

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation

(Under same management for over 5778 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

Saturday, August 4th - 10 AM -- Lolo Community "Synagogue"
12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Study



“Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai. Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart.”

Psalm 11

Parashat Ekev

Deuteronomy 7:12

וְהָיָה | עַקֵּב תִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

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V'hayah ekev tishme'oon et ha-mish'patim ha-eleh oo-sh'martem va'asitem otam

Then it shall come about because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them,
(that the)

וְשָׁמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַבְּרִית וְאֶת־הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתֶּיךָ:

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v'shamar Adonai Eloheycha l'cha et-ha-b'rit v'et-ha-chesed asher nishba la-avoteicha.

Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His loving-kindness,
which He swore to your forefathers.

Deuteronomy 10:12

וַעֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמְךָ כִּי אִם-לִירְאָה אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
וַעֲתָהּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמְךָ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

V'atah Yisra'el mah Adonai Eloheicha sho'el me'imach ki im-l'yir'ah et-
Adonai Eloheicha

And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God,

לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל-דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אוֹתוֹ וּלְעַבֹד אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ
לָלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְאַהֲבָה אוֹתוֹ וּלְעַבֹד אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ

lalechet b'chol-drachav ule'ahavah oto v'la'avod et-Adonai Eloheicha
to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God

בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשֶׁךָ:
בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשֶׁךָ

b'chol-l'vav'cha uv'chol-nafshecha.

with all your heart and with all your soul.

How Should We Then Live?

Reading through this week's Torah portion, the title to the above book by Francis Schaeffer came to mind. In it Francis Schaeffer pondered the fate of declining Western culture and presented the only viable alternative: Acceptance of God and His ethical and moral standards and values, as revealed in scripture. Our Torah portion, "Ekev" "as a result," could be summarized thusly: As a result of your obedience to God's mitzvot (commandments), God will abundantly bless you. But remember from whence you came, so that you are not tempted to return to previous idolatry. As you show your love for God by keeping His revealed ethical standards of life, God provides for you the benefits of His covenantal loyalty. Therefore keep His words close to your heart, practice them in your daily living, and let Him fight your battles for you. This is what God requires of us, and therefore how He expects us to live!

Do Jews Really Have to "Keep and Do" God's Mitzvot?

This title almost sounds like the reply of the snake in the Garden of Eden to Eve, doesn't it? One might think that, since the scripture indicates (over and over) that the "keep and do" is our part of God's bilateral covenant with our ancestors for the enjoyment of the land of our inheritance, that all of God's people believe the "keep and do's" are what God intends for us....but not so; mostly God's people do not believe they must keep God's laws in "today's world." Instead they make substitutions in God's law, according to their own desires. They would insist that God did not intend for us to "keep and do" all the mitzvot only to try our best; that God would not punish us, if we did our best. Most orthodox Jews believe that their reading the Torah is as good as "keeping and doing" God's commandments. The reading itself was as efficacious before God as the doing. However, the theme of D'varim (Deuteronomy), is "Remember, lest you forget..." (8:11) "Beware, lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes, which I am commanding you today..." Jews who believe that since no one could keep the mitzvot, God would not punish His people today for not keeping them, is mistaken. Just because God recognized the 400 years of suffering of His people in Egypt, in the diasporah, and through the holocaust does not imply that God will not hold His people accountable for not keeping His commandments. While God is totally aware of the suffering of His people throughout history, God still expects obedience to His commandments as a sign and witness that we are His distinct people. Rashi's commentary on Ekev states, that "the Torah is telling us to be equally diligent with all of God's commandments, no

less with those that seem less significant to our finite minds." "If you will heed the minor commandments, which one [usually] tramples with his heel [i.e., which a person treats as being of minor importance], then the Lord, your God, will keep His promise to you."

As the direct result of His peoples' "keeping and doing" here in Chapter 7, God will show His "chesed," His covenant-keeping loving-kindness, by giving fruitfulness to His people; fruitfulness of the womb; fruitfulness of their agriculture; fruitfulness of their herds; fruitfulness of physical health.

Another benefit of holy living was that God would fight their enemies.... holy warfare. The result of holy warfare was that the fear of Israel would find their enemies wherever they might hide (like a hornet) and drive them into the hands of Israel. For their part, Israel was to practice the "cherem" judgment....total destruction, including the destruction of all gold and silver pagan images. If God's people were to take any of these "abominable" things for themselves, they would also come under God's judgment. The application for us today is to stay away from all occult practices and artifacts.

History can be Humbling When You're "Fat & Happy"

After the admonitions of **Chapter 7**, Moses uses Chapter 8 as a history lesson for the people to remind them how God has been their help in times past, lest they forget that their blessings emanated from His presence among them. Moses again reminded our people to keep God's commandments,

so that they could "live and multiply," when they possess the land of their inheritance. Moses reminded them that it was God who fully sustained them for their 40 years in the desert, providing for their needs, while testing and disciplining them just as a father does for his children. They must remember that it was God's word that provided their sustenance. When they were not able to provide for themselves, they had to trust God for their daily provision. As they entered into their "promised land," they would begin to provide for themselves. But Moses reminded the people not to forget that when their land produced abundantly, that was God's blessing for keeping His commandments. Their focus should be on God, who provided their abundance, rather than on the abundance itself; on the Provider, rather than on what was provided. Yeshua showed proper focus

on the Provider, when tempted by Satan to focus on His ability to provide for Himself by turning stones into bread (Matthew 4:4 & Luke 4:4). It should be noted by the suggestion of Satan for Yeshua to change stones into bread to provide food for Himself, Satan acknowledged the supernatural ability of Yeshua. However, Yeshua's reply, "It is written, [Deuteronomy 8:3] 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,'" was an example for us to also acknowledge that it is God who provides our needs. This humbling history lesson by Moses served as an admonishment for the people to remember God, their Provider, and keep His commandments, when they became fully satisfied with the food, houses, abundant flocks and wealth in their "promised land." Moses knew that when the people became "fat & happy," their tendency would be to forget God, their Provider, and to trust instead in themselves, saying ... "my power and the

strength of my hand made me this wealth" (8:17). Moses told them that the consequences of forgetting God and serving other gods would be that they would lose the abundance of the land that only God could provide for them. Today we see this prophecy of Moses borne out in daily news reports from Israel. Focusing only on their predicament and how they can "fix" their situation to restore peace to their land, the government of Israel is retreating from terrorists and causing anguish and turmoil among their own people. They have forgotten the admonition of Moses that their enjoyment of the land of their inheritance in peace and security depends on their keeping God's commandments and trusting in Him to fight and to provide for them. Many in Israel have become "fat & happy" in their abundance, relying on the strength of their army for their salvation.

God's Protocol for Success and Examples of Previous Failures

Chapter 9 begins, "Hear O Israel!" Occurring only several other times in **Deuteronomy (4:1,5:1,6:4)**, "**Sh'ma Israel**" could today be translated "listen up, something significant is going to be said!" Moses told the people that they can accomplish something that their parents could not accomplish. They were going to cross the Jordan River and conquer the people and the cities that

scared their parents "to death." The tall Anakim with their fortified cities frightened their parents into refusing to follow God into their land. Now Moses was exhorting the children of those who refused to enter the land and battle the Anakim to fight and to destroy the Anakim, according to God's protocol. [By the way, God's people, under Joshua's leadership made short work of the Anakim, as found in

Joshua 11:21-22.]

There is a divine side and a human side to God's protocol. The divine side was God going out to battle ahead of the people, consuming and destroying their enemies. The human side was that God accomplished His will through His people. God expected His people to drive out those wicked nations. The natural question to be asked is why should God, who is omnipotent require people to carry out His plans? The answer from scripture seems to be that God wanted the love, trust, and obedience of His people for Him to spur them into action to exhibit their **commitment** to Him. Then, after they were successful in battle, Moses wanted to remind the people not to become proud of "their" success. God's provision for their victory was due to the wickedness of those nations, rather than to the righteousness of His people. Moses reminded them of their sin against God at Mt. Sinai. During the 40 days of being "leaderless," while Moses was with God on Mt. Sinai, the people became focused on their fear of abandonment and had Aaron fashion a molten image, an idol, for them to worship in the Canaanite style of debauchery. Moses reminded them that were it not for his prayers of intercession for them, and were it not for God's promise to Abraham and his descendants,

God might have destroyed them as a people. Moses reminded them of their sin of disbelief at Kadesh-barnea, when for the same reasons God spared them...but not because of their good deeds...for "You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day I knew you," Moses told them. In

Chapter 10 Moses reminded his people that their history of failure has been due to their focus on themselves instead of placing their trust fully on God. God's protocol for success required them to fully trust Him for their provision, while they carried out His action plan. The same can be said for us today: Fully trust God for our provision (for atonement from sin that separates us from Him) and total obedience to His action plan for our lives.

God's Commitment to Us & Our Commitment to Him

God's commitment to us is His covenant with us and His daily presence within us. Moses reminded the people of stone tablets containing the ten commandments God gave to our people, which Moses secured in the ark carried by the Levites. God's commitment to His people included setting apart the Levites to minister both to Him and to His people. God's commitment to us also included providing for us the land of our inheritance promised to Abraham and his descendants. (And eternal inheritance with Him for both Jew and Gentile through Yeshua.)

Our commitment to God is to hold God in reverential respect and awe. We are to walk in a godly lifestyle based upon our obedience to His commandments. We are to show our love for Him by serving Him with all our heart and soul.

You who Know God, Keep Him Close

Chapter 11 continues from Chapter 10, exhorting those who love God to fear Him, cling to Him, and serve Him because they have seen God in action. God, through Moses, spoke directly to those of the 2nd generation, who had personally seen the mighty deeds of God. Some had seen God show Himself greater than the Pharaoh and the army of Egypt. They witnessed His miracles both in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and against the rebellious followers of Korah. God took care of His people through their journey from Egypt to the plains of Moab, as they were about to cross the Jordan River. God's eyes will always be on the land of their inheritance to maintain and care for it. But the strength and vigor of God's people in the land will depend on their keeping close to God. If they love God, obey Him, and serve Him with all their heart and soul, God will bring the rains at their proper seasonal time to ensure abundant crops and vegetation for their animals. But if they again go into idolatry, God will keep the rain from nourishing the crops. Abundance is linked to obedience. Obedience is maintained by keeping God's words close at all times. For if God's people obey Him and walk in His ways, God

will fight their battles and provide all their needs, as they have witnessed Him do in the past. Each of us have seen God's provision in our lives, both physically and spiritually. Even today, God's abundant life is achieved only by keeping God close; keeping our focus on Him.....not on the world; on Him.....not on ourselves! This is what God requires of us, and therefore how we should live!

Incites on Practical Steps to Keep God's Laws

Deuteronomy 7:12 – 11:22 by Stuart Dauermann – edited

(The full unedited text may be found @ UMJC.org referencing Parsha Ekev.)

Even though bad things do happen to good people, by being obedient to Hashem, we multiply our chances of good things happening to us. Learn to deal radically with that which contaminates. Fearful thoughts are automatic, so maintain momentum by counterbalancing them with strengthening thoughts and memories. Hashem is a God of process. He has reasons why he does not intervene instantaneously, which we may not understand, even if told. Hashem is more interested in our character than in our comfort. A relationship with Hashem is an ongoing process of deepening trust demonstrated in obedience. Learning to say, "thank you," is essential to spiritual health. Gratitude and happiness go hand in hand. The ungrateful person is never happy, and the grateful person usually is. Prosperity is more dangerous to spirituality than is want. It is when we are doing well that we are most apt to forget what Hashem has done and what we owe Him as a result. Beware of the tendency to take credit for what Hashem does. Even Hashem's favored children are held accountable. Do not confuse Hashem's blessing with his commendation. There are limits to positive thinking. Don't forget to remember and to learn from your mistakes. A good Leader and a good parent is a good historian. Remember: We are not fatalists. Where there is Hashem, where is faith, where there is life, there is hope. It is a good idea to keep mementos and artifacts in order to keep important memories alive. Serving Hashem is a privilege, not a right. Don't ever take it for granted. Maintain your perspective: Make sure you don't lose sight of the meaning of the whole through preoccupation with the parts. Especially, remember that the prime directive every day in every way is to grow in consistency. "Showing love to Hashem by walking in His ways and clinging to Him." Remembering when we were down and out helps us to be compassionate with others in the same situation. We are responsible to learn from our experience with Hashem. Our constant question should be "what did I/should I learn from this?" Loving Adonai, walking in His ways, and clinging to him must be seen in the context of taking care to obey the mitzvot. Keeping Hashem's commandments is the main way Hashem has commanded Jews to show their love to Him, but it is impossible to keep Hashem's commandments out of mere force of habit, conformity, religious scrupulosity, perfectionism, or pride. This does not please Hashem at all! This is because all the aspects mentioned in this Parsha are meant to go together: Loving Adonai by walking in His ways, which the Jewish commentator Sforno reminds us means imitating His character, and clinging to Him as if in martial faithfulness to Him. It is in the context of this kind of intense love relationship that keeping the mitzvot has value. And, from a biblical and Jewish point of view, saying you love Him and yet don't want to bother with the commandments makes no sense: "if you love Me, keep My commandments." Finally, Rashi helps us by suggesting that "Taking care to obey all these mitzvot" requires of us that we continually study Hashem's Torah; that it not be forgotten. This can be said of all Hashem's word. We must study it diligently, for how else can we obey unless we know what is commanded us? There is nothing mightier than a person who obeys Hashem!!

SHABBAT SHALOM