

עֵקֵב

EKEV (*BECAUSE*)

Devarim (*Deuteronomy*) 7:12 – 11:25

This week our Torah reading continues with the final speech Moses gave to the children of Israel on the east side of the Jordan. As יהוה's (Yahwey) **special nation**, they are preparing to enter the **land** that has been **promised** to them. Most of these **second generation Israelites** have never known anything other than **life in the desert** (bamidbar), so it is critical that they be taught the **importance of** and the **extreme necessity of keeping the commandments of יהוה** that pertain to **living in the land**. The Almighty is fully capable of **defeating the enemies** in the land and **caring for their needs**, but only **IF** they do things **HIS way**. Moses is very aware that the tendency will be for them to **forget** what he has told them to **remember** and will do his best to present the **consequences**.

The **name** of our Torah portion comes from the first verse, and has raised the **curiosity** of commentators for hundreds of years:

*Devarim 7:12 " Then it shall come to pass, **because** (ekev - עֵקֵב) you **listen** (shema - שָׁמַע) to these judgments, and keep and do them, that יהוה your Elohim will keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers.*

King James and NIV translate עֵקֵב differently:

*Devarim 7:12 Wherefore it shall come to pass, **if** (ekev - עֵקֵב) ye hearken to these judgments...*

Ekev (עֵקֵב) is still an **unusual** Hebrew word to use in this **context**, as the Torah uses other Hebrew words for both words, “**because**” and “**if**”. Quite literally, ekev (עֵקֵב) means “**heel**”. Therefore you could say that the **blessings of Yah** come on the “**heels**” of our **listening/obedience** (shema).

Jewish commentator **James Stone Goodman** points to the usage of ekev in **Psalms 89:51** where it speaks of “**on the heels (ekev) of the Messiah**” as referring to the **last generation** before the **Messiah**. That “**heel**” **generation** contains the **weight of every generation** prior to it...every word said, every **mitsvah** (commandment) performed, **contributes** in some way to the **coming of the Messiah**. That generation is therefore pointed to in **Devarim 7:12** as the **generation who will “shema” to the instructions of יהוה**.

It is also interesting to point out the appearance of a **stand-alone aleph/tav** (אָת) in this same verse:

..... אָת עֵקֵב תִּשְׁמָעוּן אָת Devarim 7:12

As we have discussed previously, the **stand-alone aleph/tav** appears in peculiar places throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and points to the **Messiah** who Himself declared that He was the **alpha and the omega** (in Hebrew this is the **aleph and the tav**), the **first and the last**, the **beginning and the end**. Considering this implication, this first part of Devarim 7:12 would read – Then it shall be **because you listen to Yeshua (אָת)**....

If you have read through the Torah portion, then you probably noticed the **repetition** of the words “**remember**” and “**forget**”. Moses gives many warnings about **problems** that may develop as time goes on. His pro-active advice for attacking these problems will be to “**remember**” the **past** in order to **solve the problems of the future**. Let’s take a look at some of these problems that may come up.

➤ The **first** potential problem is **fear or a lack of faith**:

Devarim 7:17 "If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?'

To address this **fear**, Moses tells them to “**remember**” the **plagues in Egypt**. Being **afraid** is not so much an **emotion**, but a **paralysis** that results from **assuming that any threat is greater than יהוה**. Moses wants them to “**remember**” that **intercession** that happened in the past can be **repeated by the Almighty**.

Devarim 7:18 "you shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember well what יהוה your Elohim did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: ¹⁹ "the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which יהוה your Elohim brought you out. So shall יהוה your Elohim do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.... ²¹ "You shall not be terrified of them; for יהוה your Elohim, the great and awesome Elohim, is among you.

Yeshua also spoke of this principle of **fearing only יהוה**:

Matthew 10:28 "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

➤ The **second** potential problem is where there is **exaggerated self-confidence** that leads to **pride** and a **failure to recognize** that everything man has comes from the Almighty:

*Devarim 8:12 "lest -- when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; ¹³ "and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; ¹⁴ "when your **heart is lifted up**, and you forget יהוה your Elohim who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage... ¹⁷ "then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'*

The prescription for this problem is to “**remember**” the **difficult times** and to **give glory to the Elohim** for your **prosperity**:

Devarim 8:18 "And you shall remember יהוה your Elohim, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

- The **third** potential problem also **stems from pride**. It is when **His people begin to think that they are spiritually superior to others** and that they **deserve to be in the land**:

Devarim 9:4 "Do not think in your heart, after יהוה your Elohim has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness יהוה has brought me in to possess this land'....

For this, Moses suggests that they “**remember**” their **own stubbornness** and the **unmerited favor** being given to them to **possess the land**:

Devarim 9:5 "It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that יהוה your Elohim drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which יהוה swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ⁶ "Therefore understand that יהוה your Elohim is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. ⁷ "Remember! Do not forget how you provoked יהוה your Elohim to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against יהוה.

You may have noticed in these three “**remembrances**” Moses is taking them back to **two** points in their history – **their slavery in Egypt** and **their time of wondering in the desert**. Over and over again יהוה **interceded** on their behalf. With the hindsight of all these years, the realization came to the Israelites that **what they had truly lacked during that formative period**, was not food and drink, clothing and physical comfort, but rather a **recognition of human dependence upon Yah** and **an unshakeable faith in both His ability as well as His interest to sustain and preserve them**.

Today we are able to learn from and put into practice these **suggestions** and **admonitions** from Moses:

*1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as **examples**, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

The **desert**, or the **wilderness** (מִדְבָּר) means the “**place of the Word**”. It is a lonely and dry place, and few of us have not felt we’ve been there at one time or another:

Devarim 8:2 "And you shall remember that יהוה your Elohim led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

The **test** is to **reveal what is in our hearts**...and that revelation is **made visible** by whether or not we **keep His commandments**. Paul also referred to this **test**:

2 Corinthians 2:9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

Okay, let's throw the word "forget" (shakach - שָׁכַח) into this mix now. The **etymology of "forget"** means to "forget due to distraction or inattention". In Devarim 8, we read that the things that distract us are our **full stomachs, our beautiful homes, our jobs and our money**.

According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, "forgetting" is **not** simply a psychological act of having a thought pass from one's consciousness, i.e. a **temporary or permanent lapse of memory**. This is indicated by the frequent **identification of the verb with an action**:

- To "forget" יָדַחְתָּ Elohim, is to **not keep His commandments**
 - *Devarim 8:11* " Beware that you do not **forget** יָדַחְתָּ your Elohim **by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,**
- To "forget" יָדַחְתָּ Elohim, is to **follow other gods**
 - *Devarim 8:19* "Then it shall be, if you by any means **forget** יָדַחְתָּ your Elohim, and **follow other gods, and serve them and worship them...**
- To "forget" יָדַחְתָּ is to **live in fear of harm and danger**, to live fretfully and timidly
 - *Isaiah 51:13* And you **forget** יָדַחְתָּ your Maker, Who stretched out the heavens And laid the foundations of the earth; You have **feared continually every day** because of the fury of the oppressor, When he has prepared to destroy. And where is the fury of the oppressor?
- To "forget" יָדַחְתָּ is to live in **rebellion**:
 - *Psalms 106:13* They soon **forgot** His works; **They did not wait for His counsel,** ¹⁴ But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tested Elohim in the desert. ¹⁵ And He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul...They **forgot** Elohim their Savior, Who had done great things in Egypt,

"Forgetting" is often associated specifically with **turning away from Torah**:

- *Proverbs 3:1* My son, **do not forget My Torah,** But let your heart keep my commands;
- *Hosea 4:6* My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because **you have forgotten the Torah** of your Elohim, I also will forget your children.

So as we turn our attention back to our Parasha this week, we see the constant reminders given by Moses to "remember" to **keep the commandments of the Torah** in order to live in the **Promised Land**:

Devarim 8:1 "Every commandment which I command you today you must **be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which יָדַחְתָּ swore to your fathers.**

"Forgetting" will bring about **exile from the land**, graphically portrayed in Vayikra (Leviticus):

Vayikra 18:24 ' Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. ²⁵ 'For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and **the land vomits out its inhabitants.**

Our **commitment to** and the **keeping of the commandments** of יהוה is the **rental price for living in the Promised Land!** That concept has not changed, and today as we consider **returning to the land**, our focus as **believers** should be on **learning and keeping the commandments!** Our **obedience to Him brings Him glory** when we allow it **to come from our love for Him.** In fact since the Garden of Eden, Yah has always been **looking for a people who would love Him and would put His commandments into practice out of love and faith.** Because of **disobedience, Adam and Eve were exiled.** Today we are living in a time of **restoration** and it is no coincidence that יהוה is bringing us **to a knowledge of His commandments** to accomplish this.

For hundreds of years, too many people have taken the **Torah** and turned it into a **legalistic and religious yoke.** They attempt to **serve Him** with their **lips** and put their **own definition on how to “love Him”.** Yeshua came, however, to be an example of **how to fulfill Torah out of love.** He told us **how to display our love for Him:**

John 14:21 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

So let me suggest something. It is one thing **to believe in יהוה**, but quite another **to live with the belief in Him.** Living with that belief causes you to take up the **yoke of the commandments and they are not burdensome:**

1 John 5:3 For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

Now, let's recap where we've been. As our Parasha began, Moses promises the children of Israel that **if they will keep יהוה's Torah,** then **He will reciprocate by blessing** the land, its produce, and everything about the nation. However, Moses knows that **many changes** will come about **as a result of living in the land** as opposed to **wandering in the desert.** Therefore, in his speech he ensures them that **just as יהוה has cared for their physical needs** – in a **miraculous** manner – **He will continue to provide for their needs in the Promised Land...**but only on the **condition** that they continue to **follow His Torah!**

The **land** itself plays a key role in the **developing relationship** between יהוה and His people. Amen to that! How many of you have acquired a **connection with the land of Israel?** For those of you who have been blessed to have visited there, how many of you felt you were **“home”?** How many of you brought back **treasured little bags of dirt, rocks, shells, leaves, or pressed flowers?**

Our Parasha praises the holy **land of Israel:**

*Devarim 8:7 "For יהוה your Elohim is bringing you into a **good land**, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ "a land of **wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey;** ⁹ "a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰"When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless יהוה your Elohim for the good land which He has given you.*

The land of Israel is very **beautiful**. It is the size of New Jersey, yet it is an **ever-changing landscape** of mountains, hills, valleys, streams, lakes, and plains. You'll find everything there from the ski slopes of Mt. Hermon to the desert of the Negev. I think it is fascinating that the **seven fruits** (verse 8) for which Israel is praised are all of **exceptional nutritional value**. Being sort of a health nut, I have attempted to incorporate these fruits of the land into my own diet. Even the secular community labels many of these fruits as "**super-foods**". The first fruit listed is **wheat**. As a personal testimony, I grow (on my kitchen counter) and juice **wheat grass** which is **70% chlorophyll**. Chlorophyll is the **first product of light** and contains more **light energy** than any other element (that will preach)! The health benefits of it are amazing!

Almost every other conceivable **variety of fruits and vegetables** grows **somewhere in Israel**. This amazing fact is explained in a Midrash which teaches that subterranean channels emanate from the **center of Jerusalem**, the place where the Holy of Holies stood. Perhaps this is the **center of the Garden of Eden**, where the **Tree of Life** also stood. From this source, the **source of all creation**, these channels fan out to the whole world. This **Midrash** gains **credibility** as we read from **Revelation**:

Revelation 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of Yah and of the Lamb.² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Now the **land of Egypt** is also mentioned in our Torah reading:

*Devarim 11:10 "For the land which you go to possess is not like the **land of Egypt** from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and **watered it by foot**, as a vegetable garden;*

The **land of Egypt** represents **all other lands**, outside of Israel. Physically speaking, the main difference is in the **water economy**, which is the key to **agriculture**. In Egypt, the main source of water is the **Nile**. Egypt is a **desert** with practically **no rainfall**, but the waters of the Nile flow from **deep within another area of Africa** where **melting snow from high mountains** contribute to the Nile's current. The river valley is exceptionally fertile, for the winter and spring run-off of the river leaves behind valuable nutrients. The **ancient Egyptians worked hard** and were able to get two or three crops out of the black earth each growing season with the help of **irrigation**.

What does it mean in Devarim 11:10 when it describes Egypt as a land that is "**watered by foot**"? This refers to the **irrigation system** that was developed by Egypt by digging **ditches from the Nile to their fields**. Using this system, an Egyptian could **irrigate his field** by simply using his "**foot**" to **kick away the dirt which was blocking the flow of water**. Similarly, he could also shut off the flow by using his "**foot**" to kick the dirt back into the ditch. In contrast to Egypt, this is how the Torah describes the Land of Israel:

Devarim 11:11 "but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven,

Unlike Egypt, **Israel lacks a mighty river** such as the Nile to provide it with a **consistent water supply**. Instead the residents are **totally dependent on rainfall**. For the **farmer in Egypt**, growing crops is **less of a trial of faith**. The Nile rises and falls according to a fairly **predictable seasonal pattern**. The Egyptian knows it is **up to him to put in the “foot work” to irrigate his crops and produce food**. It is easy for him to **believe that everything works according to the laws of nature and his own hands (and feet) are the tools of his livelihood**. From an agricultural perspective, the **farmer had a clear advantage in Egypt**. A **responsible family provider** would obviously prefer the **“secure” option...that is to establish his home in Egypt**, rather than the **“risky” Israel alternative**.

However, **Ramban**, Jewish sage from the 13th century wrote:

“...realize that this new land is not like the land of Egypt that can be irrigated from the water channels and reservoirs like a garden of vegetables, but it rather is a land of hills and valleys that gets its water from the rainfall and in no other way. It therefore **always requires G-d’s sustaining hand to provide it with rain** for it is a very arid land that needs rainfall all of the year. **If you abrogate the will of G-d so that He will not sustain it with desirable rains then it becomes a poor land indeed that can be neither planted nor cultivated, and no crops shall grow upon its slopes.**”

Israel’s precarious dependence on rain from heaven for its water supply made it **harder to fall into the error of believing that they single-handedly were in control of their own livelihood**. Instead, they were **forced to depend on the Almighty**. No matter how proficiently they tilled the fields, if the **rains didn’t come from heaven**, they would not be able to produce anything. The **rain** represented **יהוה’s response to the spiritual condition of their lives**. Thus we read:

Devarim 11:12 "a land for which יהוה your Elohim cares; the eyes of יהוה your Elohim are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.

The **rainfall** and everything else in Israel is **subject to יהוה’s direct supervision in every detail**. The **purpose of being in the land of Israel is to live in a state of closeness with the Almighty**, understanding that in everything we do in this world, we are **“partners” with Him**. **Our efforts can only succeed if they align with His will** expressed to us through His Torah. We have already read of a **dangerous attitude**:

Devarim 8:17 "then you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.'

So we have learned that **יהוה** takes **direct control over the rain** that falls in the **Promised Land**. In contrast, in **Egypt** the **water supply from the Nile** is basically a **constant**. Since **יהוה** controls the **rain**, this will affect the children of Israel’s **respect for יהוה** and the **keeping of His Torah**, for their **very survival is dependent on rain**:

Devarim 11:13 ' And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love יהוה your Elohim and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,¹⁴ 'then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain

*and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.¹⁵ 'And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.'¹⁶ "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them,¹⁷ "lest יהוה's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so **that there be no rain**, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which יהוה is giving you.*

Do you see how יהוה uses the rain as a way to communicate with His people? If they are **faithful**, He will be pleased with them and **send the rain in its season**. However, upon their **unfaithfulness**, He will **hold back the rain**, thus giving them a **sign of His divine displeasure**. His intention was to bring about **self-examination** and **repentance at the national level**. Note that it was the **people as a whole who were blessed or judged**. A **faithful individual** could still find himself in a **drought situation if the nation went astray**.

Where do you think you'd like to **live**? If you are looking for a **secure lifestyle** and would like to be **responsible for your own success**, **Egypt (or this world)** will be your choice. If you are **striving for a closer relationship with יהוה**, then you will **long for the land of Israel**...not only that, but **living in community there with other Torah-keepers**.

The Hebrew word for “to rain”, **matar** (מָטַר), has a **broader meaning**. Basically, it can refer to **anything that falls from heaven to earth**. **Rain** is the classic example, but the following are also described as **descending from heaven**:

***Bereshith (Genesis) 19:24** Then יהוה rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from יהוה out of the heavens.*

***Shemot (Exodus) 9:18** "Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause very heavy hail to rain down, such as has not been in Egypt since its founding until now.*

***Shemot 16:4** Then יהוה said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My Torah or not.*

When **man** contemplates His **Creator**, there may seem to be an **unbridgeable gap** between **heaven and earth**. In Israel, where **life** depends upon **rain**, you had no choice but to **look up**. Rain, manna, and punishments that **fall from above** are proof that **something from heaven can come down to earth**:

***John 6:38** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*

***John 3:13** "No one has ascended to heaven but **He who came down from heaven**, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

***John 8:23** And He said to them, "You are from beneath; **I am from above**. You are of this world; **I am not of this world**.*

In John, **Yeshua** also connects Himself to the **manna** that “**fell from heaven**”:

John 6:33 "For the bread of Yah is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Unfortunately, we have another connection here on earth with **something that has come down** to us **from heaven**:

Isaiah 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!"

Prophetically, after the 1,000 year millennium, we are told that it is **fire from heaven** that will **defeat hasatan** and those who side with him:

Revelation 20:9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from Yah out of heaven and devoured them.

Then eternity ushers in something else **from heaven above**:

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from Yah, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Just one more thing heregoing back to **rivers**. **Israel** does have the **River Jordan**. It was not able to be used in the same way as the **Nile**, however. Because it is located **hundreds of feet below sea level**, they could not **dig ditches** to their fields for **irrigation**. Today, **as a result of their own strength**, the **Israeli's** have been able to “**solve**” **their water problem** by **pumping up the water** from the Sea of Galilee. Is it possible that there will come a day in the future when once more Israel will be forced “**to look up**” **for their sustenance**? The Bible teaches that then the **deserts will be blooming due to abundant water**:

Isaiah 35:1 The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;² It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of יהיה, The excellency of our Elohim.... For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

I'll leave you with this:

Luke 21:28 "Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near."

Shabbat Shalom!

Ardelle