

Done!

²⁶“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse (ברכה וקללה) – ²⁷the blessing, if you listen (tish'ma, i.e., listen) to the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am commanding you today, ²⁸but the curse, if you do not listen (tish'ma) to the mitzvot of Adonai your God, but turn from the way I am commanding you today, to go after other gods you have not known” (Deut. 11:26-28).

Sh'ma is the Irreducible Minimum

The month of *Elul* begins tonight when the sun sets. *Elul* is the month of repentance in the Biblical Jewish world. This week's *Parasha* is *Re'eh* (ראה) the same root as the *Pa'al* Hebrew verb *to see* (*Roeh*) and it is translated: *see, behold, or take a closer look*. It deals with the choices in a life that is to be devoted to *Adonai* – choices that ultimately bring life or death. In this section of the *Torah* we are severely warned against idolatry in its various forms and given instructions about the food we may or may not partake of, the *Shemithah* (sabbatical) years (and this is a *Shemithah* year) and reminded about the *moadim*. Every time I encounter this particular *Torah* Portion, the *Ruach* prompts me to remind you that there are no changes in *Adonai's* expectation toward us. Therefore, we must deliberately pause (come to a complete stop?) and take a closer look at the choices before us: we can choose either life and blessing or cursing and death.

Do we need reminders? As I prepared for today it was as if once again *Adonai* was asking me *Tony, pause and take a closer look*. As I read over the *Parasha* in preparation for this message, I found many reminders. Tonight, at sunset (7:58p) starts the month of *Elul*, the first day of the sixth month. Do we remember that: “¹⁶Three times a year all your males are to appear before Adonai your God in the place He chooses—at the Feast of Matzot, the Feast of Shavuot, and the Feast of Sukkot. No one should appear before Adonai empty-handed – ¹⁷the gift of each man's hand according to the blessing Adonai your God has given you” (Deut. 16:16-17). King David said: “I will not offer burnt offerings to Adonai my God that *cost me nothing...*” (2 Sam. 24:24, 1 Chron. 21:24). How often do we remember (especially all males) that we are required (in other words, it is not optional) to appear before *Adonai* during the Three High Holiday Festivals?

Adonai has given us free moral agency therefore the decisions are up to us since we have the power to choose between being blessed or being cursed. In today's Believing World the idea of God allowing us to be cursed is foreign, almost unfathomable. Again, I remind us that in today's reading we are cautioned to *take a closer look: to sh'ma is to live and not to sh'ma is to die*. Both the name of today's message and its content were given to me on Thursday around 1:20p as I returned from a lunch meeting with the *KS* elders. Let me illustrate using my iPhone and Siri. (In the live demo, I will say: *Hey Siri: text Marilyn Arroyo*. Siri will say: *what do you want to say*. I will say *On My Way*. Siri will then say: *Your message to Marilyn Arroyo said: On my way, send it?* Then I will say *yes*, and I will hear *done!*)

I was driving home when I sent that via Apple Car Play on my Odyssey. I never stopped driving nor tinkered with my iPhone. In other words, I was in the middle of living life and all I used was my voice. Immediately, the Holy Spirit quickened today's message to me. What a beautiful and precise demonstration of what *Adonai* is looking from us. He wants us to *Naase v'Nishma*, that is, to do and to obey (i.e., to demonstrate that we heard Him by performing His desires *quickly* in obedience to Him). We should want to respond to what He has said to us (His Word) with the simplest of responses, *done!* The most complicated things in life, when studied and understood thoroughly and completely are inherently simple. The irreducible minimum of living for *Adonai* is to be able to respond to His Word with *done!* No ifs, no ands, and no buts. And with no hesitation! Our first and final response once we are clear about what He has said to do is to be able to say: *done!* I want to be able to do this. Don't you? *Shabbat Shalom!*