

Notes: December 14, 2024

Start: 10 AM

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Consequences of Woe

The often conveyed image of the gentle Jesus, one who is meek and mild loses its luster when you start reading Matthew 23.

In Matthew 23 we see a Yeshua who is anything but meek and mild. On the contrary we see a Yeshua who is bold and direct. In today's terms you might say He is being "politically incorrect" He is not mincing words, but addressing the conduct of Israel's leaders head on. This conduct Yeshua is demonstrating angers Jews, mystifies Gentiles and ultimately embarrasses Christians today. He is identified as being intemperate, a stark contrast to meek and mild. He is identified by some as being antisemitic. And the most upsetting of all, He is seen as being "un-Christlike" In other words He is not being Himself.

They see Messiah as only being of one ilk, one persuasion. This can't be. Yeshua is a loving and compassionate. How can he be so harsh. This is comparable to the mindset called dualism where the distinction between "The Old Testament God" and "The New Testament God" are made thus making a distinction between the two of them, when in reality they are Echad. This dual position intended to differentiate, conveys that "The Old Testament God" is a God of wrath and judgment while "The New Covenant God" is a God of love and peace. Thus differentiating Jesus (Yeshua) and the New Covenant from its Jewish foundation of Torah.

Unfortunately, this couldn't be further from the truth.

Yeshua, like all the prophets, spoke the words of Adonai without fear or favor. If anything He was being more who He was in these passages than at any other time, when you consider the responsibility of a Prophet identified by Adonai. He comforted those who were open to him and made repeated invitation to those who opposed him; but when it had become evident that these particular *Torah*-teachers and *P'rushim* were hardhearted, closed-minded and interested only in confuting or trapping him, he seized the initiative, revealing his accusers for what they were.

Was he "unloving" toward them?

Sometimes love must be tough, it must be stern. Unfortunately, this type of love is in many instances not fully understood.

The misconception that has developed among believers through the constant teaching, and remains to this day, that Yeshua is talking about all *P'rushim* and *Torah* teachers as being hypocritical has in essence created the narrative of Yeshua being antisemitic. Even less was he antisemitic: his within-the-family correction was aimed at making these Jewish brothers of his live up to their high calling

(and he partly succeeded; see [Act 15:5](#), [Act 21:20](#), [Act 23:6](#)). If Yeshua was unloving or antisemitic, one must say the same of all the Jewish prophets from Moses to Malachi.

A truer measure of antisemitism—as it developed in the Church—is the ease with which the terms "scribes" and "Pharisees" are uncritically equated with "hypocrites," falsely implying that *all* of them were.

For Yeshua, in addressing "*you* hypocritical *Torah*-teachers and *P'rushim*" rather than "*the* hypocritical *Torah*-teachers and *P'rushim*," restricts his scathing denunciation to a specific group of them. See [Mat 3:7](#), [Mar 12:38](#), [1Th 2:14-16](#). The Jewish scholar Menahem Mansoor, writing in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, also recognizes this:

"While the Pharisees, as a whole, set a high ethical standard for themselves, not all lived up to it. It is mistakenly held that the New Testament references to them as 'hypocrites' or 'offspring of vipers' ([Mat 3:7](#); [Luk 18:9](#) ff., etc.) are applicable to the entire group. However, the leaders were well aware of the presence of the insincere among their numbers, described by the Pharisees themselves in the Talmud as 'sore spots' or 'plagues of the Pharisaic party' (Sot. 3:4 and 22b)." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* 13:366)

There were two, mentioned by name that embraced and thus followed Yeshua. One was Nakdimon (Nicodemus). The second was Yoseph (Joseph) from Ramatayim. Nakdimon would come to Yeshua by night, knowing He is from God...

Joh 3:1 There was a man among the P'rushim, named Nakdimon, who was a ruler of the Judeans.

Joh 3:2 This man came to Yeshua by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know it is from God that you have come as a teacher; for no one can do these miracles you perform unless God is with him."

He would later come after Yeshua's death...

Joh 19:39 Also Nakdimon, who at first had gone to see Yeshua by night, came with some seventy pounds of spices—a mixture of myrrh and aloes.

While Yoseph would appear in front of the Roman authorities, claiming the body of Messiah.

Joh 19:38 After this, Yosef of Ramatayim, who was a talmid of Yeshua, but a secret one out of fear of the Judeans, asked Pilate if he could have Yeshua's body. Pilate gave his consent, so Yosef came and took the body away.

Yosef of Ramatayim and Nakdimon were two highly placed Messianic Jews, both members of the *Sanhedrin*; both secret believers. Their period of secrecy was brief, for their actions made their beliefs known.

The Mishna remarks that the "plagues" (or "hits" or "self-inflicted wounds") "of Pharisees... ruin the world" (Sotah 3:4). The Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds both comment on this in famous passages delineating seven kinds of Pharisees (J. B'rakhot 14b, Sotah 20c; B. Sotah 22b).

There are seven kinds of Pharisees:

1. The "shoulder" Pharisee, who ostentatiously carries his good deeds on his shoulder so all can see them;
2. The "wait-a-moment" Pharisee, who wants you to wait while he performs a *mitzvah*;
3. The bruised Pharisee, who runs into a wall while looking at the ground to avoid seeing a woman;
4. The "reckoning" Pharisee, who commits a sin, then does a good deed and balances the one against the other;

5. The "pestle" Pharisee, whose head is bowed in false humility, like a pestle in a mortar;
6. The Pharisee who asks, "What is my duty, so that I may do it?" as if he thought he had fulfilled every obligation already (compare [Php 3:5-6](#));
7. The Pharisee from fear of the consequences if he doesn't perform the commandments; and

So, who are these Pharisees?

Mat 23:2 "The Torah-teachers and the P'rushim," he said, "sit in the seat of Moshe.

Mat 23:3 So whatever they tell you, take care to do it. But don't do what they do, because they talk but don't act!

Mat 23:4 They tie heavy loads onto people's shoulders but won't lift a finger to help carry them.

The Torah-teachers and the P'rushim... sit in the seat of Moshe, exercising the power of "the *cohen* or judge in office at that time"

Deu 17:8 "If a case comes before you at your city gate which is too difficult for you to judge, concerning bloodshed, civil suit, personal injury or any other controversial issue; you are to get up, go to the place which Adonai your God will choose,

Deu 17:9 and appear before the *cohanim*, who are L'vi'im, and the judge in office at the time. Seek their opinion, and they will render a verdict for you.

Deu 17:10 You will then act according to what they have told you there in that place which Adonai will choose; you are to take care to act according to all their instructions.

Deu 17:11 In accordance with the Torah they teach you, you are to carry out the judgment they render, not turning aside to the right or the left from the verdict they declare to you.

Deu 17:12 Anyone presumptuous enough not to pay attention to the *cohen* appointed there to serve Adonai your God or to the judge—that person must die. Thus you will exterminate such wickedness from Isra'el—

Deu 17:13 all the people will hear about it and be afraid to continue acting presumptuously.

They officially interpret *Torah*. There are some who understand this verse to mean that, according to Yeshua, the Oral *Torah*, as expounded in Orthodox Judaism, is binding on Messianic Jews today. I do not believe this, because I think Yeshua had already initiated a process transferring halakhic authority from the *cohanim*, judges and rabbis to the emissaries and later leaders of the Messianic Community.

The seat (Greek *kathedra*) **of Moshe**. The Midrash Rabbah says:

"They made for him [Moses] a *katedra* like that of the advocates, in which one sits and yet seems to be standing." (Exodus Rabbah 43:4)

At the beginning of Matthew 23, Yeshua lays out a foundation for what is called "The 7 Woes of the Pharisees"

He identifies them as being:

- They tie heavy loads onto people's shoulders but won't lift a finger to help carry them. (v.4)
- Everything they do is done to be seen by others (v.5)
- They love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues (v.6)
- They love being greeted deferentially in the marketplaces and being called 'Rabbi.' (v.7)

Yeshua is establishing a foundation for what is to follow. He is not about to convey these warnings as a Prophet without first addressing the issues.

Mat 23:13 "But woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! For you are shutting the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces, neither entering yourselves nor allowing those who wish to enter to do so.

Mat 23:15 "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You go about over land and sea to make one proselyte; and when you succeed, you make him twice as fit for Gei-Hinnom as you are!

Mat 23:16 "Woe to you, you blind guides! You say, 'If someone swears by the Temple, he is not bound by his oath; but if he swears by the gold in the Temple, he is bound.'

Mat 23:17 You blind fools! Which is more important? the gold? or the Temple which makes the gold holy?

Mat 23:18 And you say, 'If someone swears by the altar, he is not bound by his oath; but if he swears by the offering on the altar, he is bound.'

Mat 23:19 Blind men! Which is more important? the sacrifice? or the altar which makes the sacrifice holy?

Mat 23:20 So someone who swears by the altar swears by it and everything on it.

Mat 23:21 And someone who swears by the Temple swears by it and the One who lives in it.

Mat 23:22 And someone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and the One who sits on it.

Mat 23:23 "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You pay your tithes of mint, dill and cummin; but you have neglected the weightier matters of the Torah — justice, mercy, trust. These are the things you should have attended to — without neglecting the others!

Mat 23:24 Blind guides! — straining out a gnat, meanwhile swallowing a camel!

Mat 23:25 "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

Mat 23:26 Blind Parush! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside may be clean too.

Mat 23:27 "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look fine on the outside but inside are full of dead people's bones and all kinds of rotteness.

Mat 23:28 Likewise, you appear to people from the outside to be good and honest, but inwardly you

are full of hypocrisy and far from Torah.

Mat 23:29 "Woe to you hypocritical Torah-teachers and P'rushim! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the tzaddikim,

Mat 23:30 and you say, 'Had we lived when our fathers did, we would never have taken part in killing the prophets.'

Mat 23:31 In this you testify against yourselves that you are worthy descendants of those who murdered the prophets.

The consequences of woe:

Mat 23:32 Go ahead then, finish what your fathers started!

Mat 23:33 "You snakes! Sons of snakes! How can you escape being condemned to Gei-Hinnom?

Mat 23:34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and Torah-teachers — some of them you will kill, indeed, you will have them executed on stakes as criminals; some you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town.

Mat 23:35 And so, on you will fall the guilt for all the innocent blood that has ever been shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Hevel to the blood of Z'kharyah Ben-Berekhyah, whom you murdered between the Temple and the altar.

Mat 23:36 Yes! I tell you that all this will fall on this generation!

It is easy to frame the P'rushim and Torah-teachers as a villain. If Yeshua spoke so harsh of them, then the flaw is in the office, not the individual. This couldn't be further from the truth. The flaw is in the individual. The flaw is in us.

Yet, we have witnessed through Scripture that there are some who pursued Adonai's righteousness. Nicodemus is one who comes to mind.

What we see Yeshua doing here has been done before. A message by a Prophet to the people of Adonai that as proclaimed, would cause great sorrow or distress. In other words – "woe"...things that cause sorrow or distress; troubles.

What would cause great sorrow and distress among Adonai's people?

Ultimately it would be their rebellion that would cause Adonai to remove His favor from His people that would lead to times of great sorrow and distress.

Sorrow, remorse for their actions.

Distress, the consequences of their actions, being under the authority of another nation, loss of liberty, Adonai's mercy and His blessings.

Hypocritical - behaving in a way that suggests one has higher standards or more noble beliefs than is the case.

As I was preparing for last weeks sermon, and shared with you this verse:

Isa 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who change darkness into light and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter!

I found something rather interesting.

When I was doing a word search for "woe" I noticed that in this very chapter of Isaiah, "woe" is used

six times. My immediate thought went to Matthew 23 and Yeshua's response to the P'rushim and Torah-teachers. This passage of Isaiah is in essence laid out the same way.

The first seven verses lays out the case for Adonai and against His people. This will be followed by Adonai speaking through His Prophet. It will conclude with the consequences of the woes, the outcome that will incur as a result of their actions.

Isa 5:1 I want to sing a song for someone I love, a song about my loved one and his vineyard. My loved one had a vineyard on a very fertile hill.

Isa 5:2 He dug up its stones and cleared them away, planted it with the choicest vines, built a watchtower in the middle of it, and carved out in its rock a winepress. He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only sour, wild grapes.

Isa 5:3 "Now, citizens of Yerushalayim and people of Y'hudah, judge between me and my vineyard.

Isa 5:4 What more could I have done for my vineyard that I haven't already done in it? So why, when I expected good grapes, did it produce sour, wild grapes?

Isa 5:5 "Now come, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will remove its hedge, and *[its grapes]* will be eaten up; I will break through its fence, and *[its vines]* will be trampled down.

Isa 5:6 I will let it go to waste: it will be neither pruned nor hoed, but overgrown with briars and thorns. I will also order the clouds not to let rain fall on it."

Isa 5:7 Now the vineyard of Adonai-Tzva'ot is the house of Isra'el, and the men of Y'hudah are the plant he delighted in. So he expected justice, but look — bloodshed! — and righteousness, but listen — cries of distress!

This is a message to Adonai's people. A message of warning. A message based on disappointment. Because what is to follow is Adonai's assessment of His people.

Isa 5:8 Woe to those who add house to house and join field to field, until there's no room for anyone else, and you live in splendor alone on your land.

Isa 5:9 Adonai-Tzva'ot said in my ears, "Many houses will be brought to ruin, large, magnificent ones left empty;

Isa 5:10 for a ten-acre vineyard will produce only five gallons of wine, and seed from five bushels of grain will yield but half a bushel."

Isa 5:11 Woe to those who get up early to pursue intoxicating liquor; who stay up late at night, until wine inflames them.

Isa 5:12 They have lutes and lyres, drums and flutes, and wine at their parties; but they pay no attention to how Adonai works and never look at what his hands have made.

Isa 5:13 For such lack of knowledge my people go into exile; this is also why their respected men starve and their masses are parched from thirst.

Isa 5:14 Therefore Sh'ol has enlarged itself and opened its limitless jaws — and down go their nobles and masses, along with their noise and revels.

Isa 5:15 The masses are lowered, the nobles are humbled — proud looks will be brought down.

Isa 5:16 But Adonai-Tzva'ot is exalted through justice, God the Holy One is consecrated through righteousness.

Isa 5:17 Then lambs will be able to feed as if they were in their own pasture, and those wandering through will eat from the ruined fields of the overfed.

Isa 5:18 Woe to those who begin by pulling at transgression with a thread, but end by dragging sin along as if with a cart rope.

Isa 5:19 They say, "We want God to speed up his work, to hurry it along, so we can see it! We want the Holy One of Isra'el's plan to come true right now, so we can be sure of it!"

Isa 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who change darkness into light and light into darkness, who change bitter into sweet and sweet into bitter!

Isa 5:21 Woe to those seeing themselves as wise, esteeming themselves as clever.

Isa 5:22 Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine, men whose power goes to mixing strong drinks,

Isa 5:23 who acquit the guilty for bribes but deny justice to the righteous!

The consequences of woe:

Isa 5:24 Therefore, as fire licks up the stubble, and the chaff is consumed in the flame; so their root will rot, and their flowers scatter like dust; because they have rejected the Torah of Adonai-Tzva'ot, they have despised the word of the Holy One of Isra'el.

Isa 5:25 This is why Adonai's anger blazed up against his people, why he stretched out his hand against them and struck them [*so hard that*] the hills shook, and corpses lay like trash in the streets. Even after all this, his anger remains, his upraised hand still threatens.

Isa 5:26 He will give a signal to faraway nations, he will whistle for them to come from the ends of the earth; and here they come, so fast! —

Isa 5:27 none of them tired or stumbling, none of them sleeping or drowsy, none with a loose belt, none with a broken sandal-strap.

Isa 5:28 Their arrows are sharp, all their bows are strung, their horses' hoofs are like flint, and their [*chariot*] wheels like a whirlwind.

Isa 5:29 They will roar like lions — yes, roaring like young lions, they growl and seize the prey and carry it off, with no one to rescue.

Isa 5:30 On that day they will growl at them, like the sea when it growls — and when one looks toward land, one sees darkness closing in; the light is dissipated in the obscuring overcast.

When I saw this last week and knew I would be speaking about the woes, I wasn't certain what my conclusion would be. I believed my conclusion would be based on the outcome of this week's election results.

The structure of both Matthew 23 and Isaiah 5 are quite similar.

Warnings to a nation that would ultimately lead to severe consequences if corrective measures were not taken with the message of warning being ultimately ignored.

Had the election results been different, I believe I would have been concluding with what to anticipate over the next 4 years. What to expect when the balance of the Supreme Court would have changed and what it could mean for this nation and for believers. Yet, I don't have to give that conclusion.

As a nation, I believe we have been given another chance to return to Adonai.

I am not calling the President-elect a Messiah, but I will say the destructive beliefs of globalism and humanism that have been embraced by this outgoing administration and would have been continued had the outcome of the election been different, would have been a continuation of the path this country has been going down for at least the 8 years.

I believe we have been given another opportunity as a nation to return to Adonai.

The big question is this...

Will the President-elect govern as he campaigned?

Will he put into practice what he said he would do.

Will he nominate a conservative justice for the Supreme Court?

We are already seeing a backlash among some of people, who fear this President-elect.

My fear for this nation is if we were to have continue on the path we have been on for the last 8 years we may have passed the point of no return.

I don't know the final number of believers who voted in this past election, but I do know that 81% cast their vote for the President-elect. The voice of believers has finally spoken and been heard.

We are a divided nation, just as Israel ended up being a divided Kingdom.

Our responsibility as believers is to continue to be a light.

Continuing to prayer for our leadership that they will return to Adonai, thus leading a nation back to Him.

We should continue to pray for the people of our nation, believer and non-believer.

For the believer that they will draw closer to Adonai.

For the non-believer that Adonai will open their eyes and circumcise their hearts.

And that we may continue to be effective as His light. In doing so, let us circumvent the consequences of woe by returning as a nation to Adonai.