

Message: 2026-07-18:

Unity and Health: אֶחָדוּת וּבְרִיאוּת

Introduction

We have had a lot going on this Shabbat, and we have some big things happening this afternoon. We have a lot of scripture today, even though this is a simple message, let's get right into the teaching today.

בעזרת השם

Be'ezrat Hashem.

With God's help.

Be'ezrat Hashem, with God's help, we will accomplish together what He has for us this morning.

Parashah D'varim

In Parashah D'varim, Moshe gathers all the people together to help them remember the decisions they made. What had happened and where they were was a direct result of the decisions they had made as a community.

Israel is once again preparing to enter the promised land. Moshe talks about the first time the people approached the land, and how their rebellion and lack of faith resulted in Adonai punishing that entire generation.

Moshe reflects on the time that Israel spent in the wilderness. Moshe reminds them of all the times that Adonai had protected and delivered them. Our reading today recounts one of the times that Israel faced an enemy they would likely not defeat, but "ADONAI our God handed him over to us, so that we defeated him".

Don't be afraid of them, because Adonai your God will fight on your behalf.

D'varim[Deuteronomy] 3:22 (CJB)

Moshe gathers all the people together to help them remember that they made the choice to trust their eyes and not the promises of God. The Jewish people were united, but they were not united in following after Hashem. The result was that an entire generation did not get to enter the land of promise, Israel.

The people of Israel often united to do the wrong thing. Their problem wasn't unity. It was that they were listening to the wrong voice. Every single time they followed Adonai's direction they were blessed. Every single time they refused to

obey Adonai they suffered. Robyn pointed this out in the Messianic Judaism Class on Tuesday. We have to keep our eyes on the instructions and the promises of God and nothing else because it is really easy to unite around the wrong things.

Now, Isra'el, listen to the laws and rulings I am teaching you, in order to follow them, so that you will live;

D'varim [Deuteronomy] 4:1 (CJB)

The eagle-eyed among you will have noticed that my primary scripture for today is actually from next week's parashah, but that is because the whole point of what Moshe is saying in this week's parashah is revealed in that verse.

That verse goes on to say, 'then you will go in and take possession of the land that ADONAI, the God of your fathers, is giving you.'

We know that only Y'hoshua and Kalev enter the land of promise because they stood against the evil report of the majority of the spies. They followed the way of Adonai completely, and Adonai blessed them uniquely even though the rest of the community remained unified in their rebellion. Obedience results in life, and disobedience results in death.

What does this mean? I think it means that unity is important, maybe one of the most important things for the people of God, but we have to be unified in following the commandments and instructions of God.

But which of the mitzvot?

In the besorot of Matityahu and Markos, Yeshua is asked, "*Which is the most important mitzvah of them all?*"

In the besorah of Mark:

28 One of the Torah-teachers came up and heard them engaged in this discussion. Seeing that Yeshua answered them well, he asked him, "Which is the most important mitzvah of them all?" 29 Yeshua answered, "The most important is,

'Sh'ma Yisra'el, ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, O Isra'el, the LORD our God, the LORD is one], 30 and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your understanding and with all your strength.'

31 The second is this:

‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’

There is no other mitzvah greater than these.” 32 The Torah-teacher said to him, “Well said, Rabbi; you speak the truth when you say that he is one, and that there is no other besides him; 33 and that loving him with all one’s heart, understanding and strength, and loving one’s neighbor as oneself, mean more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 When Yeshua saw that he responded sensibly, he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared put to him another sh’eilah.

Markos [Mark] 12:29–34 (CJB)

Our first responsibility is to honor and love God, and our second is to love our neighbor as ourselves. We cannot truly do one without the other.

We should be unified in following after Adonai.

In the besorah of Matityahu, it records some more teaching from Yeshua on this:

The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Matityahu [Matthew] 22:40 (CJB)

That doesn’t mean that these commandments replace the Torah, as is sometimes taught. Yeshua is saying that all of the Torah depends on these commandments. You cannot do any of the mitzvot in the spirit in which they were intended without doing these two commandments.

In the besorah of Lukas a similar incident is recounted where the Torah scholar asks and answers the question.

“Teacher, what should I do to gain eternal life?”

26 Then Yeshua said to him, “What has been written in the Torah? How do you read it?”

27 And he replied, “You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

28 Yeshua said to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.”

Lukas [Luke] 10:25–28 (TLV)

Much like Moshe’s warnings to Israel to be united in following the commandments of God so that they will live, Yeshua is teaching that the result

of being united in love for God and love for each other, following the commandments of God, is eternal life. Life from the dead.

Israel's history reveals a consistent pattern: obedience to Adonai brings life and blessing, while disobedience brings judgment. As Moshe prepared the next generation to enter the Promised Land, he reminded them that their parents' failure was not a lack of unity but unity in following the wrong voices instead of trusting God's promises.

True unity is found only when God's people are united in faithful obedience to Him.

Yeshua's Commandment

Yeshua reaffirmed this same foundation by teaching that the greatest commandments are to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength and to love our neighbor as ourselves. He then gave His disciples a new commandment: to love one another as He loved them. This sacrificial, Messiah-like love is the defining mark of His disciples and fulfills the heart of God's instruction.

At Yeshua's last seder with His talmidim he gave them a new mitzvah.

"I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other. Everyone will know that you are my talmidim by the fact that you have love for each other."

Yochanan [John] 13:34–35 (CJB)

At first read, this does not seem like a new commandment at all.

ואהבת לרעך כמוך

And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

But is that what Yeshua is saying here? I don't think it is.

"I am giving you a new command: that you keep on loving each other. In the same way that I have loved you, you are also to keep on loving each other. Everyone will know that you are my talmidim by the fact that you have love for each other."

Yochanan [John] 13:34–35 (CJB)

This is an elevated commandment. We aren't just commanded to love others as we love ourselves, something that is incredibly difficult to do. Yeshua is commanding his talmidim to love each other as Yeshua has loved them.

So imitate God, as his dear children; and live a life of love, just as also the Messiah loved us, indeed, on our behalf gave himself up as an offering, as a slaughtered sacrifice to God with a pleasing fragrance.

Ephesians 5:1–2 (CJB)

This applies to us as well. We should be loving each other as Yeshua loved us.

Unity and Health

I went to one teaching session with Rabbi David Schneier at the Messiah Conference this year. I didn't get to go to very many sessions at the conference this year because we were working the conference, but I made a point to go to this one because I thought it was a timely and appropriate message for our community. He spoke about the connection between unity and health; unity and its effect on health in your body and health in your community. The title of his teaching was "Why Unity of the Body of Messiah Promotes Both Physical and Spiritual Healing".

The basic fact is that division causes stress. Stress effects your health. This chart from the Mayo Clinic shows some of the common effects of stress.

ON YOUR BODY	ON YOUR MOOD	ON YOUR BEHAVIOR
Headache	Anxiety	Overeating or undereating
Muscle tension or pain	Restlessness	Angry outbursts
Chest pain	Lack of motivation or focus	Drug or alcohol misuse
Fatigue	Memory problems	Tobacco use
Change in sex drive	Feeling overwhelmed	Avoiding friends and staying at home
Stomach upset	Grumpiness or anger	Exercising less often
Sleep problems	Sadness or depression	
Getting sick easier due to a weaker immune system		

Division weakens both individuals and communities by undermining unity, trust, and spiritual vitality. Scripture shows that divided people become more vulnerable, as seen in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Within the body of Messiah, division damages our witness to the world, contradicting Yeshua's prayer that His followers would be one so that others would believe (John 17:21). It also creates emotional pain, broken relationships, and lasting bitterness. Spiritually, division distracts believers from pursuing God, hinders the work of the Ruakh HaKodesh, and stunts growth in faith.

I think we all know this to be true.

What I know from talking with other Rabbis is that many communities are dealing with the same sorts of issues that we have dealt with here because, as we will see, these issues have always existed within the community. We tend to think that our issues are the worst issues ever, but I think that is the enemy trying to separate and isolate us from Hashem and from each other.

Our stuff is no worse than other people's stuff.

The only difference is that our stuff is *ours*. It is ours to walk through and ours to deal with and ours to mourn. That's it. It is just ours.

Most of the letters of Rav Sha'ul are addressing problems in the early communities of followers of Yeshua. In Corinth the community is not united in following God.

17 But in giving you this next instruction I do not praise you, because when you meet together it does more harm than good! 18 For, in the first place, I hear that when you gather together as a congregation you divide up into cliques; and to a degree I believe it 19 (granted that there must be some divisions among you in order to show who are the ones in the right). 20 Thus, when you gather together, it is not to eat a meal of the Lord; 21 because as you eat your meal, each one goes ahead on his own; so that one stays hungry while another is already drunk! 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or are you trying to show your contempt for God's Messianic community and embarrass those who are poor? What am I supposed to say to you? Am I supposed to praise you? Well, for this I don't praise you!

23 For what I received from the Lord is just what I passed on to you—that the Lord Yeshua, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; 24 and after he had made the b'rakhah he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this as a memorial to me"; 25 likewise also the cup after the meal, saying, "This cup is the New Covenant effected by my blood; do this, as often as you drink it,

as a memorial to me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.

27 Therefore, whoever eats the Lord’s bread or drinks the Lord’s cup in an unworthy manner will be guilty of desecrating the body and blood of the Lord!

28 So let a person examine himself first, and then he may eat of the bread and drink from the cup; 29 for a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. 30 This is why many among you are weak and sick, and some have died! 31 If we would examine ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers, when you gather together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If someone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it will not result in judgment.

1 Corinthians 11:17–34 (CJB)

The connection I am making here is that Sha’ul is recounting Yeshua’s last seder, when Yeshua gives the commandment to love each other as He, Yeshua, loved us. Sha’ul says that many among the Corinthians are weak and sick, some have even died, because they are eating it in an unworthy manner.

What is the unworthy manner?

He tells us at the beginning of this passage. They are a community divided by wealth, hubris, false customs, a lack of hospitality, and many other things. They are absolutely not loving each other as Yeshua loved them.

In another community, Ephesus, Sha’ul addresses their particular malady, which is a lot like the Corinthians’ malady. They are also divided. Here, instead of a lack of compassion and hospitality, we see a community that has a problem with their speech.

*25 Therefore, stripping off falsehood, **let everyone speak truth with his neighbor**, because we are intimately related to each other as parts of a body.*

*26 **Be angry, but don’t sin**—don’t let the sun go down before you have dealt with the cause of your anger; 27 otherwise you leave room for the Adversary.*

29 Let no harmful language come from your mouth, only good words that are helpful in meeting the need, words that will benefit those who hear them.

30 Don’t cause grief to God’s Ruakh HaKodesh, for he has stamped you as his property until the day of final redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:25–27,29-32 (CJB)

I have talked before about how lashon hara, evil speech or gossip, is like a cancer in the body of Messiah. It also spreads, metastasizing through the body, corrupting and contaminating everything it touches. This is not the point of my teaching today, but a good basic rule is this. If whatever you have to say involves your conversations with someone else, if what you have to say is about anyone other than yourself, you should really keep it to yourself. Lashon hara in any form harms the speaker, the subject, and the people listening.

Why hold your tongue? Because we should only let ‘good words that are helpful in meeting the need, words that will benefit those who hear them’ come from our lips. We just read Sha'ul's words. Bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness, slander, and spitefulness should have no place in our mouth; or in our community.

When we don't do this, our words and actions lead to congregational and personal hurt and illness and all sorts of disfunction.

*A tranquil mind gives health to the body,
but envy rots the bones.*

Mishlei [Proverbs] 14:30 (CJB)

וְרָקִב עֲצָמוֹת קִנְיָה

To be in unity and to be in health we should seek a tranquil mind. Sha'ul encourages the community to repent, to seek forgiveness, and to forgive others as well. He begins this message to the Ephesians by laying out what they should be working to be instead.

1Therefore I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you were called— 2with complete humility and gentleness, with patience, putting up with one another in love, 3making every effort to keep the unity of the Ruakh in the bond of shalom.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (TLV)

There is a close connection between unity and health—both spiritual and physical. Scripture and Jewish wisdom show that bitterness, envy, gossip (*lashon hara*), pride, and unforgiveness damage not only relationships but also the body of Messiah. Paul warned the congregations in Corinth and Ephesus that division, selfishness, and careless speech weakened the community, even

contributing to weakness, sickness, and death because they failed to honor one another as members of Messiah's body.

Instead, believers are called to humility, truthfulness, kindness, forgiveness, and diligence in preserving "the unity of the Ruakh in the bond of shalom." True unity is not simply agreement or togetherness; it is a shared commitment to obey God's Word and walk in the love of Messiah.

Conclusion

Yeshua, after one of his talmidim had left their last seder to betray Him, offered a prayer. These words are a part of it.

20 "I pray not only for these, but also for those who will trust in me because of their word, 21 that they may all be one. Just as you, Father, are united with me and I with you, I pray that they may be united with us, so that the world may believe that you sent me. 22 The glory which you have given to me, I have given to them; so that they may be one, just as we are one—23 I united with them and you with me, so that they may be completely one, and the world thus realize that you sent me, and that you have loved them just as you have loved me.

Yokhanan [John] 17:20–23 (CJB)

So, even as one of the people closest to Him in the world was turning on Him, knowing what that would mean both for Himself and for the rest of His talmidim, he prays for our unity.

Unity is important. Unity is how the world will realize that the Avinu sent Yeshua, and that Adonai loves us just as you He loved Yeshua.

Essentially what I think this all boils back down to is the message that Moshe communicated to Israel in D'varim.

Now, Isra'el, listen to the laws and rulings I am teaching you, in order to follow them, so that you will live;

D'varim [Deuteronomy] 4:1 (CJB)

Like Yeshua said to the Torah teacher,

"You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

Lukas [Luke] 10:28 (TLV)

If we want to see health in our lives and our community, we need to also strive for unity. We need to love each other as Messiah Yeshua loved us.

Like Sha'ul said to the Ephesians,

Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:25–32 (CJB)

As Yeshua taught us at the end of the Avinu Shabashamayim,

14“For if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.

Matityahu [Matthew] 6:14–15 (TLV)

That involves repentance and forgiveness.

“Do this and you will live.” I admonish you to pursue unity through repentance, forgiveness, and faithful obedience. Lasting spiritual health—both individually and within the body of Messiah—is cultivated as we love God, love one another as Messiah loved us, reject bitterness and division, and walk together in obedience to God’s commandments.

I will end this morning with the words of Yeshua.

Holy Father, guard them by the power of your name, which you have given to me, so that they may be one, just as we are.

Yokhanan [John] 17:11 (CJB)

Al Chet

This brings to my mind the prayer Al Khet which is recited multiple times on Yom Kippur, and I think this is a good way to end our time today. I invite you to stand with me and say these words with intention, with kavanah (כַּוָּנָה).

For the sin which we have committed before You under duress or willingly.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by hard-heartedness.

For the sin which we have committed before You inadvertently.

And for the sin which we have committed before You with an utterance of the lips.

For the sin which we have committed before You with immorality.

And for the sin which we have committed before You openly or secretly.

For the sin which we have committed before You with knowledge and with deceit.

And for the sin which we have committed before You through speech.

For the sin which we have committed before You by deceiving a fellowman.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by improper thoughts.

For the sin which we have committed before You by a gathering of lewdness.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by verbal [insincere] confession.

For the sin which we have committed before You by disrespect for parents and teachers.

And for the sin which we have committed before You intentionally or unintentionally.

For the sin which we have committed before You by using coercion.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by desecrating the Divine Name.

For the sin which we have committed before You by impurity of speech.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by foolish talk.

For the sin which we have committed before You with the evil inclination.

And for the sin which we have committed before You knowingly or unknowingly.

For all these, God of pardon, pardon us, forgive us, atone for us.

For the sin which we have committed before You by false denial and lying.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by a bribe-taking or a bribe-giving hand.

For the sin which we have committed before You by scoffing.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by evil talk [about another].

For the sin which we have committed before You in business dealings.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by eating and drinking.

For the sin which we have committed before You by [taking or giving] interest and by usury.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by a haughty demeanor.

For the sin which we have committed before You by the prattle of our lips.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by a glance of the eye.

For the sin which we have committed before You with proud looks.

And for the sin which we have committed before You with impudence.

For all these, God of pardon, pardon us, forgive us, atone for us.

For the sin which we have committed before You by casting off the yoke [of Heaven].

And for the sin which we have committed before You in passing judgment.

For the sin which we have committed before You by scheming against a fellowman.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by a begrudging eye.

For the sin which we have committed before You by frivolity.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by obduracy.

For the sin which we have committed before You by running to do evil.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by tale-bearing.

For the sin which we have committed before You by swearing in vain.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by causeless hatred.

For the sin which we have committed before You by embezzlement.

And for the sin which we have committed before You by a confused heart.

For all these, God of pardon, pardon us, forgive us, atone for us.

And for the sins for which we are obligated to bring a burnt-offering.

And for the sins for which we are obligated to bring a sin-offering.

And for the sins for which we are obligated to bring a varying offering [according to one's means].

And for the sins for which we are obligated to bring a guilt-offering for a certain or doubtful trespass.

And for the sins for which we incur the penalty of lashing for rebelliousness.

And for the sins for which we incur the penalty of forty lashes.

And for the sins for which we incur the penalty of death by the hand of Heaven.

And for the sins for which we incur the penalty of excision and childlessness.

And for the sins for which we incur the penalty of the four forms of capital punishment executed by the Court: stoning, burning, decapitation and strangulation.

*For [transgressing] positive and prohibitory mitzvot, whether [the prohibitions] can be rectified by a specifically prescribed act or not, those of which we are aware and those of which we are not aware; those of which we are aware, we have already declared them before You and confessed them to You, and those of which we are not aware --- before You they are revealed and known, as it is stated: The hidden things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things are for us and for our children forever, that we may carry out all the words of this Torah. **For You are the Pardoner of Israel and the Forgiver of the tribes of***

Yeshurun in every generation, and aside from You we have no King who forgives and pardons.

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