

PARASHAH: 'Ekev (Because)
ADDRESS: D'varim (Deuteronomy) 7:12-11:25
READING DATE: Shabbat
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(Note: all quotations are taken from the Complete Jewish Bible, translation by David H. Stern, Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., unless otherwise noted)

Let's begin with the opening blessing for the Torah:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher bachar banu m’kol ha-amim,
v’natan lanu eht Torah-to.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you, O' LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have selected us from among all the peoples,
and have given us your Torah.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

Our portion this week centers on the direct consequences of maintaining an obedient covenant walk within the framework of the Torah of HaShem. The immediate context is for 'Am Yisra'el (the People of Isra'el) as they will soon be occupying the Land of Promise.

Over and over Moshe establishes the absolute necessity to walk in obedience to the ways of HaShem that their lives might be abundant as they live in the Land that HaShem has sworn to their ancestors. The issue must be made clear that covenant promise, as it relates to blessing, maintenance, and enjoyment of promise is what is in view here. Safeguarding and keeping God's precious Laws were never meant to bring about the physical blessing of covenant shareholder, a symbol of salvation, characterized by the Avrahamic Covenant. In other words, keeping God Laws did not make the people God's "'Am S'gulah" (Treasured Possession). They were who they were based on the covenant faithfulness of HaShem, and the response of their hearts to that covenant faithfulness. They were who they were based on the mercy and grace of the Father.

In another study, I have stated it thusly:

“For those who trust HaShem for the promises, the proper order for faith and obedience is set by the sequence in which the covenants were given. In other words, **faith must precede obedience**. But the kind of faith accepted by HaShem is one, which naturally flows into obedience. True

obedience never comes before faith, nor is it an addition to faith. It is always the result of true biblical faith.”¹ (Emphasis, mine)

So once this all-important truth has been established, what do we do about relationship? Shall we abolish the Torah now that we have been made righteous by faith? Heaven forbid! We do not abolish, but rather we establish Torah (Rav Sha'ul to the believers at Rome)!

In this commentary I want to quote two particular passages at length, to let the Word of God speak for itself. For I believe that this issue of obedience to the Torah is made clear by the very Words that we read every week. If we would just stop and listen to what they are trying to speak to us, we might better understand the important message contained therein. I shall freely quote both "old" and "new" covenant passages to show the unified message that salvation (being made righteous) is a gift freely given, and that once made righteous, HaShem desires that we become submissive to his righteous ways, i.e., his Torah.

Moshe states in no uncertain terms, the effects of becoming and remaining obedient to the Torah, especially as it will impact their lives in the Land:

8:1 - "You must safeguard and keep the entire mandate that I am prescribing to you today. You will then survive, flourish, and come to occupy the land that God swore to your fathers.

8:2 - Remember the entire path along which God your Lord led you these forty years in the desert. He sent hardships to test you, to determine what is in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

8:3 - He made life difficult for you, letting you go hungry, and then He fed you the Manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had ever experienced. This was to teach you that it is not by bread alone that man lives, but by all that comes out of God's mouth.

8:4 - The clothing you wore did not become tattered, and your feet did not become bruised these forty years.

8:5 - You must thus meditate on the fact that just as a man might chastise his child, so God your Lord is chastising you.

8:6 - Safeguard the commandments of God your Lord, so that you will walk in His ways and remain in awe of Him.

8:7 - God your Lord is bringing you to a good land - a land with flowing streams, and underground springs gushing out in valley and mountain.

¹ Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered* (FFOZ, 1996), p. 32.

8:8 - It is a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs and pomegranates - a land of oil-olives and honey-[dates].

8:9 - It is a land where you will not eat rationed bread, and you will not lack anything - a land whose stones are iron, and from whose mountains you will quarry copper.

**8:10 - When you eat and are satisfied, you must therefore bless God your Lord for the good land that He has given you."
(D'varim 8:1-10, Pentateuch)**

Now I am quite at a loss of understanding as to how anyone could misconstrue the intent of the promises here. Clearly these are words of blessing, based on obedience. Moreover, they do not spell out the terms of salvation for an individual, based on such obedience. No, they speak to the well being of a member of God's family once he has already become a member (recall that the Torah was given to a group of freed people!).

What brings about confusion is the oft forgotten idea that the Torah speaks about forensic righteousness, the kind we inherit from God's gracious provision, i.e., Messiah Yeshua, and behavioral righteousness, the kind we gain by becoming submissive to the Torah of HaShem.

Because of our new life in Messiah, we have inherited the holiness that HaShem intended for us to possess all along. When we place our **trusting faithfulness** in the perfect Man of God, our holiness (or lack thereof) becomes the holiness of the Father! Our constitution changes and we are no longer deemed 'unholy', for his riches in glory—which includes his holy standard of being—are transferred to our account! We must grasp this central truth and begin to live according to it!

We are holy because Yeshua has made us holy!

Just as unrighteous Avraham became righteous when he placed his complete **faith** in HaShem, so we too inherit the righteousness and holiness of the Holy One when we place our unreserved trust in his Son. But holiness is also a duty.

What do I mean?

Apart from being an attribute of God—one that we inherit intrinsically with our **trusting faithfulness** in the Messiah, holiness is also meant to be a lifestyle. This is why I keep using the phrase '**trusting faithfulness**' rather than simply '**faith**'. The **latter** implies a one-time action on our part, which forever sets into motion a spiritual truth that will be fully actualized at the return of our LORD. Notice the candor of the phrase, "I place my **trust** in Yeshua." However, the **former** carries the aspect of a daily motion, which permeates every movement of our new-

creation lives! "I place my **trusting faithfulness** in Yeshua." Do you notice the subtle difference? To live by '**trusting faithfulness**' rather than just by '**faith**' alone characterizes our moment-by-moment thought process as well as our actions. The **former** "transforms" our **faith** into action! In other words, this new life in Messiah is an ever constant, ever-growing relationship with the Holy One of Isra'el; a demonstration of the miraculous on a level that can and should be measured in even the smallest areas of our lives. **Trusting faithfulness** is ongoing! It is not some unmoving, monumental event which took place sometime in our lives—it is the ongoing monumental process that overtakes our lives—for the rest of our lives—which was enacted when we first had a genuine encounter with the divine holiness!

Allow me to elaborate on this concept further using a quote from author Tim Hegg, one of the teachers at Congregation Beit Hallel in Tacoma, WA, as well as a significant contributor of materials for FFOZ. In his excellent work about the Apostle Paul '*The Letter Writer*', Hegg, in the **Prologue**, makes this important note regarding the original languages of the Bible:

One of the major difficulties we encounter in our discussion of "trust," "believe," and "faith/faithful," is that there is no corresponding verbal form of "faith" in the English language. We have no way of saying that one "faithed" or that someone is "faithing" in God. Yet in both the Hebrew and the Greek the word group expressing the concept of faith also contains a verb built on the same root. To put it simply, noun and verb are cognate. For example, the Hebrew verb [aman], "to be supported" from which we derive the verb "to believe," has the corresponding noun [emunah], which means "faith" or "faithful." Likewise, the Greek verb [pisteuo], "to believe," has the corresponding noun [pistis], which means "faith" or "faithful." Unfortunately, many English readers do not realize that "believing," "having faith," and "being faithful" all derive from the same word group whether in the Hebrew or the Greek...

This has all but been lost on our modern-day religious communities. "Faith" is considered almost exclusively to mean that one is "convinced" of this or that without regard to any outward action. Yet the very words used by the authors of Scripture indicate this was not their meaning. What both the Hebrew and the Greek word groups tell us plainly is that the internal, mental activity of genuine faith always shows itself in outward obedience: "faith" and "faithfulness" are bound together as two sides of the same coin.

This division in the Western worldview of the "internal" (which is called "faith") from the "external" (which is called "faithfulness") is foreign to the biblical way of looking at things because it is foreign to a Hebrew understanding of "faith/faithfulness." Since the Bible was written by Hebrews and those who had come to adopt the Hebrew way of looking at

the world, it only makes sense that the biblical teaching on “faith” would flow from a Hebraic perspective.²

That this concept is firmly rooted in the Torah proper is paramount to understanding such writings themselves. Can we expect to find these concepts of “faith” and “trusting faithfulness” working in tandem played out in the writings of the Renewed Covenant as well? You bet! Observe (notice particularly the author’s conclusion in verse 31):

21 - "But now a righteousness from God, apart from [Torah], has been made known, to which the [Torah] and the Prophets testify.

22 - This righteousness from God comes through faith in [Yeshua the Messiah] to all who believe. There is no difference,

23 - for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 - and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by [Yeshua the Messiah].

25 - God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished--

26 - he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in [Yeshua].

27 - Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of [legalistically] observing the [Torah]? No, but on that of faith.

28 - For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from [legalistically] observing the [Torah].

29 - Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,

30 - since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

31 - Do we, then, nullify the [Torah] by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the [Torah]."

(Romans 3:21-31, NIV, emphasis and cosmetic changes mine)

² Tim Hegg, *The Letter Writer, Paul's Background and Torah Perspective* (FFOZ, 2002), pp. 17-19, 21.

Far from teaching that a righteous status is obtained through legalistically following the Torah, or as in the case of 1st century Isra'el, a belief that righteousness is automatically granted on the basis of being born Jewish or converting to Judaism, the unified Word of God teaches that as believers and children of the Most High God, we uphold his righteous standard because we already are righteous in his sight!

It could not be stated clearer! This idea of commandment keeping is a state of mind, as well as a daily function! We should never fall for the age-old, compulsory reasons for keeping the commands of HaShem! Legalism, that is, keeping the Torah for the sake of either salvation or to (ostensibly) improve our status with HaShem and receive special favor, is simply NOT Scriptural! To be sure, it is a misuse of the Torah itself! Torah observance is a matter of the heart!

It is a natural action of ours, urged on and empowered by the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) within us! It is the result from having the Torah placed on our inward parts, as new creations in Messiah Yeshua! It is not something we do to BECOME saved; it is something we do BECAUSE we are saved!

The closing blessing is as follows:

***“Baruch atah YHVH, Eloheynu, Melech ha-‘Olam,
asher natan lanu Toraht-emet,
v’chay-yeh o’lam nata-b’tochenu.
Baruch atah YHVH, noteyn ha-Torah.
Ameyn.”***

(Blessed are you O’ LORD, our God, King of the Universe,
you have given us your Torah of truth,
and have planted everlasting life within our midst.
Blessed are you, LORD, giver of the Torah.
Ameyn.)

“Shabbat Shalom!”

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