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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Ki Tavo – The Value of Curses?

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

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Ki Tavo, which is Hebrew for “When you enter,” and it goes from Deuteronomy 26:1 to Deuteronomy 29:8.

This Torah portion speaks of the first fruits ritual, tithes, and lists the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about the value of curses. Yes, you heard that right, curses.

Deuteronomy 28:15

But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord [YHWH] your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Throughout Deuteronomy 28, Moses lists the curses—that is, the negative consequences—that will come upon God’s people if they turn away from His commandments. Some of these curses are pretty harsh—exile, famine, disease, death, and so on.

Throughout the history of Israel, we actually see many of these curses come upon Israel as a result of their rebellion. It’s an incredibly tragic story. Israel was chosen to be a light to the nations and to bring about blessing and restoration in the world, but time and time again they fail in this calling.

For those of us who’ve read the New Testament, however, we know that man’s failure is not the end of the story. Messiah Yeshua has defeated sin and death at the cross and he has ushered in a New Creation whereby God’s people are empowered by the Holy Spirit to keep His commandments and be a light to the nations. Forgiveness and renewal are available to all who confess Yeshua as Lord.

But getting back to our topic, when reading through these curses in Deuteronomy, one might be

compelled to ask why it is necessary for God's people to be punished so harshly for their disobedience. This same question can be carried all the way back to the very first curse for disobedience in the beginning. God told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge. If they ate from the tree, they would surely die.

When God created the natural and spiritual laws of the universe, why did He allow there to be negative consequences for our actions? Why didn't He just make it so that nothing we did ever caused any harm or affected anything? While we can't give a complete answer in such a short amount of time, here are a couple of thoughts.

When we're tempted to complain about consequences, it might be worthwhile to consider the alternative. What would life be like without consequences? What would life be like if it really didn't matter what we did? Would it really be worth living?

For example, consider adultery. What if you and your spouse could literally cheat on each other all the time and it never affected your relationship? That would make your marriage utterly empty and meaningless. The very beauty and specialness of marriage is in the fact that it's an exclusive and powerful union that has been cherished, protected, and faithfully maintained. In other words, the blessings that come from marriage are only possible because of the possibility of curses that come as a result of apathy, unfaithfulness, and neglect.

Values such as responsibility, accountability, and even gratitude would be non-existent in a world without negative consequences. How would one be able to truly grow and mature without the opportunity to take responsibility, to right a wrong, or to receive forgiveness with a humble heart? There would be no sense of purpose or growth—only indifference.

If there were no consequences for our choices, goodness and morality—such as love, self-sacrifice, and charity—would be meaningless. If there were no curses for doing evil, what would be the point of striving to do good? There would be no moral difference between the life and deeds of Billy Graham and that of Adolf Hitler. Nothing would matter.

Nobody would want to live in such a world. Thankfully, that is not the world God created. Values like love, faithfulness, goodness, and justice are true. The reason we fight against injustice and oppression is that we know it matters. The reason we love and live is that our choices really do have significance and purpose. So, as we can see, there is value in blessing and curses. If it weren't for the reality of such consequences, this life would simply have no meaning.

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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