

“This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, ‘GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN’” (Acts 7:37).⁴⁰

Based on the prophecy delivered by Moses, and the confirmation offered by Peter and Stephen—we **must believe in and heed the message declared by the Greater Prophet**, Yeshua the Messiah—or the consequence will be eternal punishment. This might seem like a harsh word, but the author of Hebrews’ words are even more direct than those witnessed in either Deuteronomy 18:19 or Acts 3:23:

“For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES [Isaiah 26:11]. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on *the testimony of* two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.’ And again, ‘THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE’ [Deuteronomy 32:35, 36; Psalm 135:14]. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Reading this rather direct and stern admonition—born again Believers should recognize how they have the authority to not only rebuke those who have heard the knowledge of the truth and keep on sinning, **but also** those who completely turn away from the truth that the Messiah is Yeshua, the only Savior for humanity.

Brothers and sisters, you do not want to find yourself a sinner who fails to turn from bad habits, one who has known but has rejected the good news, or one who has just rejected the good news. While all of these negative predicaments are terrible—those who once professed to believe in, *but later deny*, the blood atonement of Yeshua on their behalf—are going to be punished even more seriously than those who just reject Him outright.

Have you truly believed in the words of the Messiah? Has the good news of salvation in Yeshua changed your heart, and truly enabled you to love God and neighbor like never before? If you have not experienced the supernatural power of the gospel—**now is the time to go before the Lord in prayerful repentance!** One must believe in the words of Yeshua to experience eternal life; it is not enough to only have the words of Moses.

***Ki-Teitzei* כִּי־תֵצֵא** **When you go out** **“Be Well and Prolong Your Days”**

Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19
 Isaiah 54:1-10 (or finish at 52:13)

The final stretch of the Deuteronomy Torah portions through the month of Elul to *Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah* and the Fall feasts is now upon us (2003/5753). Our reading for this week, *Ki-Teitzei*, details many commandments that will directly apply to the Israelites upon their occupation of the Promised Land. A wide variety of unique subjects, ranging from

⁴⁰ Ibid., 433.

how to deal with foreign women in the battlefields⁴¹ to admonitions about those excluded from the assembly,⁴² are covered. Reading and meditating about many of these different instructions can take Torah students to places in both spiritual reflection and Biblical examination that they may have not considered before. *Further investigation into the thoughts of different Rabbis, commentators, and scholars is often in order.* As you may begin to consider some of the writings that have dissected many of these instructions over the ages, you will discover that the amount of material is voluminous.

Many of the instructions witnessed in *Ki-Teitzei* can only make sense when read in the context of Ancient Israel within the world of the Ancient Near East. Still, some of the instructions, such as covering up one's leavings (Deuteronomy 23:13), can be followed today (even if you just go out camping in the woods). One of the most perplexing yet intriguing instructions, is seen in how those who might take the eggs of a mother bird must make the effort to shoo away the bird before taking them:

“If you happen to come upon a bird's nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days” (Deuteronomy 22:6-7).

There is certainly a level of humanitarianism seen in shooing away a mother bird before taking her eggs. But, the Torah actually instructs people to do this “so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life” (NIV).

Also witnessed in our *parashah* is instruction on how a rebellious child was to be tried and stoned to death.⁴³ Many Bible readers have no idea what to do with this material in the Scriptures, and in Jewish history there is likewise considerable discussion as to how these instructions were to legally play out in the process of jurisprudence.⁴⁴ Since the Torah is the constitution of Israel, one can easily see why observant Jewish people have debated these instructions over several millennia.

As I pondered the text of our Torah portion, and reflected upon how the Holy One desires to be intimately involved with His children, I could not get the instruction I read about the mother bird and her eggs out of my mind. It is juxtaposed between prohibitions about cross dressing⁴⁵ and the need to build a parapet on the roof of one's house.⁴⁶ Catching my attention was how the blessing of a long life is attached to this commandment, and how the same will be incurred by honoring father and mother:

“Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you” (Deuteronomy 5:16).

Comparing these two commandments (Deuteronomy 22:6-7 and 5:16), I really did not see a connection. It seems far more logically important to honor one's parents rather than showing kindness to some random, female bird. After all, God Himself had included

⁴¹ Deuteronomy 21:10-14.

⁴² Deuteronomy 23:1-11.

⁴³ Deuteronomy 21:18-23.

⁴⁴ Scherman, *Chumash*, 1047 summarizes some of the Rabbinical discussions on this passage, including the thought of there being so many prerequisites in order for a rebellious child to be executed, that the inaction of capital punishment is effectively impossible (cf. b. *Sanhedrin* 71a).

⁴⁵ Deuteronomy 22:5.

⁴⁶ Deuteronomy 22:8.

the command to honor one's parents as a part of the Decalogue—the Ten Commandments engraved in stone. The Apostle Paul further points out how the Fifth Commandment is the first commandment with a promise of blessing:

“HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise)” (Ephesians 6:2).

It is natural to ask yourself if there is any connection between honoring one's parents and showing kindness toward a female bird—both of which elicit the same blessing. Is it possible that the Lord wants His people to demonstrate kindness not just to one's fellow humans, but also to those creatures that humanity has dominion over (cf. Genesis 1:26, 28)? Comparatively speaking, honoring one's parents is obviously more significant than being kind to a bird—but perhaps in showing kindness to an animal, we will be more akin to show kindness to *actual people*?

In the late 1990s, my family and I lived on a small, three-and-a-half acre country farm in North Texas. We had some goats, sheep, a donkey, and a number of free-range chickens that roamed around the barn area. I can remember the mornings when I would be on a search for eggs. It was usually a quiet time, when I would find myself reflecting upon the mercies of the Lord and giving Him praise for our many blessings. As I recall this delightful chore, I can remember the times when I would have to shoo away the hens to look for eggs. My heart occasionally considered the thoughts of the mother hen. Even though I was glad to have the eggs, the hen was going to have to go about her business and lay another egg after I left the barn. At the time, I thought shooing the hens was simply a practical matter of moving them away so that I could more readily access the eggs. I never really thought about the blessing that I was going to receive for treating the hen with human kindness. For whatever reasons, this approach to retrieving eggs was the way that the Father intended His people to do it. It seemed to come naturally to me without any extensive instruction. But apparently, based on the words of the Lord—by extending basic human kindness to our hens—I was receiving blessings, even without my knowledge of this particular Scripture.

Remembering this past experience this week, I then turned my thoughts to the Biblical requirement to honor one's father and mother, with its commensurate blessings. I reflected upon how natural my obedience to this instruction had been over the years—and I also remembered a period of time when I had a rebellious streak in me, which consistently dishonored my parents. Thankfully, the stubbornness was short-lived! My parents' love for me prevailed, and our relationship has been wonderful for decades.

Thinking about the material seen in *Ki-Teitzei* more and more, the reality of lovingkindness kept coming to mind. After all, is love not one of the principal attributes of our Heavenly Father? Is He not constantly working to have this attribute become ingrained into the hearts, minds, and souls of His people? **Is it possible that God wants us to be as tender hearted to mere birds as He is to us?** By using the example of the mercy we might show to a brooding hen, how truly significant is it that He wants us to extend a similar amount of mercy and lovingkindness toward *the people* we interact with? Extending love toward our neighbors is the most tangible example that we are diligently obeying the Lord. Remember how Yeshua reacted when questioned about the greatest commandment in the Torah:

“One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND” [Deuteronomy 6:5]. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it,

“YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF” [Leviticus 19:18]. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).

Yeshua concludes that the entire Torah rests on the requirements for people to love God and their neighbors. If people can observe these simple commandments, then they will understand why God gave us His Law to follow. *The command to love one's neighbor is perhaps the most basic when it comes to human interaction.* Consider in tangible terms what loving one's neighbor actually involves:

“You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob *him*. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:13-18).

The requirement to love one's neighbor goes back to the foundational instructions delivered by God about separating out a unique people for His own possession (cf. Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). The Ancient Israelites were commanded to judge their neighbors fairly, and to not oppress, rob, slander, hate, bear grudges against, or take vengeance against them. Such is all summarized and made complete in the actions witnessed in the ministry of the Messiah Yeshua.

To what degree do you need to be reminded that we need to be treating a brooding hen the same way we might treat our neighbors? *If you show disrespect to animals, then it should not be surprising why you might show disrespect to human beings.* Each of us needs to heed the admonitions of Scripture, striving to have hearts and minds indwelt with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). We need to be people who can treat all of God's creatures with dignity and honor. Perhaps if we learn to extend loving kindness to the animal kingdom, then we will treat *people* properly. **If we can exhibit love to all those we encounter, then we can truly live long and blessed lives.**

***Ki-Tavo* כִּי-תָבוֹא** **When you enter in** **“A Faithful Treasured Possession”**

Deuteronomy 26:1-29:8
Isaiah 60:1-22

Ki-Tavo is frequently remembered for the lengthy lists of blessings and curses that are promised to Israel as a result of their obedience or disobedience to the Lord. In this season of repentance, which traditionally comes during the month of Elul as we approach the Fall high holidays, reflecting on such blessings and curses can be a sobering exercise. After all, God has declared many times throughout the Scriptures that Israel is a chosen people who