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Because You are Listening 7: 12-15

Because you are listening DIG: What are the main events of this parashah? Did the promises of God as a nation depend on Isra'el's faithfulness? Did the blessings or cursings of Ha'Shem depend on her obedience to the Torah? Do these verses teach a "prosperity gospel?" Explain how fruitfulness and the Promised Land expand together as a result of obedience.

REFLECT: Are you doing your best to live your life according to biblical standards. It's not that "bad things can't happen to good people" (Psalms 37 and 73), but since God has set up in the world a "stream of blessing," and a "stream of cursing" using the Torah as our blueprint for living, which "stream" are you in right now. Are you ready to cross over your Jordan?

Parashah 46: 'Ekev (Because) 7:12-11:25
(Click to see [Af](#) - Parashah)

The Key Person is **Moshe**, speaking to all **Isra'el**.

The Scene is the wilderness east of **the Promised Land**. **Moses** continues **his** final speech to **the Israelites** just before **they** were to enter **the Promised Land**.

The Main Events include more speech from **Moshe**: future **blessings** for obedience, reminders from past signs and wonders, and encouragement to follow **ADONAI** now; remembering the golden calf incident, new tablets of stone, and the ark; phylacteries and mezuzah as reminders; anticipating prosperity in rain-fed **Land** as a result of super-obedience.²²⁷ **The people** were to have no tolerance for **idols** of any kind.

What God promises does not depend of Isra'el's strength or merit. Rather, it resides in the character of their God. Obedience to the Torah was not the means of gaining the covenant, but the means of maintaining and enjoying it.



Because (Hebrew: *'ekev*) **you are listening to these rulings, keeping and obeying them, ADONAI your God will keep with you the covenant and mercy that He swore to your ancestors** (to see link click [Cb](#) - God Has Chosen Isra'el). In other words, as long as **the Israelites** obeyed the commandments of **the Torah, they would prosper in the Land** they were about to conquer, just as **the LORD** had **promised to their forefathers**. These words describe **YHVH's** choice to make **Isra'el His** own, and **His** tender care of **them**. **He will love you, bless you and increase your numbers (7:12-13a)**. God's promise to multiply **their** population (**Genesis 17:2 and 20, 48:4; Exodus 32:13; Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 1:10**) contrasts with the way **He** found **them**, small and insignificant.

'Ekev comes from the root *akav* (meaning to *take by the heel*), as does the name **Jacob**, who had *grabbed the heel* of **his** twin brother **Esau** while still in the womb of **Rebekah**. **Jacob** was later named **Isra'el** in commemoration of **his** struggle with **the Angel of the LORD** at **Peniel** (see the commentary on [Genesis Hw](#) - **Jacob Wrestles with God**). **The Lord** then declared to **him**, **"Your name shall no longer be Jacob ("heel holder" of Esau) , but Isra'el ("contender with God")**; **because you have shown your strength to both God and men and have prevailed (Genesis 32:28)**. The first occurrence of the root word appears in **Genesis 3:15**, where **ADONAI** prophesied that even though **the Messiah's heel** would be **bruised**, the very **head of the serpent** would be **crushed** (see the commentary on [Genesis Be](#) - **He Will Crush Your Head and You Will Strike His Heal**). Therefore, in this parashah, **Isra'el** is called to grapple with **the commandments** and to perform **them** diligently, lest **they** find themselves driven out of **the Land**.

ADONAI will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground - your grain, wine, olive oil and the young of your cattle and sheep - in the Land He swore to your ancestors that He would give you. You will be blessed more than all other peoples; there will not be a sterile male or female among you, and the same with your livestock (7:13b-14).

In this passage, as in many others in the TaNaKh, a close relationship between **the people**

and **the Land** is pictured. An obedient **people** enjoy **the blessing of God** on **their** Promised **Land**, while **those** who are disobedient discover that the curse would touch **their** crops and flocks (also see **Deuteronomy 27:11 to 28:68** and **Leviticus 26**).²²⁸

How literally are we to take **verses 12-15**? At face value it promises **Isra'el** an idyllic, poverty-free, sickness-free life. It is easy to see how such scriptures can be taken up by supporters of the so-called "prosperity gospel" as the biblical justification for believing that "health and wealth" are guaranteed to believers today. It certainly has to be said that the words have a literal meaning in their context. This is to say, Moses is talking about real crops, animals and children, and should not be spiritualized into some metaphor for any other kind of **blessing**.

However, there are two factors that put these verses into a wider biblical perspective that rules out a simplistic "prosperity gospel." First, in the TaNaKh itself health and wealth were not in themselves a reliable sign of faith and obedience. Some people gained property through the oppression of others, as the prophets point out repeatedly, And the lack of, or loss of, the good things of life may have nothing to do with personal sin or disloyalty to **God**, as the book of **Job** teaches us. On the other hand, it is easy to see the often the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer, and **Ha'Shem** seems strangely distant (**Psalms 37** and **73**).

Secondly, a strictly literal approach to **YHVH's** response to sin does not fit **7:10b**, where **Moses** declares: **He will not be slow to discipline those who hate Him; He will repay those to their faces**. Yet in our human experience, not only do evildoers sometimes have delayed justice, sometimes generations later, but the very fact of the delay can be interpreted as **ADONAI** leaving time for repentance. **The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you - not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9)**. Therefore, **7:10b** must be understood in general principle that **God's** judgment awaits the wicked. But it is not instant. And it is not automatic, in that **ADONAI** leaves room for **repentance**.

In the same way, **verses 12-15** need to be taken as a true principle. **The LORD** loves to **bless** those who are obedient and loyal to **His** covenant, and their lives they enter into a "stream of **blessing**," not excluding material **blessings**. But the connection between faith, obedience, and material **blessings** is neither instant and automatic, nor experienced by all believers. Sickness and barrenness are not exclusive experience of the wicked even in the Dispensation of the Torah (see the commentary on **Exodus Da - The Dispensation of the**

Torah).²²⁹

This positive message of abundant, divine blessing on **Isra'el** also represents a veiled rebuke against those who worshiped the false god Ba'al. What **YHVH** promised to **Isra'el**, here, are the very things the Canaanite gods were supposed to provide for their worshipers. **Ha'Shem**, the only living **God**, is **the One** to whom **the Israelites** must look rather than any dead, pagan, god.²³⁰

ADONAI will remove all illness from you - He will not afflict you with any of Egypt's dreadful diseases, which you have known; instead, He will lay them on those who hate you (7:15). The reference to **Egypt** is particularly appropriate for **Moses'** audience, for some of **them**, if **they** were old enough, and **their** parents would still have been able to remember the particular **diseases** associated with that **land**. In ancient **Egypt**, such **diseases** as elephantiasis, various types of boils, and diseases of the eyes and bowels were especially common and unpleasant. **The Israelites** would no longer be plagued with such sickness, but **God** would inflict it on **their** enemies.²³¹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, It is a joy to listen to **You**, for **You** are always wise and loving. Thank **You** for giving us mitzvot that will help us be happier as we follow them. Thank **You** that when someone is selfish and sins - and there is no **one** who does not **sin** (**First Kings 8:46; Second Chronicles 6:36; Romans 3:23**), you forgive when we confess and turn back to **You** in repentance. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9).** Praise **You** that **You** are never too busy to listen (**First John 5:14-15**) to **Your children (John 1:12).** **You** are always there with us whenever we need a friend: **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5c).** Praise **You** for being so wonderful and always available. We love **You**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*