

Parashat Ki Tetzei / פרשת כי-תצא

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The Torah shows us not only how to relate to God, but also how to relate to our neighbors.

This Weeks Reading List:

Torah: Deut 21:10-25:19

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-54:10

B'rit HaChadashah: Mt 5:27-30 1 Cor 5:1-5

Reading through this week's Parsha, all I can think of is "mitzvot, mitzvot, and more mitzvot." Parashat Ki Tetzei is loaded with mitzvot (commands). In the previous two parsha (Re'ey and Shoftim) we saw there was a focus upon creating a national center for worship as well as God's desire to make Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) an Am Kedosh (holy people or holy nation). Here in Parashat Ki-Tetzei the focus shifts from mitzvot relating to the nation as a whole to mitzvot which relates to the individual. The mitzvot in Parashat Ki-Tetzei covers a wide range of topics as can be seen in the Mitzvot Summary below.

Mitzvot Summary

1. Laws relating to prisoner of war (21:10-15)
2. Inheritance to the first born (21:15-17)
3. Rebellious children (21:18-21)
4. Capital punishment by hanging on a tree (21:22-23)
5. Take care of your neighbors things (ox, sheep, coat, etc) (22:1-4)
6. Build a wall around one's roof to prevent someone from falling off (22:8)
7. Planting seed (22:9)
8. Don't work two different animals side by side (22:10)
9. Multi-threaded clothing (22:11)
10. Make tzitzit for your clothing (12:12)
11. Laws on Divorce (22:13-21; 24:1-4)
12. Laws on Adultery (22:22)
13. Laws on Fornication (22:23-29)
14. Laws on incest (22:30)
15. Damaged private parts and the beit hamikdash (the Holy Temple in Jerusalem) (23:1-3)
16. Prohibition against taking interest (23:20-21)
17. Stealing from Adonai by neglecting one's vow (23:22)

18. Stealing produce from your neighbor's field (23:25-26)
19. Prohibition of divorcee to remarry his remarried wife preventing a legal affair (24:4)
20. Punishment by flogging limited to 40 strokes (25:2-3)
21. Correct and fair weights of measure for merchants (25:14-16)

Here I have listed 21 different mitzvot and I am sure I could find a few more there in Parashat Ki-Tetzei if I looked really hard. However, while reading through this week's parsha point number 5 really spoke to me. Specifically Deut. 22:1-4 which talks about taking care of your neighbors things (having compassion upon your neighbor).

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

22:1 "You are not to watch your brother's ox or sheep straying and behave as if you hadn't seen it; you must bring them back to your brother. 22:2 If your brother is not close by, or you don't know who the owner is, you are to bring it home to your house; and it will remain with you until your brother asks for it; then you are to give it back to him. 22:3 You are to do the same with his donkey, his coat or anything else of your brother's that he loses. If you find something he lost, you must not ignore it. ! 22:4 "If you see your brother's donkey or ox collapsed on the road, you may not behave as if you hadn't seen it; you must help him get them up on their feet again. (CJB)

Our relationship with God begins with understanding how God wants us to relate to Him. The Torah explains to us how we not only relate to God but also how we should relate to our neighbors (friends, family, and the stranger). As you know the Torah contains obligations ... obligations we are to fulfill to the Lord and here in Parashat Ki-Tetzei we find our obligation to our neighbor and our neighbor's property. In God's instruction on being a holy nation he instructs the individual to take care of his neighbor's property as if it were his own. Taking care of our neighbor's property is to have compassion on our neighbor, enough compassion to help him/her out when he/she needs help.

I don't know about you but for me this can be a difficult thing. Either, (i) I think I do not have time because of my busy schedule, or (ii) do not desire to help because of my own selfishness. I find in my own life it is easier to take (i.e. take advantage of) than to give (i.e. or take care of) someone else's things. This is definitely a point the Lord is working out in my life and as time goes on the Lord is tempering me to be less selfish and more giving of my time to others.

Through the course of our interaction with others we may we do or say things which are hurtful to one another. In this case our relationships become one of restoration which is preceded by forgiveness of what has been done to us. I think this is a process that goes on and on throughout or lives not only with our loved ones at home but also with those whom we work with on a daily basis. I know what it is like to have a reluctance to forgive, I have struggled with that for years; my flesh sometimes doesn't want to forgive others. Not wanting to forgive is rooted in selfishness. If we look upon our relationship with God, during prayer we ask the Lord to forgive us of our sins, and we may even make promises to the Lord which we cannot keep. However, God in his mercy rejects our

conditions of repayment and in his own mercy and grace completely cancels the debt we owe him because of the payment which was made in the Messiah Yeshua.

As time goes on however, that experience of grace is quickly forgotten as we move on in life, demanding things of our loved ones, like money that is owed or something that we wanted and it was not given to us. We demand payment without conditions, no excuses; we want justice for what is happening to us. What we forget is we ourselves were spared from the very justice we are asking for. Learning to forgive and have mercy upon others is a process, not only does it take practice it also requires the help of God's Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul gives us some insight into these things and the importance of forgiveness.

Ephesians 4:30-5:2

4:30 Don't cause grief to God's Ruach HaKodesh, for he has stamped you as his property until the day of final redemption. 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, violent assertiveness and slander, along with all spitefulness. 4:32 Instead, be kind to each other, tender hearted; and forgive each other, just as in the Messiah God has also forgiven you. 5:1 So imitate God, as his dear children; 5:2 and live a life of love, just as also the Messiah loved us, indeed, on our behalf gave himself up as an offering, as a slaughtered sacrifice to God with a pleasing fragrance. (CJB)

We can cause God's Holy Spirit to be grieved by holding on to bitterness and unforgiveness. We have to learn to be forgiving and have mercy upon others because the Lord has shown us mercy and forgiveness. To be forgiven absolutely and unconditionally means that we have an imperative to forgive those who have hurt us absolutely and unconditionally.

Forgiveness tells someone who has offended you that he no longer owes you anything.

As a holy people it is important to see not only the forgiveness of God but also to forgive others what they have done to us. And remember, there are no conditions upon the forgiveness that resembles the forgiveness found in Yeshua HaMoshiach. So, as a holy people, let's make it our goal to take care of our friends, family, and neighbors showing them the same love, grace, mercy and forgiveness which the Lord Almighty has given us.

Heavenly Father,

Please forgive me for withholding forgiveness to others. Please grant me the willingness and ability to forgive completely and unconditionally those who have hurt me. I realize that sometimes a relationship cannot be restored, however, help me to extend forgiveness unconditionally according to your example Lord.

In Yeshua HaMoshiach's name I pray. Amen.

Be blessed in Yeshua the Messiah!

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,
“Yeshua” King Messiah for ever and ever