

Extending Grace to a Thousand Generations

In this weeks reading from *Parsahat Ekev* (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25*), the Lord states the commandments that He had given are to be kept, and He will also keep His covenant that He has made with us. He says contained within the blessings of keeping the covenant, he will love us, bless us, multiply us, and increase the fruit of the womb, and of the ground (*note how the wine and oil connect the Temple service to the covenant blessings, 7:13*), and no one will be barren from either man or beast. The Lord will remove the sickness from among His people, and that His people will dominate all the other nations because of their faith and obedience to His commands. The Lord God Himself will go before Israel to drive out the people of Canaan (*7:17-26*). Moshe reminds the people to never forget what the Lord has done (*8:11*) because obedience to the command is connected to the blessing and increase of the people of Israel (*8:1*), where forgetting is manifested in one's forsaking the commandments. The Lord is to be remembered because He is the One who gives power, wealth, and life (*8:18*). A warning is also given to not become arrogant in the commands, to say it was by our own righteousness that we were able to overcome these people in the Promised Land. (*9:1-5*) Moshe says specifically in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 9:6*, וַיִּדְעַתְּ כִּי לֹא בְצַד־ דְּקַתְּהָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ הַטּוֹבָה הַזֹּאת לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כִּי עַם-קָשֶׁה-עֲרָף אָתָּה: *9:6 'Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people. (NASB)* Moshe reminds the people of God's grace (חֶסֶד) and the sin of the Golden Calf from Parashat Ki Tisa (*Shemot / Exodus 32*). Moshe continues recounting the times that Israel had fallen short of the glory of God by sinning, and both Aaron and Moshe fell short as well. Moshe continues speaking of how we are to circumcise our hearts, to cut away at the sin in our hearts, to fear the Lord, and to walk in His ways, to serve Him, and to obey the commandments. We also know that according to the Torah the Lord God also works to cut away at the sins in our hearts, the Lord is in the process of circumcising our hearts as well (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 30:6*). The keeping of the commands is a sign of strength in the spirit (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:8*) that enables a person by the

power of God to take possession of the Promised Land, to live long, and to prosper by the grace of God. Moshe ends the Torah portion by speaking of the benefit of living for the Lord and walking in His ways, the Lord will increase the borders of Israel and expand her territory so that all the people of the land will fear them.

ספר דברים פרק ז *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:12-16*

יב וְהָיָה | עֲקֹב תִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת
הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם
וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְשָׁמַר יְהוָה
אִלֵּיכֶם לְךָ אֶת-הַבְּרִית וְאֶת-
הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךָ:
יג וְאֶהְיֶיךָ וַיְבָרְכֶךָ וְהִרְבָּה
וַיְבָרֶךְ פְּרִי-בִטְנְךָ וּפְרִי-אֲדָמָתְךָ
דְגָנְךָ וְתִירֹשֶׁךָ וְיִצְהָרְךָ שֶׁגֶר-
אֶלְפִיךָ וַעֲשִׂתָּרֶת צֹאנְךָ עַל
הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךָ
לָתֵת לָךְ: יד בָּרוּךְ תִּהְיֶה מִ-
כָּל-הָעַמִּים לֹא-יִהְיֶה בְּךָ עֲקָר
וְעֲקָרָה וּבְבִהֶמְתְּךָ: טו וְהִסִּיר
יְהוָה מִמֶּךָ כָּל-חֲלִי וְכָל-מַדּוּי
מִצָּרִים הָרְעִים אֲשֶׁר יָדַעְתָּ
לֹא יִשְׂיֶמְךָ בָּךְ וַיִּנְתְּנֶם בְּכָל-
שְׂנְאֵיךָ: טז וְאֶכְלָתָּ אֶת-כָּל-
הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן
לָךְ לֹא-תַחֲוֶם עֵינֶיךָ עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא
תַעֲבֹד אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כִּי-מוֹקֵשׁ
הוּא לָךְ:

7:12 'Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. 7:13 'He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. 7:14 'You shall be blessed above all peoples; there will be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. 7:15 'The Lord will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you. 7:16 'You shall consume all the peoples whom the Lord your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. (NASB)

Moshe opens the Torah portion saying, עֲקֹב תִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים וְהָיָה | עֲקֹב תִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשָׁמַרְתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם וְשָׁמַר יְהוָה אִלֵּיכֶם לְךָ אֶת-הַבְּרִית וְאֶת-הַחֶסֶד אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְתָּיִךָ *7:12 'Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the Lord your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness (grace) which He swore to your*

forefathers. (NASB) In the opening verses of the portion, it is interesting to note how Moshe explains the Lord God will keep the covenant (וְשָׁמַר) (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְךָ אֶת-הַבְּרִית), because of the grace (חֶסֶד) that He swore to our fathers and that the Lord will bless the people in the land if they remain faithful to Him (7:12-16). These warnings are contrasted with the mighty works God did to preserve His people in the wilderness. The major concept that is brought forth at the beginning of this week's Torah portion is the matter of God's grace that was available to His people in the wilderness. Did you know that the understanding of God's grace by Yeshua, the Disciples, and Paul was understood according to the Torah?

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he wrote about the grace (חֶסֶד) of God which was manifest in Yeshua the Messiah. He said the Lord determined this from before the foundation of the world, drawing in the Torah context of creation, and that it was by the glory and the grace of God, that He forgives our sins, in the blood of the Messiah. According to *Ephesians 1:1-14*, Paul taught the following concerning the Grace (Mercy, חֶסֶד) of God.

Ephesians 1:1-14

א פולוס שְׁלִיחַ יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ בְּרִצּוֹן אֱלֹהִים אֶל-הַקְּדוֹשִׁים בְּאֶפְסוֹס
 1:1 *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:*
 ב חֶסֶד וְשָׁלוֹם
 1:2 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 ג בְּרוּךְ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אָבִי אֲדֹנָינוּ יֵשׁוּעַ הַמָּשִׁיחַ אֲשֶׁר בִּרְךָ אֶתְנוּ מִשָּׁמַי
 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*
 ד כְּאֲשֶׁר בּוּ בְחֵרָנוּ עַד לֹא נִוְסְדָה אֶרֶץ לְהִיּוֹת קְדוֹשִׁים וְתַמִּימִים לְפָנָיו
 1:4 *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.*
 ה וּבְאֵהֱבָתוֹ יַעֲדָנוּ מִרְאֵשׁ לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְבָנִים עַל-יְדֵי יֵשׁוּעַ
 1:5 *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*
 ו לְתַפְאֵרַת עֹז חֶסְדוֹ אֲשֶׁר-גָּמַל עָלֵינוּ

ז כִּי־בו נִמְצָא פְדוּת 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His **grace**, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
 ח אֲשֶׁר 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His **grace**
 ט וַיִּוְדַע לָנוּ אֶת־סוּד רְצוֹנוֹ כַּעֲצָתוֹ 1:8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight
 י לְקַבֵּץ בַּמְּשִׁיחַ בְּמִלְאֵת יָמָיו הַפְקֵדָה כֹּל 1:9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
 יא וְגַם עַל־יְדוֹ נָחָה 1:10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him
 יב לְמַעַן יֵרָאֶה עָלֵינוּ הַדָּר כְּבוֹדוֹ 1:11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,
 יג וְבוֹ בְּטָחִים גַּם־אַתֶּם אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעְתֶּם 1:12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.
 יד אֲשֶׁר עָרְבוֹן הוּא לְמוֹ־ 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
 יוּ עַד אֲשֶׁר־תִּגָּאֵל וְהִיְתָה־לָּנוּ לְאַחֲזָה לְתַהֲלֵת שֵׁם כְּבוֹדוֹ 1:14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (NASB)

Paul says that the Lord God has revealed the mystery of all of these things, of the things in heaven and on earth. What is the mystery that is connected to the grace of God? The mystery is related to the Torah command on the Sacrifices, which the author of Hebrews interprets saying,

“For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (*Hebrews 10:4*). However, according to the Torah command, we are commanded to bring an offering for atonement. The mysteriousness of these commandments, comes by reason of the idea that the Lord desires mercy (grace) rather than sacrifice (*1 Samuel 15:22, Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9:13, Tehillim / Psalms 51*). Why does the Lord command us to bring a sacrifice for atonement and then state that He desires mercy rather than sacrifice? Are these words of the prophets and Yeshua diminishing the importance of the command for atonement, as opposed to obedience to the command for atonement? How are we to understand these things?

In Ephesians, the Apostle Paul draws in the idea of obtaining the inheritance (*a Torah concept*) with being filled with the Holy Spirit of God (*Bamidbar / Numbers 11:29, another Torah concept*) which are found within the covenant and the promises of God according to the Torah. Remember, within the covenant one receives the promises of salvation and redemption for His people in this present age, and being in and remaining in the covenant redemption and salvation for the world to come. The most significant aspect of this week’s Torah portion as we read in Ephesians, is the Torah’s description of the covenant, the commands, listening, obeying, keeping, and doing (*1:13*), which is coupled to the grace of God that was sworn to our fathers. Paul is taking a very Torah centric perspective to his interpretation on who Yeshua the Messiah is, his intent, purpose, and accomplishments according to the introduction to the book of Ephesians.

Note that this context of listening, obeying, keeping, and doing, is coupled to Paul’s statements on inheritance, the gospel message of salvation, the sacrifice, and atonement. Paul also spoke of these things in the opening verses in Romans which says the following:

Romans 1:1-6

1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 1:2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 1:3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 1:4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

1:5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake, 1:6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; (NASB)

In Paul's opening lines to the book of Romans, he speaks of the gospel of God. The Gospel he refers to he says is from the prophets. Note that Moshe is considered according to Scripture as being among the prophets. So Paul's statement to the Romans opens with a reference to the Torah, and including all of the Tanach. It is also important to note Paul's words to the Romans, saying that in the Messiah Yeshua, we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the "*obedience to the faith*" for His name's sake. This again draws in this context of listening, obeying, keeping, and doing, that is coupled to Paul's statements on inheritance, the "*gospel*" message of grace, salvation, the sacrifice, and atonement.

An example of this may be found in Parashat Ki Tavo (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8*) meaning "*when you come*" (כִּי-תָבוֹא) "26:1 *When you come into the land that the Lord God has given you as an inheritance ...*" (NASB). In Parashat Ki Tavo, Moshe lists the blessing that follows the one who listens and obeys (הַשְׁמָעִים וְהַשְׁמָרִים) God's Word, and the curse that follows when one chooses not to listen and obey. *Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:1* states וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת "now it comes to be that you listen hearing the voice of the Lord God to keep and to do ..." The phrase שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָע is translated as "*diligently obey*" according to the NASB. Both of these words are taken from the root word שָׁמַע meaning "*to listen/hear.*" The first word שָׁמוּעַ is a 3rd—ע Qal noun meaning "*to hear or to listen*" and תִּשְׁמָע is written in the imperfect Qal second person masculine singular form denoting a past action that is in progress but not completed at the time in question. This Hebrew phrase is translated into English as "*to hear listening,*" where the NASB translates as to "*diligently obey*" the Lord your God. It is interesting that, the verse says "*if you listen to the voice of the Lord your God*" (וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ) וְהָיָה אִם-שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָע בְּקוֹל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת in Hebrew, the imperfect form תִּשְׁמָע indicates that listening is an ongoing process. This indicates the process of listening (hearing) and obeying God's voice is an ongoing life long

process. A parallel is drawn within the sentence on “*listening or hearing the voice of the Lord God*” to the words “*to keep*” (לְשָׁמֵר) and “*to do*” (לַעֲשׂוֹת) what God has commanded. This is how Paul is drawing in the context of hearing, continuing to listen, obeying, keeping, and doing, that is coupled to the covenant inheritance, the “*gospel*” message of grace, salvation, the sacrifice, and atonement.

What we find here in the Hebrew translation of the Apostolic Writings, is the connection between the grace of God, Yeshua the Messiah, and the Torah, God’s way of life for His people. Note also how Moshe says “*when you come*” (כי-תבוא, Ki Tavo) into the inheritance whereas Paul says “*we have obtained an inheritance*” (*Ephesians 1:11*). We are being given this “*before and after*” picture of who we are supposed to be, how we are supposed to live, and the reasons why these things are true. The point that we can take from these texts is that the grace of God is not something new that started only in the Apostolic Writings (NT). According to the Scriptures, throughout history, the Lord has offered His grace to His people because He is a merciful and loving God! Halelluia!

Because of God’s mercy, Moshe reiterates saying in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9*:

Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9

7:9 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, He is God; the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy (grace, וְהֵן־וְהָסֵד) with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations; וַיִּדְעֶתָּ כִּי־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים; הָאֵל הַנִּצָּאֵן שֹׁמֵר הַבְּרִית וְהַחֲסֵד לְאַהֲבָיו וְלִשְׁמֹרֵי מִצְוֹתָיו [מִצְוֹתָיו] לְאַלְפֵי דוֹר:

In the opening verses to Parashat Ekev, it is important note how the Scriptures say the Lord keeps His covenant and grace with those who love Him and His commandments to a thousand generations. The rabbis have some to say concerning the generations who love the Lord and obey his commands.

Rashbam on Exodus

וְעוֹשָׂה חֶסֶד לְאַלְפֵי דוֹר, to the third and fourth generation,

fifth, tenth, hundredth and thousandth. The term אלפים mentioned here is equivalent to the אלף דור, 1000 generations mentioned in the parallel version of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 7:9. The two verses need not be a contradiction to one another according to the simple meaning of the text. Here the Torah mentions children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. All “children” are part of the same generation. All grandchildren are the same but second generation. The children after the 1000th generation are referred to as אלפים, or “the plural mode of one thousand.” In Deuteronomy, where children and grandchildren have not even been mentioned, and no mention is made of third and fourth generations, only the final generation to whom G’d extends such love is mentioned. Hence it is natural that this “final” generation qualifying for this loving care by G’d is called אלף דור, i.e. this generation being the children of the 1000th generation. In other words, both verses speak about the same generation being the last generation enjoying this love of G’d for something their originators so long ago did which pleased G’d.

Daat Zkenim on Exodus

נוצר חסד לאלפים, “extending kindness to a thousand generations;” G’d undertakes to extend kindness to the descendants of the good and righteous father...

Or HaChaim on Genesis

נוצר חסד לאלפים, “extending kindness to a thousand generations;” G’d undertakes to extend kindness to the descendants of the good and righteous father...

Shelah, Mishpatim, Torah Ohr

נוצר חסד לאלפים, “extending kindness to a thousand generations;” G’d undertakes to extend kindness to the descendants of the good and righteous father...Ein Yaakov (Glick Edition): נוצר חסד לאלפים, “extending kindness to a

thousand generations;” G’d undertakes to extend kindness to the descendants of the good and righteous father... etc.

Notice how Rambam states, *Here the Torah mentions children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. All “children” are part of the same generation. All grandchildren are the same but second generation. The children after the 1000th generation are referred to as אלפים, or “the plural mode of one thousand.” In Deuteronomy, where children and grandchildren have not even been mentioned, and no mention is made of third and fourth generations, only the final generation to whom G’d extends such love is mentioned.* The other commentators also focus upon the extending of God’s grace (kindness) to the 1000th generation. This is a very important concept. Emphasis is placed upon the generations upon which the Lord God maintains as a result of His grace and mercy. According to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 7:9*, the Lord keeps His covenant, forgiveness, and grace for a 1000 generations. An interesting point with regard to the generations, is to calculate the number of generations from the time of Adam and Eve (from creation) until the present day. Now the number of generations must be estimated due to the Torah not supplying exact dates between the creation of Adam and Eve and the present generation. However, we can roughly estimate the number of generations. A generation represents a standard age difference between the parents and children. That figure tends to be represented as 30-40 years. Based upon the biblical record, the earth is approximately 6000 years old, and so the number of generations from since the beginning of creation is between 150-200, depending upon whether a generation’s seen as 30 or 40 years, respectively. The age may also be taken as an average (35 years old), in which the number of generations is approximately 170. So the idea is that the Lord extends his grace to 1000 generations. Only approximately 170 generations have existed thus far. Why do you think the Lord made such an inflated numerical statement? The reason may be that His grace has been from the very beginning (from since creation) and that this is not a new phenomenon as some Christian commentators have suggested (e.g. dispensationalism).

The Torah portion reminds us in *Deuteronomy 7:17-18*, to remember what the Lord has done and so do not fear. Reading last week’s Torah portion, we see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:6* speaks in the future tense when it says, *“These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your*

heart,” Moshe is saying *“you are to do this in the future.”* What Moshe is tell us is to be diligent in keeping the commands by placing them upon our hearts, which also implies an assurance of the future, and of the Lord who will keep His covenant with us. According to Jeremiah 31:33, we are told the Lord will make a new covenant, and will write His Torah upon our hearts. He says, *“I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it” (Jeremiah 31:33).* This means the Lord God will actually change our nature, circumcising our hearts for the purpose of removing from us the waywardness of our Yetzer Hara (the evil inclination). Paul speaks of this transformation as *“the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).* Paul also states in *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (NASB)* Paul points to our lives as evidence of the new covenant where all of these things happen as a fulfillment of the promises of the covenant. The Holy Spirit is responsible for writing the commandments of God upon our hearts. The important point of this week’s Torah Portion is how Moshe explains the Lord God will keep the covenant (וְשָׁמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת-הַבְּרִית), because of the grace (הַחֶסֶד) that He swore to our fathers and that the Lord will bless the people in the land if they remain faithful to Him (7:12-16). The Scriptures show us the benefit of living for the Lord and walking in His ways. We are to actively be in the process of seeking the Lord in heaven to live in the way He wants us to live, and for help, in the Messiah, to overcome sin in our lives. He is faithful, and by His eternal grace, we can be assured that He will help us. What a glorious God we serve!

