

#46 Ekev Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25

By Moshe Schwab

Names

Kefa – Peter
 Moshe – Moses
 Shaul – Paul
 Yeshua – Jesus
 Ya'akov – James
 Yēhōvāh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
 Yochanan – John

Terms

#46 – the 46th portion for 2019-2020
 Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
 Metzot – plural of mezuzah; it contains scripture
 Parashah – (portion) one of 54 portions of the Torah
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

Ekev means, “because” or “if” (pertaining to “if you follow”). This Torah portion begins with Moshe telling Israel that God will bless them for being faithful to His commands. If Israel obeys God's commands, He will keep His covenant of mercy with them; God will love them and bless their lives, family, work and health. The same is true in this Messianic age. If we obey God, He will be merciful to us.

I have personally experienced blessing in my life because I was faithful to God. That is a promise to all who will keep His commandments. Israel was to go and take the land that God had promised them; that required trust in God and action. Ya'akov tells us that our faith requires action in James 2:17 NKJV, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

They were not to bring any idols into their houses. Bringing an idol into their house can bring a curse with it since devil spirits can attach themselves to idols. They were to remember their time in the wilderness; how God tested them and provided for them; Israel should learn that we don't live by food alone, but also through what God says. Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV says, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." Yeshua (Jesus) quoted this in Luke 4:4. We must always remember that our spiritual life is just as important as our physical life. This life is short compared to the eternity that is promised by God to those who keep His commandments.

The devil tempted Yeshua in Luke 4 and Yeshua used the scriptures to fight off the devil. We are to follow God and use His scriptures to help us have good and godly thoughts. Shaul said we need to get control of our thoughts, "Bringing every thought into captivity;" 2 Corinthians 10:5 NKJV. We are in a spiritual battle and we need to take control of our thoughts. Yeshua used the scriptures to stand against demonic powers as an example to us and we should also stand against any wrong thoughts that may enter our minds. Also, Ephesians 6:12-14 NKJV says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore." So, stand strong.

God was bringing Israel into a good land. They were not to get proud and forget Yehovah. They were to remember that God was blessing them. What does it mean to be proud? A proud person wants to do things their way. We should want to do things God's way. Being proud spiritually is thinking our thoughts and ideas are better than God's ways. It says that if they didn't keep God's commandments, they would perish like other nations had perished because of their sin; because they followed their own ways instead of God's good ways. God will help them to defeat nations greater than them. They were not to think it was because they were so good, but because the nations they displaced were evil. Also, God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham which is still in effect to this day.

Moshe reminds them of some who rebelled in the desert and his prayers for them that saved them; they should stop rebelling. God set apart the tribe of Levi to serve Him. In this portion He then tells them to

follow God's commands for their own good and to circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16). Just as circumcision reminded Israel of their agreement to follow God, their hearts needed to be circumcised and committed to follow God. Shaul quotes this and says we need to have circumcised hearts, "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart;" Romans 2:19 NKJV.

Some say Shaul is saying there that circumcision is no longer necessary; it is of the heart. He is quoting a scripture that says we are to have circumcised hearts. He is not saying circumcision is no longer necessary; he taught circumcision, "And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?" Galatians 5:11 NKJV. He taught the circumcision of male babies. The Bible says we are to protect life (Deuteronomy 22:4; Luke 14:5), even on Shabbat. Circumcising adult males is dangerous and should not be practiced. It was especially dangerous in ancient times.

Those who were pushing for adult circumcision at that time were disobeying the Torah's command to save life. **They were Torah breakers.** Saving life means we value life and do things that protect life. For example, taking our medicine unless we are healed. Watch out that you don't get caught up in superstitions against medicine. We had a foster child in home that was being treated with vapor rub for her asthma by her abusive parents. She could have died! Be sensible. Consider the consequences of your thinking; could the superstitious values that you are passing on cause someone to die? I wouldn't want that on my conscience.

God is a good and just; they were to also be good to foreigners because they were once foreigners in Egypt. In ancient times, strangers to the community could be a drain on resources and some people groups mistreated them. Israel was commanded not to mistreat foreigners. They have seen the power of Yehovah so they should keep His commandments. Remember, we have now found the correct pronunciation of God's name in over 2,363 manuscripts as Yĕhōvâh. "This is My name forever;" Exodus 3:15 NKJV. When we learn something, we begin to practice correct doctrine. Those that are saying we can't say God's name are treating God's name with disrespect. Believers used Yĕhōvâh's name appropriately. Some call God Hashem which means, "the name." It's like calling someone "it."

The eyes of Yehovah are always on the land of Israel it says and He will prosper the land if they keep His commands and put God's words in their heart. Do you want the eyes of Yehovah to be upon you? Keep His commands and put God's words in your heart too. Putting God's words on their forehead meant they were to always have God's words on their mind; it wasn't meant to be literal as some take it. This practice didn't begin until the 1st century AD. They were to put God's words on the door frames of their houses. This portion ends with telling them that their territory would extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Sea to the Euphrates.

This portion talks about God's mercy, forgiveness, and willingness to bless; this should give us great comfort. Moshe tells them that God gave His commands for their good and that they should circumcise their hearts. Shaul said in Rom. 2:29 that a real Jew (believer) has a circumcised heart. Believers in the Messiah considered themselves Jewish in the 1st century. They were a Jewish sect called Nazarene Jews. Jewish people were to treat foreigners well and it is a misconception (lie) that they don't. For example, Israel sends Gaza food and supplies, and Gaza sends rockets into Israel to try to destroy Israel.

Israel has seen God's power and we will too says Yeshua in John 14:12. Israel should have remained faithful based on their witness. Believers in the Messiah should also remain faithful based on our witness. Many of both Jews and Christians have failed though. They make God into their place of worship or say they believe in God, but do not listen to His commands. Since they do not listen to God, they disrespect God. Believing in God means we also believe and trust in what He says.

Putting up scriptures on our entries is a commandment of God. Mezuzot are a practical way to put scriptures up at your entries and they remind us to obey God. As Messianic Jews we understand that just because the New Testament portion doesn't mention something, that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. There are lots of commands in the Torah that should be practiced in our present day. For example, honest weights and measures are not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do that. The practice of treating a mezuzah like a rabbit's foot as some do is wrong. A mezuzah which contains scripture is to remind us to keep God's commands for when we leave our home and when we return (or we could put up a scripture instead of a mezuzah containing scripture). The man-made practice of touching a mezuzah and saying something to God when you touch it can help the mezuzah from becoming invisible to us. Some man-made practices are practical, but they are not commanded.

The Haftarah for Ekev is Isaiah 49:14 to 51:3. In this portion it says that God will never forget Israel; He has engraved them on the palms of His hands. In their captivity God will still help them and save them. They lost their land because of their sins. Yĕhōvāh will not be put to shame though, and if Yehovah helps us, who can condemn us? Yehovah called just one person, Abraham and that blessing turned into many. God will once again turn Israel's desert into a garden (like Eden) and there will be joy, thanksgiving, and music there.

Shaul sees the Messiah in this section of Isaiah. He also says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. He is obviously also relating Israel's travail to his travail and God's blessing to what God is accomplishing through Messiah. Just like God will never forget Israel, He will never forget us.

Isaiah 50:7-10 CJB says:

"For Adonai ELOHIM will help. This is why **no insult can wound me**. This is why I have set my face like flint, knowing I will not be put to shame. My vindicator is close by; let whoever dares to accuse me appear with me in court! Let whoever has a case against me step forward! Look, **if Adonai ELOHIM helps me, who will dare to condemn me?** Here, they are all falling apart like old, moth-eaten clothes. Who among you fears ADONAI? Who obeys what his servant says? Even when he walks in the dark, without any light, he will trust in ADONAI 's reputation and rely on his God."

We've seen a number of verses quoted in the New Testament portion in our studies and this portion also has verses quoted in the New Testament portion. The New Testament believers reference for life is the Old Testament portion.

Bible teachers can give us all kinds of interesting information and tell great stories, but we are to actually live by God's words and not just get stories and good advice. I remember listening to this one pastor teach and thinking he was just giving his personal advice. Good advice is not a bad thing, but we are to actually learn to keep God's commandments; the words that come from Yehovah.

Deuteronomy 6:2 NKJV tells us God's commandments prolong life, "That you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged." People will do all kinds of things to prolong their life; why not keep God's commandments. Notice it is the commandments in the Old Testament portion that prolong life. It is strange that people say the Old Testament has been done away with. I hope not; I trust in His words.

Just a few verses later, it says in Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you." The

word for "well" has to do with making well, beautiful, happy, successful or right according to Strong's.¹ Wow, isn't that something! Also, it says that we are to do what is right before God. That in itself should motivate us. God sees us and we show God that we love Him when we keep His commands, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always.;" Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV. It is important to keep God's commands. Deuteronomy 11:32 NKJV says, "You shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments."

The Holy Spirit is to be our helper, but first of all, we need to learn and keep what God tells us to do. We need to be strong and follow God's truths. The Bible is our manual for life and the Holy Spirit encourages us to follow the manual. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will say that I should use caution or that I shouldn't do something. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will lead me or encourage me. God expects us to know what we can know first in the Bible and then the Holy Spirit will help us with more specifics. Yeshua said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you;" John 14:26 NKJV. The Holy Spirit woke me up in the middle of the night once because I had a fire in my house. The Holy Spirit saved me and my family. I wouldn't be around if it wasn't for the help of the Holy Spirit.

Since God expects us to know His word and follow His word, it is a good idea to have some scriptures handy to help us in certain situations. A good scripture for fear is Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." Perhaps when encountering some fearful thoughts we might say to ourselves, "Be strong and of good courage." Or, if feeling alone and afraid we could think, "He will not leave you or forsake you."

I take courage in knowing what God said to our forefathers and you can too. One of my favorite sections of scriptures is Proverbs 3:5-10 NKJV;

- 5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.
- 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.
- 8 It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.
- 9 Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase;
- 10 So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.

Perhaps today you need verse 6 or you are feeling sick and need verses 7-8, "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones." Then pray to God and tell Him that you fear Him. Ask Him to help you and heal you in the name of Yeshua. Or, perhaps we just need to tell ourselves that we will not do any evil. Sometimes I say to myself, "I rebuke that evil thought in the name of Yeshua." Don't let just anything to go through your head. Remember, Shaul said to get control of our thoughts.

Be ready to do what is right; we need to have direction in life. Kefa said, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed;" 1 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV. Perhaps someone says to you, what good has believing in God done for you? I would say, "I believe in the creator God who helps me to do good and not evil. He is active in my life and even saved my life on several occasions. Believing in God has been more than worth it.

¹h3190. יָטַב; yāṭab; a primitive root; to be (causative) make well, literally (sound, beautiful) or figuratively (happy, successful, right): — be accepted, amend, use aright, benefit, be (make) better, seem best, make cheerful" - Strong's Enhanced Dictionary.

Perhaps someone says that all that congregations want is our money. You could say, God doesn't need our money; He is the creator and God asks us to give as recognition that He is our provider and the creator. We need to have answers on how to live. We need to not only be able to explain what we are doing to others, but also be able to know within ourselves what is right and why. For example, those who hate me for doing good will not get under my skin, "No insult can wound me;" Isaiah 50:7 NKJV. Use the scriptures if you can instead of sayings or good ideas. Put your trust in God. Or perhaps, I am not going to fear because, "He will not leave you nor forsake you;" Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV.

The possibilities and applications are endless. I now have 9 pages of scriptures that I've put together. As my list got longer, I began speaking one page a day into my life instead of all of them every day. Base your beliefs in the Jewish biblical context of the scriptures; that is the biblically correct way to understand them; namely, the original way they were to be meant to be understood.

This portion tells us that God will bless us for doing what is right. We need to be dedicated spiritually; spiritual things are just as important as the physical side of life; even more so. God is for us; why not trust in God and not just in good advice. We need to follow God's word first and foremost and then the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our helper and can even save our life. Have scriptures ready for life's situations to help you live right. Set aside your life for God.