paths clearly now stretching behind and in front, Israel. This is a special moment in the calendar when we have been primed to see the way of life and the way of death.

The Daily Two Paths

In truth, the two paths are part of every moment for us. We make life and death decisions all day long as we choose what to dwell on in our minds and how to use our time and how to use our money and other resources. God is coming to us all day long but in hidden ways. We have to train our eyes to see Him in all of these moments, to re'eh. He comes wearing the glove of a child who has needs or questions, the glove of a coworker who wants to share a bit of gossip, the glove of a neighbor who could use a bit of help. Each of these moments are God coming to test us. And in each moment, we are given the choice of walking with God or not. Part of our challenge in this life is that we don't see God directly but only through the faces of others around us and through the stuff of this world and through circumstances. But here Moses says, "See, Israel, I place before you a blessing and a curse." He says, "See!" "Open your eyes to really see, Israel! It is all God. And each moment with all of it is the chance to see Him and walk with Him or not see Him and walk apart from Him!"

And we can open our eyes to see God in every part of the Word, too, and in our reading of a certain part of the Torah at a certain time of the year. That is God's design. Let me give a suggestion now for reading these portions, this recitation of the Torah commandments that begins here and continues for the next several weeks in what amounts to hundreds of commandments. Try to see in this repetition of the commandments what the heart of love is in each commandment. As we approach the outpouring of His grace in the 7th month, which is the Torah written on the heart, I think God wants us to not only see our need for that work but also to ASK for a new heart, the heart of love for Him and for our neighbor. He wants us to ask. He wants us to see in the Torah the heart of love that we should be having, and He wants us to ask for that. Let this be our kavanah as we read through these next several Torah portions: Lord, help us to see what these commandments look like when they are being done from a heart of love in my life situation. Have mercy on us and forgive us for having fallen short of that love and pour out your mercy on us through Your Son, Yeshua!

Lessons from Moses' First Topic Choices

I'd like to turn now to looking at the topics Moses chooses to BEGIN his repetition of the Torah here because his choices here are instructive. By placing certain topics first, Moses is making choices for what he wants to emphasize as being particularly foundational to the life of the Believer. Grant has taught us that we need to learn to be adamant where the Torah is adamant and less so when the Torah does not emphasize something.

So what does Moses put first? Well, the very first instructions here have to do with destroying the Canaanite places of idolatry and proper worship of God. Rejection of idolatry and making sure our worship of God is not like the pagan worship are foundational to our walk with God. This makes sense to us as a first topic.

What may surprise us is what Moses chooses for his next topics. He moves from proper worship to the food laws, then to tithes, then to the 7th-year release of debts and release of servants after 6 years of service, then the annual mo'edim. What? The food laws are important enough to come after proper worship of God? Let's talk about that for a minute.

One way to look at this is that after Moses addresses the food we bring to God in the form of sacrifices, he continues by addressing the foods we feed ourselves. But there's more. Food is a daily constant in our lives, and it's an area where we have to constantly keep the flesh in check. Every time we have a victory with food, we gain a little strength spiritually, and every time we lose a battle over food with the flesh, we become a bit weaker spiritually. So food carries a lot of potential for aiding or hindering us in our walk. It is absolutely vital that our diets be holy in every way possible, starting with the kosher laws.

Beyond this great potential that food carries with it, the Sages teach that eating unclean foods causes a kind of spiritual fog. You can also hear some rabbis talk about how the foods we eat impart something to us of their nature, a spiritual quality to each food that is beyond the scientists' abilities to detect. This is why God effectively forbids the eating of scavengers and predators, animals that live off of death. These animals carry an intangible essence with them that transfers to us if we eat them. There is really some truth to the idea that you are what you eat, so we must be careful with the kosher laws. But within the foods that God calls clean, if an animal has been mistreated, for example, its very flesh will carry the mark of that mistreatment in ways that we can't perceive. If chickens are raised in an inhumane way, eating that chicken has a kind of weakening affect on us spiritually. With all of these different aspects to how food affects us, we can see why in Moses' mind, the food topic is absolutely vital. He places it second after proper worship.

Moving forward now to the topic of tithes, tithes speak to fundamental issues of TRUSTING God for our own wellbeing on the one hand, and on the other hand the commandment to tithe is a foundation stone for our ultimate purpose here, which involves becoming a channel of God's goodness and light in this dark place. God is a giver. If we are to be like Him, if we are to live up the image of Him, we must become givers too. That's not the inclination we are born with. We are tasked with overcoming that inclination. Being commanded to tithe is an important way that we begin learning about being a giver rather than a taker. I understand that many Jewish parents put tzedakah boxes in a baby's room so that from the moment they come home from the hospital, tzedakah is being trained into them.

Moses' next topic is the mo'edim, God's appointed times. The appointed times are foundational to how we structure our week and month and year. They are the rhythm within which we grow, the matrix of time within which we develop. And the mo'edim are the root of how a community comes together to be a community together.

Of the many laws Moses could have chosen to begin this detailed repetition of the Torah, he chose these. It's interesting that the church eventually pushed away the diet and the mo'edim and began to deemphasize the tithing laws. And we wonder why we are weak. These commandments are absolutely vital to walking with God in victory. If we obey His Torah, we will be blessed in our walk with Him, but if we reject pieces of His instructions for us, we are going to struggle in that walk.

On the Mo'edim: See and Be Seen

On the topic of the mo'edim, specifically, I want to bring out one quick idea some of the rabbis talk about regarding the last two verses of the portion. Those verses read like this: "Three times a year all your males **shall appear** before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Matzah, at the Feast of Shavuot, and at the Feast of Sukkot. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that He has given you" (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

The rabbis point out that the verb translated "shall appear," the verb "yareh," literally means "shall be seen," "shall be seen by God." So this is one idea here, that at the mo'edim, particularly at these pilgrimage mo'edim, we are SEEN by God. We need to be ready for that inspection, and we need to have in our hands offerings according to how He has blessed us.

But the rabbis say the same letters can be read as meaning that WE SHALL SEE God at the mo'edim. God sees us, and we see Him – both readings are possible. These are appointments to meet together. R'Trugman talks about how weighty it was for a pilgrim to go to Jerusalem particularly when the Temple was standing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYmGIFQJvM> 31:45). He said that thousands would come and that even to this day in the prayers, they delay adding the prayer for rain for two weeks after Simchat Torah because in ancient times the Jewish pilgrims from Babylon needed that extra time to get back to Babylon before the rains set in. And R'Trugman says that the Shekinah was palpable for these pilgrims. Even today there is a special presence at the Western Wall, which is merely a retaining wall for the Temple Mount. And if we can feel it today, what must it have been like when thousands were streaming into Jerusalem bringing their offerings, and the Temple was filled with the holiness of these offerings and with the music of the Levitical choir and the smell of the incense that permeated the city and reached down even to Jericho. R'Trugman points out that the same letters for "to see" here, yud-resh-aleph-heh, are used to spell the word for "awe" and "fear." Seeing God at the Temple is an experience of awe for Him.

The Parsha of Tzedakah

Lastly here as we bring out some specific topics from the portion, I want to focus on tzedakah, charity. Re'eh is called the parsha of charity, the parsha of tzedakah (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EID-NKbKhHY> 4:10m). R'Trugman lists the following areas that address giving in the portion: first the giving of tithes, which includes giving to the priests and Levites and to the poor; then the idea of forgiving loans in the Shmitta year is here, and we also read here how one is to send away a servant with generous gifts when his or her service is completed. Listen to the following passages from chapter 15: "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be" (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). "You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command

you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land’” (Deuteronomy 15:10-11).

Let’s go over a few points the rabbis often discuss here. First, “tzedakah” doesn’t quite mean “charity.” “Charity” in English is voluntary. “Tzedakah” is not voluntary; it’s required. So there’s not quite an English equivalent for it. R’Sacks suggests “social justice” as coming somewhat close, although that term has come to carry a lot with it in recent years. Point number one, tzedakah is required, so it’s not exactly charity. It’s a bit more like redistribution.

Second, the rabbis understand how difficult it can be for some of us to open our hands to give tzedakah. But maybe partly for this reason, giving charity carries a great power with it. Tzedakah is seen as one of the greatest keys to opening the pathway to physical blessing in your life. The rabbis say, “more than the giver does for the recipient, the recipient does for the giver,” meaning that when you give, you might be thinking of the good you are doing for someone, but you should really think about what they are doing for you by presenting their need to you and giving you the opportunity to help them. The reward for the giver is great. For one thing, by putting yourself in a less secure position financially, God becomes your financial partner, and there’s no better financial partner than the Creator of the Universe. R’Anava says that God actually gives us BEYOND THE MEASURE WE NEED so that we will have the tzedakah to give when the opportunity is presented to us. In other words, if God determines that your need is \$100, He will give you \$115 so that you have \$15 to give. In that respect, there’s a sense that the tzedakah was never really intended for you in the first place. So hold it lightly. It’s just meant to pass through your hands.

Lastly here on this topic of tzedakah, I love stories about generous people, and I think there’s a great power for us in these stories to motivate us to give. So I’d like to share a “giving” story now, originally told by Ilene Wright but retold by someone else (<https://christianpf.com/extraordinary-stories-about-giving/>).

“Years ago, Ilene’s preacher noticed the family standing in front of him at a New Orleans convenience store did not have enough money to pay for their few items. He tapped the man on the shoulder and said, ‘You don’t need to turn around, but please accept this money.’ The man took the money without ever seeing the preacher.

Nine years later, the pastor was invited to speak at a church in New Orleans. After the service, a man walked up to the preacher and shared this story about how he had come to faith in Christ: ‘Several years ago, my wife and our child were destitute. We had lost everything, had no jobs, no money and were living in our car. We also lost all hope, and agreed to a suicide pact, including our child. However, we decided to first give our son some food, so we drove to a convenience store to buy him some food and milk.’

‘While we were standing in line at the store, we realized that we did not have enough money to pay for these items, but a man behind us asked us to please take the money from his hand and not look at him. This man told us that “Jesus loves you.”

‘We left the store, drove to our designated suicide site, and wept for hours. We couldn’t go through with it, so we drove away. As we drove, we noticed a church with a sign out front which said, “Jesus love you.” We went to that church the very next Sunday, and both my wife and I were saved that day.’

He then told the pastor, ‘When you began speaking this morning, I knew immediately that you were the man who gave us that money.’ How did he know? The pastor was from South Africa and had a very distinct accent. He continued, ‘Your act of kindness was much more than a simple good deed. Three people are alive today because of it.’”

One of the things this story points out for us is that there’s a PSYCHOLOGY OF POVERTY that has to be handled carefully. R’Sacks says that poverty brings a loss of human dignity, so when we give, we need to be aware of this (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CBz8NeuAXs> 4m). The halachah stipulates that when we give, we give in such a way that we don’t HUMILIATE someone. When the pastor in this story said, “Just take this and don’t turn around,” he was helping to preserve the dignity of this couple that obviously felt so little connection to their inherent human dignity that they thought their lives were worthless, that the world we be better off without them. We must try to emulate such people like this pastor and such acts of kindness.

Yeshua

Well, lastly here today, let’s make a final connection to Yeshua in today’s discussion. As Moses launches us off into this repetition of the specific Torah commandments, let’s think about one important way Yeshua relates to the Torah. Yeshua is called the Word, the Word Made Flesh. Here’s the idea for this point today: we relate to God THROUGH the Torah, and we relate to God THROUGH Yeshua. Our goal is relating TO THE FATHER THROUGH the Son. This is important language, and we read just this language in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, which draws some lines of distinction for us: “For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from Whom are all things and for Whom we exist, and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, THROUGH Whom are all things and THROUGH Whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). Yeshua always points us not to Himself but to the Father, and it is through Yeshua and through the Torah that we are able to properly relate to the Father. We come from the Father and exist for the Father. We relate to the Father through the Son.

One point to take from this today is that if we approach the Torah legalistically, without the proper heart, we end up breaking the Torah, and the same is true for the Son. Yeshua reprimands the religious leaders of His time by saying that in their great legalism and in the minutia of the fences they had built around the Torah, they end up stomping all over the weightier parts of the Torah. And this is true of Yeshua, too. If we relate to Him legalistically, we end up stomping all over Him. That is what the religious authorities of Yeshua’s time ended up doing to Him. They saw Him through eyes trained in the letter of the law but lacking the spirit of the law, which is love, and this led them to insist upon His crucifixion. They saw Yeshua legalistically, and they ended up stomping all over Him.

We have to always keep in mind that the heart of the Torah is love and that the Torah is meant for life, and these ideas must balance us when we start to put up a great many protections for walking out the Torah and when we are observing others in their Torah walk. We must ask, “Are these protections bringing life?” or is this just getting a bit ridiculous and even becoming so unattractive that it pushes others away from Torah observance? And we must take great care when insisting that others abide by a fence that mankind has added to the Torah. We must be people of grace. We have to ask, “How can I stay true to the Torah but also show love to others who are walking a bit differently as they also try to follow the Torah with all their hearts?”

Well that’s all for today. Thank you for listening. Once again, I have posted a link to an outline of this teaching below the video. May God make us a people who often pause to see the two paths and to examine whether our choices are leading to life or to death. May we be a people who know how to emphasize what God emphasizes. May we be a people who give generously. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.