

פרשת ראה Parashat Re'eh

Devarim / Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17, Isaiah 54:11-55:5
John 16:1-17:26

Aiming toward the Goal of Our High Calling

א אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּצְוֹת
שֶׁשָּׂאתָ אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיךָ לְךָ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ
כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל-הָאֲדָמָה: ב אַבֵּד תֵּאַבְדוּן אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּקְדָּשִׁים
אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ-שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל-הַהָרִים הַרְּ-
מִים וְעַל-הַגְּבֻעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רֵעֵן: ג וְנִתְּצוּם אֶת-מִזְבְּחֵיהֶם וְשִׁבְרֵתֶם אֶת-
מִצְבֹּתֵיהֶם וְאֲשִׁרֵיהֶם תִּשְׂרֹפוּן בְּאֵשׁ וּפְסִילֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶם תִּגְדְּעוּן וְאִבַּדְתֶּם אֶת-שְׁמֵם
מִן-הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא: ד לֹא-תַעֲשׂוּן כֵּן לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: ה כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שְׁבִטֵיכֶם לְשׂוֹם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לְשַׁכְּנוֹ תִדְרְשׁוּ
וּבֵאתָ שָׁמָּה: 12:1 *‘These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. 12:2 ‘You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 12:3 ‘You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 12:4 ‘You shall not act like this toward the Lord your God. 12:5 ‘But you shall seek the LORD at the place which*

the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. (NASB) Notice how the Chukim (חֻקִּים) and Mishpatim (מִשְׁפָּטִים) are connected to both Haaretz (אֶרֶץ) and Haadamah (אֲדָמָה). The parallel of obedience to the Land of Israel and the word is very significant because these Scriptures are saying that obeying Torah will cause life to go well with us, not just in Eretz Yisrael, but also in all the World! Notice how this is the interpretation according to the prophet *Ezekiel 36:27* *‘I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 36:28* *‘You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God. (NASB)* This point cannot be stressed enough, the Torah is designed to point or direct our lives toward the goal of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is a Hebraic way of saying sin is to miss the mark. So when we are not following the Torah, we are not aiming toward the goal of the high calling we have been given, we are missing the mark. As a result, we understand and accept the Torah as the Father’s loving instructions and directions to be followed motivated by our love and respect for the God of Israel. Very often one of the first things Christians will say when we speak of the Torah not being abolished, is *“you need to read the book of Galatians!”* In spite of the multitude of scriptures in the *“New Testament”* which demonstrate we should keep HaShem’s Torah, many understand Paul’s letter to Galatians to state otherwise. A careful study of Galatians reveals there is not a single verse in the book of Galatians or anywhere in the scripture that would tell us the law has been abolished. Rather, much to the contrary! The book of Galatians actually establishes a proof text that while we are not saved by our observance of the Torah, true believers will make a sincere effort to walk in its precepts. Based upon these Scriptures that speak of life going well with those who obey God’s Word by faith, we believe that God’s commands are for our own good. The Lord loves us and wants to help us, and not to give us unnecessary burdens. As our Creator, he has the wisdom to know how we should live, what works best, and what causes the most joy for the duration of our lives. We have to trust Him in His will for our lives and that his perspective is much better than ours. Our obedience expresses faith in his wisdom and love. Obedience is what

he created us for, (*Ephesians 2:10*) and life goes better if we are in tune with the way we were made. Note how the Torah provides for us the hope of a future, giving us a future expectation of blessing, and of the Messiah who will usher in that blessing. If there is no future life, then our faith would be foolish (*1 Corinthians 15:14-18*). Yeshua promised that his disciples would find eternal life which is worth far more than anything they might have to give up in this age (*Mark 10:29-30*). Everyone who is saved will have the joy of knowing the Lord God of Israel forever, but there are also rewards in this life in addition to eternal joy. Yeshua encouraged his disciples to “*store up for yourselves treasures in heaven*” (*Matthew 6:19-21*). The Lord God rewards those who seek him (*Hebrews 11:6*) and Paul wrote saying, “*The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does*” (*Ephesians 6:8*). This is not speaking of salvation only, but of rewards in addition to salvation. These rewards are not speaking of the prosperity gospel that is taught today. Paul speaks of the life of a believer and judgment as a fire that tests the quality of every person’s work and faith. “*If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward*” (*1 Corinthians 3:14*) and if it is burned up, he will lose it, but he will still be saved (*3:15*). Reward however is not the only reason we work, for we are children of the King, not employees who do only what we get paid for. We obey by reason of our love for Him. This love is not only for our Father in heaven, but also for the people around us, because they will be better off if we obey His instruction than if we do not. God’s instructions are sensible, not arbitrary rules and they are meant to help people get along with one another. This is how the Torah relates to the New Covenant, repentance, and seeking the Lord in heaven. In addition, this also is why we are not to serve the Lord God the way the nations serve their gods or choosing to do what we think is right in our own eyes. We are to use God’s Word as our standard for righteousness, justice, and truth, so we do not stray from the ways of the Lord. Let’s discuss these things further in this week’s Torah portion.

This week we are looking at *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1-8*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1-18

12:1 ‘These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord,



the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. 12:2 'You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. 12:3 'You shall tear down their altars and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. 12:4 'You shall not act like this toward the Lord your God. 12:5 'But you shall seek the LORD at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. 12:6 'There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. 12:7 'There also you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you. 12:8 'You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; 12:9 for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. 12:10 'When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you so that you live in security, 12:11 then it shall come about that the place in which the Lord your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the Lord. 12:12 'And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you. 12:13 'Be careful that you do

not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see, 12:14 but in the place which the Lord chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you. 12:15 'However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer. 12:16 'Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water. 12:17 'You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. 12:18 'But you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all your undertakings. (NASB)

א אלה החקים והמשפטים אשר נתן יהוה אלהי אבותיך לך לרשתה כל הימים תשמרון לעשות בארץ אשר נתן יהוה אלהי אבותיך לך לרשתה כל הימים: 12:1 'These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. (NASB) This verse is a central tenant of the Torah saying that we are to follow the statutes and judgments of God all the days of our lives. The interpretation is the Torah directs our lives toward the kingdom of God. (*Ezekiel 36:27*) This is why Yeshua taught to seek first the kingdom of God in *Matthew 6:33*. For some the meaning of seeking first the kingdom of God is straight forward, but is this as simple as most believe? The idea is to seek the things that are inherent in the kingdom of God because they are of greater value than all the worlds riches. We are told to seek the things of God as a priority over the things of the world. This Torah mandate to observe carefully the statutes and judgements calls us to have a different attitude toward the

things of God, to make His ways a priority in our lives living in obedience to Him and sharing the good news of the kingdom to everyone. The question then is *“how do we know if we are seeking God’s kingdom first?”* This is why the Torah mandates keeping the statutes and judgments for every person, to help us to understand what it means to seek first the kingdom. Some questions we may ask ourselves, *“Where do I primarily spend my energies? Is all my time and money spent on goods and activities that will perish, or in the services of God, the results of which live on for eternity?”* Believers who have learned to truly put the Lord first in their lives may rest in the knowledge that *“...and all these things will be given to you as well.”* These things are found in His promises to provide for His people in supply and need (*Philippians 4:19*). The point is that we do not seek the kingdom of God for wealth. The Lord knows our needs. He also does not promise what the prosperity gospel teachers claim of great wealth and riches. Note what Sforno states concerning *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1*.

Sforno on Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1 Part 1

אלה החוקים והמשפטים אשר תשמרון וגו' לר שתה כל הימים. ומכלל המצות האלה הם שצריך שתשמרו אותן אשר בקיומן תירשו הארץ כל הימים שתאבדו מקומות כל ע'ג ושלא תעשו כמותם לאל ית' להקריב לפניו בכל מקום ושיהי' לכם מקום מיוחד להקריב לפניו אותו המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלהיכם מכל שבטיכם: אלה החקים והמשפטים *observance of all the commandments listed forthwith is, among other things, a condition to ensure that you will remain ancestral owners of this land for all time. כל הימים, during all the time when you are busy wiping out locations dedicated to idolatry and you will not yourselves worship idols by becoming like them by offering your sacrifices wherever it pleases you.*

Sforno points out obeying God’s word is to destroy the locations of pagan worship. He connects this to not becoming like the nations, making sacrifices wherever it pleases us. Note how the sacrifice is not

simply a matter of blood letting (animal sacrifices), but also encompasses the sacrifice of our lives. This then may be interpreted as we are not to make sacrifices based upon our whim, but to do so according to God's Word. The Lord promised to provide for His people, but He also looks for sacrifices demonstrating our love for Him. Note how the Lord loved both Job and Elijah, and He allowed Satan to attack Job. In the Tanach, the Lord allowed Jezebel to break the spirit of the prophet Elijah (see *Job 1-2 and 1 Kings 18-19*). In both cases, the “*negative*” aspects of the “*wiles of the enemy*” run counter to the heresy of the “*prosperity*” gospel. This false teaching has the message “*God wants you to be rich!*” But this philosophy is not the counsel we receive in the Scriptures, and this is not the meaning of the Torah command, אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיךָ לָּךְ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל-הָאֲדָמָה: 12:1 *These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. (NASB)* Yeshua taught that we are to focus our attention upon the things of God's kingdom.

The Talmud Bavli has the following to say concerning *Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:1*.

Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 37a:4

The Gemara asks: From where are these matters derived? The Gemara answers: This is as the Sages taught in a baraita: The verse states: “These are the statutes and the ordinances that you shall observe to do in the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth” (Deuteronomy 12:1). This verse is interpreted as follows: The phrase “these are the statutes” means that these are the expositions that the Sages learn from verses. With regard to the phrase “and the ordinances,” these are monetary laws. With regard to “that you shall observe,” this is referring to the study of matters that must be observed for one to perform them. And as for the phrase “to do,” this is referring to action, the actual performance of mitzvot.



Notice how the rabbis in the Talmud state these commands are given in order to possess the land all the days we live. They divide the verse into categories saying, one part speaks of what the sages have learned, the other speaks to our studying, and the third part speaks to our taking action to live out God’s Word.

The Talmud continues saying the following,

Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 37a:5

The baraita continues: From the phrase “in the land [ba’aretz],” one might have thought that all mitzvot apply only in Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, the verse also states “all the days that you live upon the earth,” i.e., wherever you live. Furthermore, if the Merciful One had written only the phrase “all the days,” one might have thought that all mitzvot should apply both in Eretz Yisrael and outside of Eretz Yisrael. Therefore, the verse also states “in the land.”

The point is the commands are not meant just for Eretz Yisrael. The rabbis in the Talmud point this out based upon this verse, אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְרוּן לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם לְךָ לְרִשְׁתָּהּ כָּל-הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל-הָאֲדָמָה: 12:1 *‘These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. (NASB)* The reason the verse is written אֵלֶּה הַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר-אַתֶּם חַיִּים עַל-הָאֲדָמָה is that these commands are for us who live throughout the earth. It is for all peoples, and not just for a specific place or time.

What we are learning here today, is that if we want the best for our families, then we ought to live by God’s Torah. The reason these things are true, is the Torah lays down a system of holidays that remind us throughout the year of the Lord and the great love that He has for us. The Torah is a health manual, both spiritually and physically. The Torah is a marriage manual, how to treat one another and how to show our love for one another. The Torah describes how we should raise our family (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 4-10*). The Torah describes how

we are to treat our friends, strangers, and even our enemies. The Torah is a business manual (having just scales), and teaches us extensively about times of war. We are given instruction on how to fear and respect the Lord, how to take care of ourselves, personal hygiene and food, and how we relate to our spouses, children, servants, and workers. There are too many verses to reference here from the Torah to provide all of the examples, because from cover to cover the five books of Moshe details all of these things. Yeshua said the two most important commands, Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself. He focused upon these three areas of the Torah and if we succeed in them we have fulfilled the Torah (lived it). Note how we speak a lot about God's Torah, but what we are saying is God's Word is involved in every aspect of our lives, for good, for life, for joy, and for peace.

Paul's writings further clarify what Yeshua taught. Paul reinforces a central tenant of the Torah in the covenant relationship, that a spouse is bound to the other spouse by the covenant of blood until one of them dies, then the marriage covenant is no longer in place. Similarly, a person dies to sin as being in Yeshua the Messiah, and the new master (Yeshua) takes over and we live according to the Spirit. The point is that every person who has the expectation of eternal life in the Kingdom of God, and wants to enjoy a good, healthy and prosperous life now, ought to do their best to follow the Creator's instructions. The bottom line is, the more of the Torah we succeed to keep, the better our life will be and the better life will be for every one around us. It is also only with God's help that we are able to do as He wants, to walk according to the Spirit. The commands were given to us in order to humble our lives for the glory of God. Instead of arrogantly declaring that we are "*not under the law, but under grace,*" which is an insult to the grace and goodness of God in His Word, we are to humble our lives, and to seek first His kingdom. He is looking for His sons and daughters to have the correct heart attitude towards His Torah, and like King David, thank Him and praise Him for giving us His perfect instructions, and to do the best we can to live by them. And when we fail, we get back up, repent, and continue to walk in the Spirit with the help of the Lord.



