**Some Questions to Ponder:**

1. From all the readings for this Shabbat, what verse or verses touched your heart and fired your imagination?

The Torah portion speaks of a turning point in man’s life where he can choose to obey or disobey Torah. If he obeys he receives certain benefits. If he disobeys he receives certain punishments. This is quite facinating because this was the Shabbat closest to the tekufah of Tebet (the winter solstice), which is a major turning point of the year where the days start to get longer. In the septennial cycle we will read this same Torah portion, in three and a half years, at the tekufah of Tammuz (the summer solstice) where the days start getting shorter. Thus we have the turning points either for more light, or for less light – for turning to HaShem and His light, or turning away from HaShem and His light.

1. How is Variqra 26:3 related to Vayiqra 26:25-26?

If we reject HaShem’s Torah we will become the people who abolished His covenant and terrorize the rest of the Jewish people.

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:3?

**If you follow My statutes** – What does this refer to?

**and observe My commandments** – What specifically is being commanded?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:8?

**of you will pursue** – Does this require the strongest warriors?

**Five... will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand** - But is this calculation correct?

**and your enemies will fall [by the sword before you]** – What does this repeated promise teach us?

1. What question was asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:9?

**I will turn towards you** – What does this pasuk mean?

**and I will make you fruitful** – What does this phrase refer to?

**and I will set up My covenant with you –** What are the details of this covenant?

1. What question was asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:14?

**But if you do not listen to Me** – What does this refer to?

**and do not perform** – What punishment is being brought here?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:15?

**and if you despise My statutes** – To whom does this refer?

**and reject My ordinances** – To whom does this refer?

**not performing** - To whom does this refer?

**any of my commandments** - To whom does this refer?

**thereby breaking My covenant -** To whom does this refer?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:16?

**I will order** – To whom does this affect?

**Consumption** – What is this disease?

**Fever** - What is this disease?

**that cause hopeless longing and depression** – What is the meaning of this Hebrew phrase: מְכַלּות עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבֽת נֶפֶשׁ?

**You will sow [your seed] in vain [and your enemies will eat it]** – How can my enemies eat seed sown in vain?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:17?

**I will set my attention** – What is the meaning of this Hebrew word: פָנַי?

**Your enemies will rule over you** – What is the meaning of thisHebrew word: וְרָדוּ?

**Then I too, will do the same** – What is the meaning of this Hebrew phrase: אַף אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה זּֽאת?

**I will order upon you** – What is the meaning of this Hebrew phrase: וְהִפְקַדְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם?

**shock** – What is the meaning of this Hebrew word: בֶּהָלָה?

**Consumption...** What is the meaning of this Hebrew phrase: מְכַלּות עֵינַיִם וּמְדִיבֽת נֶפֶשׁ אֶת הַשַּׁחֶפֶת וְאֶת הַקַדַּחַת?

**You will sow your seed in vain** – How will this work?

**I will set My attention against you** – How will HaShem do this?

**and you will be smitten before your enemies** What is ther meaning of this Hebrew word: וְנִגַּפְתֶּם?

**Your enemies will rule over you** What is the meaning of this Hebrew phrase: וְרָדוּ בָכֶם?

**you will flee** – What will cause us to flee?

**but no one will be pursuing you** – Why will they not be pursuing us?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:20?

**Your strength will be expended in vain** – What does this pasuk mean?

**your land will not yield its produce** What does this Hebrew word mean: יְבוּלָה?

**and the tree of the earth [will not give forth its fruit]** - Why the expression "tree of the earth"?

**will not give forth** – What do we understand from this phrase?

**will not give forth its fruit** – What does this clause represent?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:22?

**I will incite** What is the meaning of this Hebrew expression: הִשְׁלַחְתּי?

**and they will bereave you** – How do I know that domestic animals, which are not accustomed [to kill people, that they too, will kill]?

**and they will bereave you** – To whom does this refer?

**utterly destroy your livestock** – Which livestock are included?

**and diminish you** – Who will be diminished?

**and your roads will become desolate** – Which roads are included and what are the seven punishments?

1. What questions were asked of Rashi regarding Leviticus 26:26?

**the staff of bread** What does this Hebrew expression: מַטֵּה denote?

**When I break for you the staff of bread** – What does this refer to?

**and ten women will bake your bread in one oven**- What is lacking for this to occur?

**and they will bring back your bread by weight** – What do we learn from this expression?

**and you will eat, yet not be satisfied** – How can this be?

1. On reading the Torah Seder for this week what touched the heart and fired the imagination of the Psalmist‎ in Psalm 89:16-38‎?

The Psalmist keyed in on the benefits of observing the Torah, of walking in and doing HaShem’s statutes, as found in our Torah portion. He was especially enamored with HaShem’s faithfulness.

1. On reading the Torah Seder for this week what touched the heart and fired the imagination of the prophet Isaiah 1:19 – 2:5‎?

The Prophet picks up on the Torah’s promises and punishments and elaborates on their effects.

1. How is the reading of Hakham Tsefet (2 Peter 3:11-16) related to the readings for this Shabbat?

Hakham Tsefet focuses on the effects of the Torah portion’s promises and punishments as they will be manifested in the end of days.

1. In your opinion, what is the chief purpose that Hakham Tsefet wants to address in 2 Peter 3:11-16?

He wants folks to understand the end so that they will understand how they must live today.

1. Explain how Hakham Tsefet derived all of his material in 2 Peter 3:11-16 from the Torah Seder for this Shabbat, Psalm 89:16-38, and ‎ Isaiah 1:19 – 2:5?

Torah Seder

Hakham Tsefet connects to the Torah Seder immediately through the idea of holiness and piety. This is the result of following the Statutes and Mitzvot Vayikra 26:3ff. Furthermore, Hakham Tsefet maintains a continuity with the Torah Seder thorough the special vocabulary such as “Shalom” (v6) Shamayim (v19)

Ashlamatah

Hakham Tsefet connects to the Prophet through the idea of God being the “Master” of Hosts. Yeshayahu 1:24. Furthermore, he connects with the idea of Judges. (Elohim) And, as our Masterful Hakham (His Eminence Rabbi Dr. Yoseph ben Haggai) has pointed out for us v28 of Yeshayahu speaks of the “destruction” and identification of the sinners.

Tehillim

Hakham Tsefet connects to the Psalm through the idea of piety and holiness as well. See v21 Likewise the Hebrew word “salvation” is matched in Greek. The Lord being the master of Deliverance (salvation). See Tsefet v14

1. How are the readings for this Shabbat communicating that the people of G-d (particularly Nazarean Jews) must be a separate people not imitating any of the traditions, laws and customs of the Gentiles but should be faithful to observe the commandments of the Sages?

The Torah portion, the Psalm, and the Ashlamata all speak of the benefits of observing the Torah and the punishments for those who do not. Hakham Tsefet goes on to show what will happen in the end for those who obey faithfully and for those who willfully disobey.

1. Why doesn’t the Torah explicitly reveal the reward for the commandments in the next world?

They rewards of the next world are not mentioned in order that we should serve HaShem out of love. If the rewards were spelled out we would be obligated to observe the Torah in order to secure the reward.

1. What are the seven progressive sins and their explanations as well as their punishments as derived from Vayikra 26:18?

The seven sins are: 1. [First, a person] does not learn [the Torah]; then, 2. he [subsequently] does not fulfill [the commandments]; 3. he then despises others who do [fulfill them]; 4. then, he hates the Sages, 5. prevents others from fulfilling [the commandments], 6. denies the [authenticity of the] commandments and [finally] 7. denies the very omnipotence of God.

The seven punishments are: 1) the teeth of domestic animals, 2) the teeth of wild animals, 3) the venom of the crawling things of the dust, 4) and they will bereave [you], 5) utterly destroy [you], 6) and diminish [you], 7) and [your roads] will become desolate.

1. In your opinion, and taking into consideration all of the above readings for this Sabbath, what is the prophetic message for this week?

We are at the turning point of the year which signifies a turning point in our lives. We must learn Torah and heed our Hakhamim while striving to fulfill HaShem’s commands.

We should know that God is a Righteous Judge. We should strive to live in sincerity and peace; waiting patiently, with long-suffering, until all things are finished.

Piety and holiness as taught by the Hakhamim is the way of the Jew. Personal opinions do not detract from the truth of the righteous path.

We need to be doers and not hearers only. We must take advantage of this time of turning (Takufah), to turn in the direction of our Fathers commandments and towards His son our savior.

Our failures to keep the commandments have grave consequences, but keeping the commandments has great rewards.