

ראה

Re'eh (*See*)

Devarim (*Deuteronomy*) 11:26-16:17

The name of our Torah portion this week, **Re'eh**, can be interpreted as “**observe, behold, or see.**” In context, it is not associated with a physical seeing, but “**seeing**” with the “**eyes of one’s heart.**”

Devarim/Deuteronomy 11:26 " Behold (Re'eh ראה), I set before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ "the blessing, if you obey the commandments of יהוה your Elohim which I command you today; ²⁸ "and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of יהוה your Elohim, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.

The Israelites have been receiving instruction from Moshe concerning entering the Promised Land. Now they are being told to “**see**” that the future can hold either blessings or curses, all dependent upon their choices. This week we will read of 55 commandments. No one is forced to obey them. You are free to sin, however that freedom does not acquit you of the responsibility and consequences of your choices. These consequences are what are known as the “**blessings and the curses.**”

But aside from all the commandments this week, there’s something interesting going on. The Israelites are told to address the “**idolatry**” once they arrive in the Land:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 12:2 "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³ "And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

Specifically, they are to “**burn their wooden images with fire.**” “**Fire**” is the topic we will be discussing, as we read of the many roles “**fire**” symbolizes throughout the Scriptures. The first time we saw “**fire**,” was when there was a “**flaming sword**” which separated Adam and Chava (Eve) from the “**Tree of Life.**” In fact, the only way they could get back into the Garden was to go through the “**fire.**”

Bereshith/Genesis 3:24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

“Fire” played a part in יהוה’s covenant with Avram as a “**torch of fire**”

Bereshith/Genesis 15:17 And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a **torch of fire** that passed between those pieces.

¹⁸ On the same day יהוה made a **covenant with Avram**, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates --

A simple search shows that “**fire**” shows up throughout the Bible over 450 times. There are many positive mentions of “**fire**.” For example, there’s the burning bush, fire on Mount Sinai, the pillar of fire the Israelites followed by night, and of course the fire that came down and accepted the sacrifices. All these “**fires**” were associated with His Divine Presence. And the source of His “**fire**”? “**His throne is flames of fire**”:

Daniel 7:9 " I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, And the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. **His throne was flames of fire**, Its wheels a burning fire;



Then there are the many times that “**fire**” shows up as an instrument of the Almighty’s wrath including Sodom and Gomorrah, “**fire**” in the form of lightning in the plagues of Egypt, and “**fire**” as a consequence for murmuring:

Bemidbar/Numbers 11:1 Now *when* **the people murmured**, it displeased יהוה; for יהוה heard *it*, and His anger was aroused. So the **fire of יהוה burned** among them, and consumed *some* in the outskirts of the camp.

Thus far, every “**fire**” we have seen, we have been able to trace back to יהוה. When “**fire**” is mentioned, we see His glory. But there’s another story we are very familiar with and this “**fire**” is apart from Him:

Vayikra/Leviticus 10:1 Then Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before יהוה, which He had not commanded them

The verse tells us “**profane fire**” is that which “**He had not commanded them.**” The Hebrew word for “**profane**” (זר zur) is usually translated as “**to turn aside**” or to “**be a stranger.**” When we walk away from the commandments, we are walking away from יהוה’s glory. This makes us a “**stranger.**” That is, someone from outside the camp.

“**Fire**” should represent His glory, His authority, and His power. “**Profane fire**” represents someone else’s glory, someone else’s authority, and someone else’s power. “**Profane fire**” is the reality of idolatry. Idolatry came with some sort of a “**form,**” and the Israelites were NOT to associate their Elohim with any sort of physical “**form.**” In fact, idolatry will be met with His “**consuming fire!**”

Devarim/Deuteronomy 4:23 "Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of יהוה your Elohim which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which יהוה your Elohim has forbidden you. ²⁴ "For יהוה your Elohim is a consuming fire, a jealous El.

A “**form**” is man’s attempt to define, to limit or to box in his Creator. That’s a sin and in our Torah portion, the Israelites are asked to participate in יהוה’s judgment of idolatry by destroying these idolatrous images with “**fire**”:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 12:2 "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³ "And you shall destroy their altars, break their *sacred* pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place.

The “**places**” where they have chosen to serve their gods must be “**destroyed.**” The “**images**” that they have formed are to be “**burned with fire.**” And their “**names**” or their authority are also to be “**destroyed.**” We can find the parallel of יהוה’s “**place, fire, Name and authority**” (there’s no parallel “**image**”) if we keep on reading:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 12:5 "But you shall seek the place where יהוה your Elohim chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His Name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. ⁶ "There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave

offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks.

It's “**His place**” the Israelites must seek, “**His Name**” will be the “**authority**” there, and the “**fire**” will come as a result of the accepted sacrifices when they obey His commandments. However, if they follow the ways of the nations, there will be trouble:

Devarim/Deuteronomy 12:29 " When יהוה your Elohim cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ "**take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them**, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you **do not inquire after their gods**, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? **I also will do likewise.**'

“**Molech**” was the **fire-god** of the nations and unfortunately, the Israelites also fell into their idolatrous practices:

Jeremiah 32:35 They built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to **sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech**, though I never commanded, nor did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin.

But our gracious Creator responds not only with “**fire**” as a judgment, but He will also use “**fire**” as a means of “**refinement and purification.**”

Malachi 3:2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For **He is like a refiner's fire** And like launderer's soap. ³ **He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver**; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to יהוה An offering in righteousness.

1 Corinthians 3:13 **each one's work** will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it **will be revealed by fire**; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ... ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but **he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

Zechariah 13:9 **I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested.** They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And **each one will say, יהוה is my Elohim.**' "

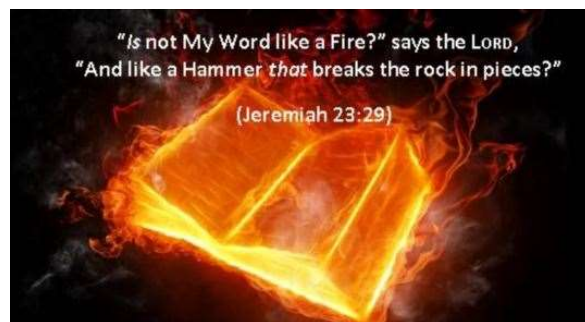
So, what is the meaning of the expression used by Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) - “**baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire**”?

Matthew 3:11 "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Yochanan was telling them that Yeshua would wash away their sins, fill them with the Holy Spirit, but there would also be a “**refining fire**” ...a “**consuming fire**” that would burn away their dross and kindle in their hearts a “**flame of zeal**” for His plan. Empowerment through the Holy Spirit, plus refinement and purification would enable His disciples to become useful for Kingdom service.

We could go on and on with this subject of “**fire**,” but let’s just say that to one person “**fire**” results in death and to another person “**fire**” leads to life. Yet, although His “**refining fire**” leads to life, it is often coupled with pain as He “**tests and refines**” the “**heart**”:

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not My word like a fire?" says יהוה, "And like a hammer *that* breaks the rock in pieces?"



Isaiah 48:10 Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot *is* for silver and the furnace for gold, But יהוה tests the hearts.

His “**refining fire**” is not intended to destroy you:

Isaiah 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

Better to be “**purged with fire**” through the trials and the adversity that cleanse and purify, then to be “**judged with fire**” for idolatrous practices later. The Great Comforter, the Holy Spirit, will stand alongside us to strengthen and encourage us to persevere and overcome.

Now once more we return to our Torah portion and are reminded that upon entrance into the Land, the Israelites were to burn the false images by “**fire**” and destroy all their “**idolatrous places**” where they served other gods. Destruction by “**fire**” is again played out in the book of **Revelation**. If you read **Revelation**, beginning in **chapter 15**, you see the “**fiery judgment**” of Elohim over the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and those who refuse to repent. But we also see the “**sea of glass mixed with fire**” for those who have been victorious over the beast.

Do you remember that the only way back to the **Tree of Life** in the Garden is through the “**flaming sword**?” **Jeremiah 23:29** (above) told us that “**His Word**” is like a “**fire**.” Plus, we know from **Ephesians 6:17** that the “**sword of the Spirit is the Word of Yah**.” And what is in the “**mouth**” of our Messiah as He fights the end-times battle? Could we even expect the “**sword**” to be of “**fire**”?

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² **His eyes were like a flame of fire**, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His Name is called The Word of Yah**. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now **out of His mouth goes a sharp sword**, that **with it He should strike the nations**. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty Yah.

After 1,000 years, “**fire**” once more plays the role of judgment:

Revelation 20:7 Now when the **thousand years have expired**, haSatan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number *is* as the sand of the sea. ⁹ They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And **fire came down from Elohim out of heaven and devoured them**. ¹⁰ The devil, who deceived them, was **cast into the lake of fire and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Next comes the new heavens and the new earth, but not for anyone involved in “**idolatry**.” Their end will be with the “**fire**” of judgment:

Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, **idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire** and brimstone, which is the second death."

And the New Jerusalem will shine with the “**glory (the fire?) of יהוה**”:

Revelation 21:22 But I saw no temple in it, for Adonai Elohim Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of Yah illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. ²⁴ And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.

And then we come full circle, as the Messiah's battle with the “**flaming sword**,” the Word of יהוה, has enabled us to return into the Presence of the “**Tree of Life**”!

Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Yah and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the **Tree of Life**, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations.

Shabbat Shalom!

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