

# PARASHAT B'CHUKOTAI

(BY MY REGULATIONS)

LEVITICUS 26:3-27:34

## ETZ CHAYEEM HOO (HE IS A TREE OF LIFE)

**Y**eshua is a tree of life to those who take hold of Him, and those who support Him are praiseworthy. His ways are ways of pleasantness and all of His paths are shalom. Bring us back YHVH to You, and we shall come, renew our days as of old.

As we begin to study the Torah let us never forget that YESHUA THE MESSIAH is the Living Torah, the Torah-Word of Elohim made flesh. He is the way, the truth and the life — the Living Manna sent from heaven. Without Him living in our lives through the indwelling Presence of his Set-Apart/Kadosh Spirit (Who leads us into all truth and revelation) the Written Torah can become the dead letter of the law!

### Haftorah Reading

Jeremiah 16:19-17:14

### B'rit Chadashah

Yeshua on blessings and curses: **Matthew 7:21-27**

The blessings of keeping YHVH's commandments: **John 14:15-21; 15:10-12; 1John 2:3-6; John 3:18,36; 5:24**

Elohim's judgement against the Torahless: **Romans 1:18; 2:2-10**

Put off wicked lifestyles: **Ephesians 5:1-7; Colossians 3:1-10**

Yeshua to deliver the saints from the wrath of Elohim: **1Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9**

The wrath of Elohim to come upon the wicked in the end times: **Revelation 11:18; 14:10,19; 15:1; 16:1,19**

### Outline of This Week's Parashah (Torah Portion):

- 26:3 Blessings for Obedience and Curses for Disobedience
- 26:16 The First Series of Punishments for Failing to Hear and Obey YHVH's Torah Commandments
- 26:18 The Second Series of Punishments for Failing to Hear and Obey YHVH's Torah Commandments
- 26:21 The Third Series of Punishments for Failing to Hear and Obey YHVH's Torah Commandments
- 26:23 The Fourth Series of Punishments for Failing to Hear and Obey YHVH's Torah Commandments
- 26:27 The Fifth Series of Punishments for Failing to Hear and Obey YHVH's Torah Commandments
- 26:42 The Conclusion of the Admonition—YHVH Will Remember His Covenants
- 27:1 The Valuations of Gifts/Voluntary Contributions to the Tabernacle
- 27:9 Sanctification and Redemption of Animals as Used in Offerings
- 27:16 Redemption of Houses and Fields When Given as Gifts to YHVH
- 27:28 Personal Property Segregated/Excluded From Personal Use and Given Over in Service to YHVH
- 27:30 The Second Tithe Collected Four Times Every Seven Years (First, Second, Fourth and Fifth Years) for Use at the Aliyah Festivals
- 27:32 The Tithe of Animals: Every Tenth Animal of Israelites' Flocks to Be Sanctified as an Offering to YHVH

**Study Questions For This Week's Midrash (Torah Discussion):**

- 1 **26:3**, *Walk ... keep ... do [my commandments]*. The Hebrew word for *walk* is *halak* (הלך, Strong's H3212) and is the generic word meaning "to walk or go." *Keep* is the Hebrew word *shamar* (שמר, Strong's H8104) meaning "to guard, observe, give heed." *Do* is the generic Hebrew word *asah* (עשה, Strong's H6213) meaning "to fashion, accomplish or make." Ponder and discuss the different connotations of these words with regard to one's day-to-day life of obedience to YHVH's Torah commands.
- 2 Starting in 26:3ff, notice the direct correlation between obedience and physical blessings? Is this part of YHVH's Word still applicable to us today? If not, why not? If we can "do away" with this part of his Word, as some teach, are there other parts that we can also annul? Read what Yeshua had to say about the rewards for Torah-obedience in Matthew 5:19.
- 3 **26:6**, *Evil beasts*. This phrase literally means *evil life* (*chai ra*, Strong's H2416). *Beasts* can mean "life, beast, creature, living thing." To the degree that our nation turned from its Judeo-Christian heritage evil (lawless) individuals (like wild beasts) have overrun us in our institutions of government, education, politics, economics and religion. In many of our churches, a diluted truth is preached for fear of infuriating spiritual beasts such as sexual deviants, abortionists and the wicked in general. What can you do to help turn the tide in your own life and sphere of influence? Are you salt and light? Do you allow yourself to be a spokesman for YHVH whenever opportunities present?
- 4 In **26:7**, we see an allusion to "spiritual warfare." Do you exercise spiritual warfare in your life? If not, why not? Yeshua, the apostles Paul and John view it as a normal activity for saints (Luke 9:1; 10:19; Mark 16:17–18; 2 Cor 10:3–5; Eph 6:10–18; Rev 12:11). Does your past religious tradition (or "spiritual baggage") ignore these Scriptures saying that they somehow do not mean what they say? Are you AWOL (absent without leave) from YHVH's spiritual battle, and are you letting others who have more faith than you fight those spiritual battles?
- 5 **26:8**, If five Israelites who are walking in Torah obedience can put 100 enemies to flight (a 1:20 ratio) while 100 can put 10,000 to flight (a 1:100 ratio) what does this teach us about spiritual synergism? Can the more of us who band together to help to defeat the forces of darkness be more effective in advancing YHVH's kingdom? What does this teach us about *being* the spiritual body of Yeshua (see 1 Cor 14) and being part of a spiritual community as opposed to being an island unto oneself or a spiritual "lone ranger"? As the days get more evil and the forces of hell squeeze with greater ferocity those who hew to a Judeo-Christian ethic, will the need for like-minded believers to unite and to cooperate increase for spiritual defense against our common (spiritual) enemies?  
  
There is another lesson to be learned from this verse. The arithmetic of the verse seems to be faulty. If five Israelites can pursue a hundred enemies, a ratio of 1:20, then a hundred Israelites should pursue 2,000, not 10,000, as the verse teaches. This teaches us that the more people who are united in serving [Elohim], the more effective their actions (*ArtScroll Vayikra-Leviticus Commentary*, p. 449). How much of our spiritual ministry efforts are spent devouring, envying, bad-mouthing, attacking, competing with one another—even those of like faith? Now what happened when the early Messianic believers in the Book of Acts were together and in one accord (and not fighting each other)? (Read Acts 2:24ff; 4:24ff, 32ff; 5:12; 8:6f for the answer.) If it could happen then, why not now? Stop fighting one another! Unite to fight the devil. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of Elohim (Matt 5:9).
- 6 In **26:11–12**, YHVH says he will set his Tabernacle among his people and will walk among them. Do you have a sense of this in your life? The word *tabernacle* in verse 11 is the word *mishkan* meaning "dwelling place, residence or habitation." From this word comes the word *shakan* meaning "abiding or presence." From this word derives the well-known word *shekinah*, which refers to the anointed and *kadosh* or set-apart Presence of YHVH. Obedience to his commands and setting oneself apart unto him is the key to having the Presence of YHVH in one's life. What steps are you taking in your life to press into a deeper relationship with your Heavenly Father?
- 7 In **26:14–5**, we read, "But if you will not listen to me and will not perform all these commandments; if you consider my decrees loathsome, and if your being rejects my ordinances, so as not to perform all my

commandments, so that you annul my covenant, then ..." (and then a long list of curses follows that will befall those rebellious Israelites. The last several verses of the Christian Bible's "Old Testament" states, "**Remember the Torah-law of Moses** my servant which I commanded unto him at Horeb [i.e., Mount Sinai] for all Israel with the statutes and judgments ..." (Mal 4:4). Yeshua states in Matthew 5:17, "**Think not** that I have come to destroy the Torah-commandments or the prophets ..." Have Christians followed these admonitions (as highlighted above) when they teach that we are "no longer under the (curse of) the law" or "the law was nailed to the cross or done away with" or "the law was for the Jews, but we're under grace," etc.?

**8** **26:14–15**, Rewards and punishment are contingent upon Torah-obedience. Did this change in the Brit Chadashah (New Testament)? If you think it did, then please read Matthew 5:19.

**9** **26:21**, *If you behave casually with me and refuse to heed me (ArtScroll Stone Edition Tanach)*. What does this mean? It means that Israel's performance of the commandments, despite the punishments, would be haphazard and erratic; they would treat them as a matter of choice and convenience, rather than as divinely imposed obligations. *Casually* can also mean "with stubbornness," meaning that they would stubbornly refuse to draw close to Elohim (*ArtScroll Vayikra-Leviticus Commentary*, p. 455). Does this explain your heart attitude and spiritual walk with regard to YHVH's Torah—his instructions in righteousness?

**10** In **26:23–24**, we see that if we **walk contrary to** YHVH (in obedience to his commands) so he will walk contrary to us and bring cursings upon us (see Ps 18:24–26). What we do will determine our rewards or punishments. This is a theme found in the Apostolic Scriptures, as well (see Matt 5:19; Rom 2:6–11). In Leviticus 26:14–15, we see that those who hear and do his commandments will be blessed while those who despise and abhor his commandments will be cursed. His blessings are conditional upon our obedience. He will not force his ways down our throats. It is **our choice** what we do and we will then have to accept the consequences of our actions (2 Cor 5:10; Matt 16:27; Rom 2:6).

**11** In **26:30**, we read as part of the fifth series of curses to befall a disobedient and Torahless people, "*I will destroy your lofty buildings and decimate your sun-idols ...*" (*ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash*). The same Chumash on this verse comments, "The people placed their confidences in the high towers from which they would be able to repulse invaders, but God would destroy the buildings leaving the people helpless against their enemies" (Ibid., p. 713). Could what happened on September 11, 2001 when a group of terrorists attacked America's economic and military centers have been a fulfillment of this? Has this nation become vulnerable and somewhat defenseless against a small band of terrorists who can virtually hold a nation hostage on the threat of striking anywhere anytime because we have forsaken our Judeo-Christian heritage and turned to the gods of humanism, hedonism and materialism? Consider the destruction of the city of New Orleans and the gambling casinos along the coast of Mississippi in 2005 by Hurricane Katrina. Could this be a judgment of YHVH against America's "high tower" idols of immorality, decadence, hedonism and greed?

**12** **26:33**, *I will scatter you among the heathen*. Eventually this prophecy came to pass when Israel (both the House of Judah/Southern Kingdom and the House of Ephraim/Northern Kingdom) were scattered over the face of the whole earth as a judgment for their disobedience to the Torah commands and covenants of YHVH (Deut 30:4; 32:26; Ezek 34:6,12; 36:19; 37:21; Amos 9:9; John 11:52; Jas 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1). In regards to Deuteronomy 32:26 which says, "I said, I would scatter them into the corners,..." *ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash* comments, "This refers to the exile of the ten tribes, who were scattered to an unknown place where they have never been heard from again." On the phrase of the same verse, "I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men..." the same *Chumash* states, "This is a reference to the exile of Judah and Benjamin, the Davidic kingdom from which today's known Jews are descended." It goes on to say that though nations would seek to destroy Israel entirely, YHVH would never allow Israel to become extinct or to disappear. Israel's perpetual existence is a constant reminder of YHVH's plan and eventually Israel will thrive and fulfill YHVH's intention for it (pp. 1105–1106). Hirsch in his commentary on the Pentateuch on the same verse translates the phrase, "I would scatter them into the corners,..." as, "I would relegate them into a corner..." and then says that the Hebrew here refers to the "extreme end of a surface,

the side or corner..." He, too, relates this fate to the ten tribes who would be scattered "to some distant corner of the world, where, left entirely to themselves, they could mature towards serious reflection and ultimate return to [YHVH]..." (p. 650). Despite Israel's punishment, would YHVH leave them in a scattered state? We discuss the answer to this question in the corresponding Haftorah portion that follows.

**13** In 26:42, YHVH states that "I will remember my covenant with Jacob and even my covenant with Isaac, and even my covenant with Abraham will I remember ..." Classical Jewish Torah commentators Rashi and Baal HaTurim both note that the patriarchs are mentioned here in reverse order (the only place in Scripture where this occurs). They both give different reasons as to why this occurs. Allow me to give you our reason why we believe YHVH wrote this in the Torah. In the preceding verses, Torah prophesies what will be Israel's punishment for her disobedience to YHVH's Torah commandments and covenants. As a result of her unfaithfulness to YHVH, she would be dispersed among the heathen nations (Ezek 36:19) from where she would later confess her sins—the sin of walking contrary to YHVH with an uncircumcised heart (verses 40–41). As a result, YHVH promised to remember his covenants that he had made with her patriarchal fathers (verse 42).

At the same time, Scripture prophesies that in the days to come Israel will awaken spiritually from the lands where YHVH has driven the them (because of their disobedience to his Torah-commands) and in captivity they will recognize their idolatrous state and that their fathers have inherited religious and spiritual lies (Jer 16:14–21). They shall remember their evil and Torahless ways (Ezek 36:31) and YHVH will begin to regather his people back to the land of Israel from those nations (Ezek 36:24). This is what was prophesied by Malachi about the hearts of the children being turned to the fathers just before the day of YHVH's wrath (Mal 4:6) and the return of Yeshua the Messiah. Therefore the verse that lists the patriarchs in reverse order is prophesying that wayward Israel will return to the Hebraic roots of her faith working her way backwards as she sheds off the false religious lies she has inherited.

Rabbi Hirsch in his commentary on this verse confirms our interpretation (*Hirsch Pentateuch Leviticus*, pages 808–809). He discusses the children of the Abrahamic covenant who have been carried away captive for their Torahlessness. Scripture refers to them as the *captivity* or *galut* (גלות, *Strong's* H1546 and 1547, *TWOT* 350b). Hirsch notes that as Jacob was exiled from the land of Israel and his father's house for his sins and went into captivity under Laban, this was prophetic of the fate of his sinful descendants. From out of the nations where the galut of YHVH will be scattered they will awaken (like the prodigal son of the parable of Yeshua in the Gospels) to their Torah-covenant roots and will return to *Beth-el* (the House of El), as did Jacob when he left Lot and returned to his father Isaac's house. Is this what we see happening today in the current Messianic movement where Christians are returning to the Hebraic roots of the Christian faith?

If this is so, could your interest in your Hebrew roots be a part of prophecy being fulfilled? Rejoice that the Sovereign Ruler of the universe is calling you back to your spiritual roots! YHVH's prophets prophesied that this would happen thousands of years ago.

**14** According to Rashi's commentary and *The ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash* commentary, when verse 45 (of chapter 26) states, "I [YHVH] will remember the covenant of the ancients, those whom I have taken out of the land of Egypt before the nations, to be Elohim unto them ..." this is a reference to the whole House of Israel (all 12 tribes), and this is YHVH's promise to redeem their offspring. In Hebraic thought, redemption involves bringing back the Israelite exiles to their land from the nations where they were scattered due to their Torahlessness. It involves reestablishing them into covenantal relationship with YHVH, their Maker and their spiritual Husband. Is this what Paul was referring to when he wrote in Ephesians 2:11–13:

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past peoples of the nations in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Messiah, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants [plural, referring to the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants] of promise, having no hope, and without Elohim in the world: but now in Messiah Yeshua ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Messiah. (emphasis added)

**15** 27:32, Concerning the tithe. We must never forget that all that we “possess” belongs to YHVH and we honor him through the tithe. Those who greedily hoard that which belongs to him, or who stingily say, “I can’t afford to tithe” will quite simply be cursed in their finances. Again, the choice is ours: to tithe and be blessed, to not tithe and not have that blessing on our finances.

## HAFTORAH READING—JEREMIAH 16:19-17:14

### Come Out of Her My People!

In the Torah portion, YHVH declares the blessings that come when his people faithfully obey him, as well as the curses that result from disobedience to his Torah. Similarly, Jeremiah the prophet, acting as YHVH’s spokesman, states that Israel would be scattered among the nations for their disobedience to YHVH’s Torah and for their turning to the pagan idolatrous practices of the surrounding nations. The prophet then foretells of an eventual return of the exiled Israelites to their land as they turn from their pagan traditions and return to the true worship of YHVH as per biblical instruction.

**1** **16:15**, *Children of Israel ... from all the lands where [YHVH] had driven them ... I will bring them again into their land.* This verse corresponds to Leviticus 26:33 of this week’s Torah portion, which states as a result of Israel’s disobedience to YHVH’s Torah-Word: “And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you, and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste.” When did this prophecy come to pass in ancient Israel? To whom did it apply? (On Israel being dispersed among the nations of the world, see Isa 11:12; 56:3, 6–8; Ezek 36:19; Zeph 3:10; John 7:35. On Israel becoming outcasts from its land, see Isa 11:12; 27:12–13; 56:8; Ps 147:2; cp. Deut 30:3–4.)

**2** **16:16**, *Fishers.* Not only this verse, but all of Jeremiah 16:16 is a prophecy about exiled Israel returning from the lands where YHVH had driven them (verse 15). Jeremiah says YHVH would use spiritual fishermen to fish his scattered people out of all the places—even to the ends of the earth (verse 19)—where he had driven them. Some of Yeshua’s disciples were fishermen by trade whom he recruited to become “fishers of men” (John 4:19). Who has that commission now?

Another way to look at this issue is to compare Israel to lost sheep. How many times does Yeshua liken his mission to that of a shepherd gathering his lost sheep? (Please note Ps 119:176; Isa 53:6; Ezek 34:4,16; Matt 15:24; cp. Isa 40:11; Matt 18:11; Luke 15:4; 1 Pet 2:25 [cp. 1 Pet 1:1].) When will these lost sheep be regathered? In the end days, YHVH will gather his sheep that have lost their way, been scattered, hurt and wounded by hireling shepherds and self-seeking religionists (Ezek 34:11,16). YHVH will gather them from the nations where they have been scattered and return them to the land of Israel with David (or Messiah Son of David) as their king (see Ezek chapters 34 and 36–37).

**3** **16:19**, *Ends of the earth.* Who are these “Gentiles” that have been scattered to the ends of the earth? The word *gentiles* is the Hebrew word *goyim* (*Strong’s* G1471, Greek: *ethnos*, *Strong’s* G1484) This word is translated in the Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) as *nation* 374 times, as *heathen* 143 times, as *Gentiles* 30 times, and *people* 11 times.

Whenever the word *gentile* is used in the KJV it is the word *gowy* or *goy*. According to *Strong’s Concordance*, the meaning of *goy* is “a foreign nation; hence a Gentile; also (fig.) a troop of animals, or a flight of locusts.” According to *Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*, the word *gowy* means “a people, a confluence of men,” and “contextually in holy Scripture it is used to refer to the other nations besides Israel, the foes of Israel, and strangers to the true religion of Israel.”

There are times when *goy* refers specifically to Israel (e.g., the descendants of Joseph in general: Gen 48:19; of the Southern Kingdom of Judah when it forsook Elohim and its covenant with him and became like the surrounding heathen nations: Isa 1:4; of the Southern Kingdom: Isa 9:1; of Israel in general: Isa 26:2; 49:7; Ps 33:12; Gen 12:2; 35:11). There are numerous other instances in Scripture where the words *goy* or *goyim* are applied to the descendants of Abraham. Scripture’s use of the term is unbiased and lacks any of the pejorative implications that have been applied to the term subsequently (e.g., Gen 17:4,5,6,16; 18:18;

25:23; 46:3; Exod 19:6; 33:13; Deut 4:6,7,8,34; Ezek 37:22).

As already noted, the word *goy* simply means “people group.” The Greek word *ethnos* as found in the Apostolic Scriptures is equivalent in meaning to the Hebrew word *goyim*. So clearly, in Jeremiah 16:19 *gentiles* is a reference to lost and scattered Israel who has mixed herself with the heathen (Hos 7:8; 8:8), and who is now returning to YHVH.

**4 16:19, *Our fathers have inherited lies.*** What are some of the lies (false or pagan religious traditions) that our spiritual (Christian) fathers have inherited and have passed on down to us that we must let go of in order to serve our Heavenly Father in a manner that is pleasing to him and consistent with his Word (including the Torah)? Compare this verse to Revelation 18:4, where YHVH admonishes *his people* to come out of the Babylonian religious system that would exist on earth in the end times. Keep in mind that many of these religious systems derive from ancient pagan sex and sun worship rituals as we note below under 17:2.

**5 16:21, *They shall know that my name is YHVH.*** In Hebraic thought, a name is more than just a word. It also refers to one’s reputation, character and authority. But here, it states that Israel will *know* what Elohim’s name is. Have you found it ironic that our English Bibles, in this verse, translate YHVH as *Lord*? *Lord* is not his name! YHVH (pronounced Yehovah, Yehowah, or something similar to this) is his name. It is time the people of YHVH recognize this and start using it!

**6 17:1, *The hearts of Gentile-Israelites have become hardened by the sinful traditions they have inherited from their fathers.*** What was your response when someone began sharing with you about the pagan origins of many sacred cow Christian traditions such as Sunday observance, Christmas and Easter? Once your eyes were opened, were you excited to share the truth with family and friends? What was their reaction?

**7 17:2, *Groves/Asherah trees.*** Sacred trees (like obelisks) were set up near pagan altars for the worship of the Babylonian and Canaanite sex goddess, Astarte (or Ishtar from which the Christian festival Easter derives its name).

In Exodus 34:13, YHVH commands the Israelites to destroy the pagan sex worship symbols that the *NIV Study Bible* describes as wooden poles, or carved images, that were set up in honor of this pagan goddess at pagan worship sites. *The International Bible Encyclopedia* (vol. 1, p. 317) states that a tree trunk with branches in honor of this pagan deity was often placed next to the altar of YHVH—something YHVH abhorred! (Deut 16:21; Judg 6:25,28,30; 2 Kgs 23:6).

Jeremiah’s description of such a tree in chapter 10 is eerily reminiscent of our modern Christmas tree. Have you ever seen a Christmas tree next to the altar in a Christian church? Sometimes this pagan deity was represented by a tree, sometimes by an obelisk type pole. The *asherah* pole is related to the *matstebah*, which is defined as “image, pillar, stump, tree or altar.” This type of pagan representation made its way into the religious system of ancient Israel, something YHVH forbid and something he expected righteous leaders to destroy (e.g., 2 Kgs 10:25–27). Have you ever wondered about the origins of the church steeple and about its striking resemblance to the ancient Egyptian obelisk, which was associated with phallic and sun god worship?

**8 17:5–8, *Two trees are mentioned in these verses. Both are in the wilderness and subjected to the heat and drought thereof, yet one does not flourish and “will not see when good comes,” while the other is fazed neither by the heat nor the drought of the desert. If these trees represent two types of people going through the same wilderness experience called life, then what is the fundamental difference between them? Relate this back to verse five and ahead to verses nine and ten.***

**9 17:14, *Heal me, O YHVH.*** This is a plea to YHVH, the Great Physician. Only he can heal the hardness (17:1) and crooked deceitfulness or weakness (17:9) of Israel’s heart. Various prophets link the concept of healing to that of the two houses of Israel being reunited, being restored to their promised land and spiritual inheritance, returning to Torah and the establishment of a Messianic kingdom on earth. Here are some thoughts on these things:

### **The Breach Will Be Repaired**

Those who are returning to the Sabbath in its full spiritual sense and are returning to the “old (ancient, everlasting) paths” are called “repairers of the breach” (Isa 58:12; Amos 9:11).

What is a *breach*? By dictionary definition a *breach* is “an infraction or violation of a law; a broken, ruptured or torn condition; a split, crack or divide between two sides; a break in friendly relations.” This is what occurred when the Northern Kingdom was torn away from King Rehoboam causing a split in the nation of Israel (1 Kgs 11:13, 29–40; 12:1–20).

The last question the disciples asked Yeshua before his ascension was whether he was about to restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6). What was Yeshua’s response to them? He told them to preach the gospel everywhere (verse 8). This message of restoration and repairing the breach was the focus of what Paul called the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor 5:18) and the middle wall of partition between Jews and non-Jews coming down and the making of one new man out of two through the atoning sacrifice of Yeshua (Eph. 2:11–19).

### **The “Sick” Will Be Healed**

The hireling and self-seeking shepherds of Israel who should have cared for, healed and fed YHVH’s sheep have instead left them in a weakened, sickly and malnourished state (Ezek 34:4, 16). Yeshua came to heal his sick sheep (Ezek 34:8–31).

### **Spiritual Blindness Will Be Healed**

In Hebraic thought, blindness is a metaphor for spiritual blindness, lack of spiritual enlightenment, and especially Torahlessness; that is, it is a reference to those who are blinded to the light of YHVH’s truth (Isa 29:18; 42:7, 16, 18–19; 43:8; Jer 31:8, see also Rom 11:25; Isa 56:10).

