

Parashat Ki Teizei כִּי תֵצֵא

Torah: Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1–10

The Purpose of the Mitzvot

General Overview

The parasha before us is one of the “busiest” in the Torah. It is jam-packed with commandments (mitzvot), precepts, statutes, and judgements. Depending upon how they are divided, there are at least 31 different topics. Maimonides counted 72 positive and negative commands in this parasha. That is an abundance of material to be analyzed.

Because of the enormous amount of topics found in *Ki Teitzei*, we have decided not to give a verse-by-verse analysis or even attempt to present an outline for this parasha. Instead, our approach will be more theoretical. We will look at some of the purposes of the Torah as a whole and see how these are illustrated by the mitzvot in this parasha. In doing so, we will discover that once we can determine the purposes for Torah, then it will be easier to use correct hermeneutical principles to understand the specific instructions. By studying this parasha in such a way, we can see that God has a reason for *all* the mitzvot. Once we understand this portion, we will be able to apply the same principles of interpretation to the rest of the Torah.

We should say, at the beginning that we are not aware of any singular collection of purposes laid out in this way. It does not mean that we are teaching things that have never been taught before, but what it does mean is that we are not aware of this material being arranged in such a fashion.

Jewish commentators who do not know the Messiah have done this in various forms. However, they have not taken into consideration the purposes for the Torah as discussed in the Renewed Covenant Scriptures. Because of this, we will invariably arrive at different conclusions about the purposes — and even the practices of some of the mitzvot — because our sources of authority differ.

The rabbis see the mitzvot only through the eyes of the traditional literature on the subject. We, on the other hand, while taking into consideration that august body of literature, nevertheless, draw our authority from the written Word, the Renewed Covenant Scriptures and the Tanakh. It is quite possible that we may overlook some of the purposes and this, of course, is not intentional. Perhaps you, the student, can supply the missing ones for yourselves. (If you find others, write to us and allow us to consider your findings.)

We wish to make one more preliminary statement. The list we are giving you is not in any specific order and is not intended to convey any order of importance. With all of that in mind, let us look at how the Torah should be understood and how these ideas can be illustrated from the mitzvot in this week’s parasha.

Exposition

The general study outline is as follows:

The Torah —

- I. God's Covenant
- II. God's Revelation of Messiah
- III. God's Theological Picture Book
- IV. God's Mirror
- V. God's Adorning Garland

In this excerpt from Parashat Ki Teizei, we will focus on section IV, God's Mirror.

IV. God's Mirror

The Torah, God's Mirror? How do we see this? What do we mean?

In order to understand this principle, we will turn to the Renewed Covenant Scriptures. In James 1:19–27 we read that James refers to the Torah as a mirror. He says that a person who merely listens to the Word and does not do what it says is like a person who looks intently into a mirror, walks away from it, and forgets what he looks like.

This is quite a profound teaching because, in context, this author is saying that the Word is the “perfect Torah that gives freedom.” He is talking about the same Torah that we are studying! He says that this Torah is really a mirror which, when we look into it, shows us the reflection of who we really are as new creations in Messiah! We see ourselves as God created us to be when He caused us to be born again.

In other words, when we study even the most nitty-gritty of the Torah mitzvot, we are really looking at an image of ourselves (our new creation). We can see our lives as the righteous ones who God has made us to be. When we obey any of the Torah mitzvot, we are merely acting out who we really are in Messiah. Obedience then comes more easily because we will discover that obeying the Torah is who we really are, it is our new identity in Messiah. Obeying the Torah “fits” us like a proper set of clothing. Torah teachings such as this will not only aid us in developing our theology, but will also speak volumes concerning how we must live.

Let's look, now, at some examples of how the Torah can serve as a mirror for our new-creation self. The examples are scattered throughout our parasha. For instance, look at the teaching about the wayward son in 21:18–21. When we look at this “mirror” we can see that the new creation is not such a rebellious son. In Messiah, the “new creation us” loves our parents and seeks to honor them. The rebellion occasionally found in our flesh will eventually suffer the spiritual death needed to remove it from our new selves. This is pictured by the prescribed death penalty for such a son.

Another illustration is from 23:18. Here we learn that there is not to be a promiscuous man or woman among the children of Israel. That is true! Even, if in our flesh, we act promiscuously, it does not mean that we *are* a promiscuous person! There is a BIG difference. If one thinks of himself as promiscuous, he

may rationalize his sin by saying, “that’s who I am, I can’t help it!” However, if we really look into the mirror of the Torah we will see that if we are in Messiah, i.e., part of the Covenant Community, we are not promiscuous, even though at times, our flesh may yield our members to it. Remember however, that as believers in Messiah, we have the power and ability to stop acting in our flesh. We do not have to act promiscuously because that is not really who we are. We discover that truth when we continually gaze into the mirror of God’s Word, according to James.

We can find another vivid illustration in Deuteronomy 22:12. After the teaching in our parasha reminding us that we are not spiritual mixtures, the Torah reminds us about the *tzitzit*, the fringes we are to wear on the four corners of our clothing.

One of the fringes is to be blue. Among other things, the blue (*tekhelet*, תכלת) reminds us of the clothes the High Priest wore. If we remember, one of his main garments was one entirely colored with tekhelet. Moreover, in addition to other things, the four corners remind us of the altar where sacrifices are performed. All of this paints a picture of the sacrificial system.

If we are correct so far, in essence, one of the many important reasons for wearing of the *tzitzit* is to remind us that we are all believer priests, just as we are taught in 1 Peter 2:9. In fact, 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us that our bodies are temples of the Spirit of God. As such, the wearing of a four-cornered garment with fringes, pictures an altar with its four horns. Thus, we are to know ourselves as altars on the earth upon which spiritual sacrifices are offered daily. According to Romans 12:1–2, these sacrifices of worship are our offerings to God for Him to use us in any way He desires.

In this illustration we combined the concepts of Torah Pictures with the Mirror. The wearing of fringes paints the Torah Picture that we are individual believer-priests. It also provides the Mirror where we see ourselves as that priest who offers up our own lives in sacrificial service to Him. That is who we are, and we may not know it unless we see it first in the Torah. The more we look at it, the more we can confidently walk in it.