

## Walking in the Testimonies

This weeks reading from **Parsahat Bechukotai** (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3-27:34*) is the last portion of scriptures from the Book of Leviticus. The parashah begins with God stating to keep His Mitzvot (Commandments) so that the rains will come and the land will produce its fruit in its seasons (26:3-5). Walking in God's ways will bring peace in the land, remove the harmful beasts, and no sword will pass through the land (26:6). The scriptures say that when we obey God's commands our enemies will run and fall before us 26:7 *'But you will chase your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword; 26:8 five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword. (NASB)* and God will make His dwelling among us (26:11). On the other hand, if the we fail to keep His commandments and reject His statutes (26:14-15) the Lord will set his face against the us so we will fall before our enemies and will flea even when no one is pursuing us (26:17). These things will be brought upon the people so they turn from their wicked ways and obey the Lord (26:18). If the people continue to reject the Lord he will cause the plague to *"strike them seven times because of their sins"* (26:21) and if they continue in hostility against the Lord it is repeated *"I will strike you, also I seven times because of your sins."* Continuing in the sin of hostility against the Lord results in the increase in punishment, the people will consume the flesh of their own children (26:29), the Lord will lay waste to the cities (26:31), and scatter the people among the nations (26:33). When these things happen then the land will truly enjoy its Sabbaths (26:35). The people who remain in the land will have great weakness of heart (26:36) and they will stumble and flea even though nobody is pursuing them and their enemies will consume them (26:37-38). However, if the people repent the Lord will remember His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do you think these things apply to us today?

### ספר ויקרא פרק כו

א לא-תעשו לָכֶם אֱלִילִם וּפְסֵלִם וִמַּצֵּבָה לֹא-תִקְיְמוּ לָכֶם וְאֶבֶן מִשְׁפָּת לֹא תִתְּנוּ בְּאַרְצְכֶם לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת עָלֶיהָ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ב אֶת-שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִירָאוּ אֲנִי יְהוָה: פ פ [פרשת בחקותי] ג אִם-בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלְכוּ וְאֶת-מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: ד וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמִיכֶם בְּעֵתָם וְנָתַתִּי נָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָה וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פְּרִי: ה וְהָשִׁיג לָכֶם דִּישׁ אֶת-בָּצִיר וּבָצִיר יִשָּׂא אֶת-זֶרַע וְאָכְלֹתֶם לְהַמְכֶם לְשֹׂבַע וַיִּשְׂבַּתֶּם לְבָטָח בְּאַרְצְכֶם:

### Vayikra / Leviticus 26:1-5

26:1 *'You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the Lord your God. 26:2 'You shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary; I am the Lord. 26:3 'If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, 26:4 then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit. 26:5 'Indeed, your threshing will last for you until grape gathering, and grape gathering will last until sowing time. You will thus eat your food to the full and live securely in your land. (NASB)*

This week's reading is interesting because the opening verse of the Torah portion begins with the statement *"if you walk in My statutes and keep My commands so as to carry them out..."* This is interesting because we are told who owns the statutes and the commandments. Ownership of the *"statutes"* (בְּחֻקֹּתַי) and the *"commandments"* (מִצְוֹתַי) is the Lord and not man. Again, this statement in *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3* implies that the statutes and commands in the Torah are given by God to His people, those who trust and believe in Him. This idea is born out of the natural progression of the Torah's narrative, that God delivered a mixed multitude and brought a mixed multitude of people before the mountain of Sinai and gave them His Torah to live by. Studying the *"mixed multitude"* whom God delivered from Egypt provides us with a foreshadow of what our Father in Heaven has planned from the beginning, that both Jew and non-Jew (Gentile) are grafted into one family of God (*Galatians 3:28*). The Scriptures state that God sanctifies both the Jew and non-Jew in the same way, He saves us in the Messiah Yeshua by faith in the same way, and the Lord wants us to live and walk before Him in the same way, in the way that brings glory to His name. The rabbis in Midrash Tehillim Vayikra, Parashat 35, Part 1 (מדרש רבה ויקרא פרשה לה סימן א) point out this fact and the importance of these words in the Torah saying the following.

***Midrash Rabbah Vayikra, Parshah 35, Part 1***

*"If you walk in My statutes (Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3). This bears on the text, I considered my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies (Tehillim / Psalms 119). David said, Sovereign of the Universe. Every day I used to plan and decided that I would go to a particular dwelling house, but my feet always brought me to Synagogues and Houses of Study. Hence it is written, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies..."*

א אם בחקותי תלכו ה"ד (תהלים קיט) חשבתי דרכי ואשיבה רגלי אל  
עדותיך אמר דוד רבש"ע בכל יום ויום הייתי מחשב ואומר למקום פלוני  
ולבית דירה פלונית אני הולך והיו רגלי מביאות אותי לבתי כנסיות ולב-  
תי מדרשות ה"ד ואשיבה רגלי אל עדותיך

The midrash references *Vayikra / Leviticus 26:3* commenting on *"if you walk in My statutes,"* and draws a parallel to David's words in *Tehillim / Psalms 119*. David says he considered his ways and turned his feet unto the testimonies of God.

***Tehillim / Psalms 119:57-66***

*119:57 The Lord is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words.  
119:58 I sought Your favor with all my heart; Be gracious to me according to Your word. 119:59 I considered my ways And turned my feet to Your testimonies. 119:60 I hastened and did not delay To keep Your commandments. 119:61 The cords of the wicked have encircled me, But I have not forgotten Your law. 119:62 At midnight I shall rise*

*to give thanks to You Because of Your righteous ordinances. 119:63 I am a companion of all those who fear You, And of those who keep Your precepts. 119:64 The earth is full of Your lovingkindness, O Lord; Teach me Your statutes. 119:65 You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word. 119:66 Teach me good discernment and knowledge, For I believe in Your commandments. (NASB)*

According to the Psalm, David considered his ways and turned his feet unto the testimonies of God. What does it mean to turn one's feet to the testimonies of God? What are God's testimonies? What is a testimony? We all know what it means to give our testimony which means to speak of how God has worked in our lives, how one got saved (came to faith in Yeshua the Messiah), etc. But what does it mean to turn our feet to a testimony, the testimony of God? According to the Englishman's dictionary, the word "*Testimony*" is the act of giving evidence in judicial proceedings in a court of Law. In the biblical context, the testimonies of God, the Scriptures bear witness or evidence of what the Lord has done for His people. Thus, the turning of one's feet to the testimonies of God, is the process of becoming a living testimony of God working in one's life. A few biblical examples on the use of the word "testimony:"

1. The Lord instructed Moshe to construct the Ark of the Testimony, which was God's provision of a structure for worship and drawing near to Him. (*Ex 25:16-22, Acts 7:44*)
2. According to the Scriptures, it is possible to lie or to bear false testimony.
3. We read of the testimonies of Abraham's faith in the stories of the Torah which bear witness of his life of faith. His actions in faith are recorded and we read of them in the Torah.
4. We have a powerful testimony in Yeshua the Messiah where our testimony itself is prophetic in nature (*Revelation 19:10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." NASB*)
5. The Apostle John speaks of God giving His testimony concerning His son. (*1 John 5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. NASB*)

When the rabbis speak of turning one's feet toward the testimonies of God, they are speaking of drawing near and obeying God's word. For example, are we walking in the

way the Lord wants us to walk for the purpose of bearing the testimony of God or of Yeshua the Messiah? Are we taking the time in our lives to ponder the path of our feet? Do our daily and weekly routines show a purpose which is centered in Yeshua the Messiah? In the Apostolic Scriptures Paul tells the Corinthians in *2 Corinthians 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you unless indeed you fail the test?* (NASB) The prophets tell us in *Haggai 1:5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Consider your ways!* (NASB) and David says to commune with our heart (*Tehillim / Psalms 4:4*) to see whether our ways are righteous before Him. Many today however are too busy with life to stop and think soberly about their lives. Entertainment is the preferred activity which, if we think about it, is designed to cease all thinking. Instead of having quiet time to reflect on one's life, radio, television, cell phones and mobile devices take up the spare time. The Scriptures speak of the wicked that *"God is not in all his thoughts"* (*Tehillim / Psalms 10:4*). Might you be characterized in one way or another in that way? King David said to his son Solomon the following:

***1 Kings 2:1-4***

*2:1 As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2:2 'I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. 2:3 'Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, 2:4 so that the Lord may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'* (NASB)

David says *"Be a man"* and keep the charge of the Lord your God (וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת-מִצְוֹת ה' | לְלַכֵּת בְּדַרְכָיו) to walk in His ways (וְהָיָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) to keep His statutes (לְשָׁמֹר חֻקָּיו) His commandments (מִצְוֹתָיו) His judgments (וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו) and His testimonies (וְעֵדוּתָיו) that are written in the Torah of Moshe (בְּתוֹרַת מֹשֶׁה). The reason is so that he will succeed in all he does. It is interesting to note the pronominal suffixes all indicate that these ways, statutes, commands, judgments, and testimonies belong to the Lord. We hear alot today regarding being a disciple (talmid) of Yeshua. In order to do this we need to be students (Talmidim) of God's Word and then go and do likewise. It is important to note that there is more to a talmid than simply being a student. A student today wants to know what the teacher knows for the grade, to complete the class or the degree or even to do so out of respect for the teacher. A talmid on the other hand wants to be like the teacher and even to become what the teacher is. Therefore, within the biblical context, the student was passionately devoted to his rabbi and noted everything he did or said. He walked in the way He did in every aspect. The rabbi-talmid relationship was a very intense and personal system of education. Note how this is the relationship we are called



to have in Yeshua the Messiah! We are told to *“abide”* in Christ (see *John 15*). Now this rabbi-talmid relationship was very intense and the rabbis of the first century were looking for the smartest and the brightest of students. As a result, when a student went to a rabbi and asked to be his Talmid (Disciple) the rabbi would test him and ask him a series of questions to test his knowledge and understanding of the Torah and the prophets and the writings, in addition to the Mishnah and Talmud (interpretations of the rabbis). The rabbi would quickly discover whether the person was exceptional and worthy to be his talmid. As the rabbi lived and taught his understanding of the Scripture his students (talmidim) listened and watched and imitated him so as to become like him. Eventually they would become teachers passing on a similar lifestyle to their own talmidim. In this process of oral testing, the rabbi would ask the student *“do you have an ear to hear?”* The meaning was *“do you have understanding?”* Do you know Torah, can you interpret the Tanach, do you know Mishnah, do you know Talmud (the interpretations of the rabbis)? Note something Yeshua asked his disciples in *Matthew 15:16*, he asked *“Are you still so dull?”* Having been with Yeshua for a period of time he expected them to have understanding of the parable he taught. They were walking in his ways and discussing the parable, a colloquial teaching technique of the rabbis in their day. With this background information, can you imagine what it would have been like for a person who was not exceptional to have been invited by a rabbi to follow him? When Yeshua went to each of his disciples, he said to them *“follow me”* and they immediately got up, left all that they had and followed him. This was an act of great honor to follow after a brilliant rabbi. They were given an opportunity to study at the feet of Yeshua the Messiah.

Generally speaking, to follow in the footsteps of the Messiah, having studied the Torah’s statutes and commands, it quickly becomes apparent that in the commands we take on the character of God, to be loving, merciful, kind, long-suffering, and forgiving towards others. Directing our ways to the testimonies of God implies doing and observing which testifies of having the purpose of mind that is centered upon the Lord and Yeshua the Messiah. Turning ones feet towards the testimonies of God involves acting wisely to live in the manner in which the Lord has instructed us. The commandments in one aspect or another reveal an essential element of God’s character. The commandments are the very will and wisdom of God. It is interesting to note that Yeshua said in *Luke 22:42* *“Not My will, but Yours be done.”* He also said in *John 8:28* *“I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”* In addition to this He says in *John 15:10* *“I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”* These verses are interesting because by turning our feet to the testimonies of God, the commandments in one way or another teach us about Christ’s behavior. There is a direct relationship between the commandments and the person of the Messiah, because the commandments are a direct revelation from God and they speak of living a godly life. It is interesting that Yeshua says to Philip in *John 14:9* *“He who has seen me, has seen the Father,”* therefore to see a commandment performed is to see something of God. When Christ came to us, He came as the Holy One of God (*John 6:69, Mark 1:24*) and His holiness is characterized by the way he walked and who he was and is. Therefore, we should not be afraid of the commandments but we should embrace them in Yeshua the Messiah for the Glory of our Father in Heaven! Halelluia!

