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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Ekev – The Problem With Prosperity

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Ekev (ay-kehv), which is Hebrew for “if [you follow],” and it goes from Deuteronomy 7:12 to Deuteronomy 11:25.

This Torah portion lists blessings for obeying God and warnings against forgetting God in times of prosperity. Israel is then told not to think that God is giving them the Promised Land because of their righteousness. Israel is reminded of the times they provoked God through their rebellion. They’re reminded of all the events surrounding the Golden Calf incident. They are then exhorted to “circumcise” their hearts and follow God’s commandments. The Parashah concludes with more promised blessings for obedience.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about the problem with prosperity.

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses spoke about the many wonderful blessings and prosperity that awaited Israel upon their entering the Promised Land. This is what he says:

Deuteronomy 8:7-10

For the Lord [YHWH] your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 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. And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord [YHWH] your God for the good land he has given you.

This sounds pretty awesome, right? Blessings, security, and prosperity. Israel is told that they will have the opportunity to make great wealth; they won’t have to worry about food or provision; they will “lack nothing.” So what’s the problem? Isn’t all of that good? Well, yes. But immediately after saying this, Israel is given a warning:

Deuteronomy 8:11-14

Take care lest you forget the Lord [YHWH] your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord [YHWH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

So the problem with comfort and prosperity is the temptation to forget about God. That's why we're explicitly commanded to "[remember the Lord \[YHWH\] your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth](#)" (Deuteronomy 8:18). There would be no need for a commandment to remember if it weren't likely that we might forget!

But why are we warned not to forget about God in times of blessing and prosperity? Wouldn't it make more sense to issue such a warning in times of hardship, poverty, and pain? While we shouldn't forget God during those times either, it's perhaps less likely that we would. What do we mean?

Well, the comfort that comes with abundance can often lead to our complacency. Because of our human nature, it's easy to take blessings for granted. But pain, loss, and hardship can't be ignored—it forces us to do something. And if we're faithful believers, it will cause us to cry out to God, to draw near to Him, and to depend on Him to give us the strength to endure.

Christian author, C.S. Lewis, once wrote:

We can rest contentedly in our sins and in our stupidities; and anyone who has watched gluttons shoveling down the most exquisite foods as if they did not know what they were eating, will admit that we can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.

-C.S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain

This is why we're explicitly commanded to remember God in the midst of prosperity—because His whispers can be difficult to hear if we aren't carefully listening.

Therefore, in times of comfort and blessing, we must make the intentional effort to "bless YHWH" for all the good He has given us. Remember Him.

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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