

5784 - Deuteronomy 7-11 - Eikev (As a consequence of ...)

Hi, this is Rabbi David Fohrman and you are watching Aleph Beta. Welcome to *Parshat Eikev*.¹

This week's *parsha* contains Moshe's summary of what it is that God asks of us. In just a sentence or two Moshe summarizes everything. **מָה הִי**

מָה הִי (mah Hashem Eloheicha sho-el me-imach) (Deu 10:12),

Moshe says, “what is it anyway that God asks of you,” **כִּי אִם** (*ki im*), “ex-

cept for,” and then Moshe gives a whole list of things. **To love God, to fear him, to serve God, to walk in his ways.**

What I want to look at with you today is the fact that later on, centuries later we have a prophet who tries to do the exact same thing, boil down for you what it is that God wants in just a few words—and not only does that prophet try to do exactly the same thing, he actually sorts of quotes the opening words of Moshe.

What Does the Bible Say About Being a "Good" Person?

The prophet I am thinking of is the prophet Micah and Micah's statement begins, **מָה־הִי דוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ** (*mah Hashem doresh mi-m'cha*), “what is it God seeks of you anyway,” **כִּי אִם** (*ki im*) “except for dot dot dot” (Mic 6:8).

Then he gives a list but the list is radically different than the list that Moshe gives you, leading to some interesting questions. Was that prophet arguing with Moshe? He is clearly aware of what Moshe says. How does he mean for us to understand how his words drive with Moshe's words?

Now that's a very interesting question. One that I hope to address in an epilogue to this one. But in this video I want to focus with you on Micah's words, how is it that Micah summarizes all of our obligations in just a few words.

Here is what Micah says, **וּמָה־הִי דוֹרֵשׁ** (*higid l'cha adam mah tov*), “But it is told to you, oh man! What it is that's good,”

וּמָה־הִי דוֹרֵשׁ “and what it is that God seeks of you?” It really boils down to this:

כִּי אִם־עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט (*ki im-asot mishpat*), “it is just doing justice;”

וְאַהֲבַת חֶסֶד (*v'ahavat chesed*), “love and kindness;”

וְהִצַּנְעַת עִם־אֱלֹהֶיךָ (*v'hatz-nea lechet im-Elohei-cha*) and “walking modestly with the lord, your God.”

So, Micah boils it down to three things here and here is the question what I ask you: How do these three things relate to each other? Are these three separate things or are they connected things and when you put these three together, does it create some sort of overall picture, **is there a structure here that emerges and what would that structure look like?**

How Can We Be Good Servants of God?

So I want to suggest to you that there is structure. The best metaphor I can use for that structure is a staircase and to give you kind of a vivid idea of what I mean by this, I want to go back a couple of sentences, to what it is that the prophet Micah says just before this. Because if you look carefully, there you are going to find another staircase, a staircase that's the mirror image, the evil twin of this one as it were.

בְּמָה אֶקְדָּם הִי (*bamah a'kadem Hashem?*), “with what shall I approach God?” (Mic 6:6)

אֶכַּף לְאֱלֹהֵי מְרוֹם (*ikaf lei-lohei marom?*), “how shall I show my submission to the lord who is most high?”

הֲאֶקְדַּמְנוּ בְּעוֹלוֹת (*ha-a'kadmenu b'olot*), “shall I offer offerings to him?”

בְּעֵגְלִים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה (*ba-a'galim benei shanah?*), “Maybe with fine offerings, with calves that are just a year old?”

הֲיִרְצֶה הִי בְּאַלְפֵי אֵילִים (*ha'yirtzeh HaShem b'alfei elim*), “would God perhaps be appeased with a thousand rams?” (Mic 6:7)

בְּרִבְבוֹת נְחָלֵי־שָׁמֶן (*b'riv'vot nachalei-shamen?*), “10,000 rivers of oil?”

הֲאֶתֵן בְּכוֹרֵי פִשְׁעֵי (*ha-eten b'chori pishi?*), “shall I perhaps sacrifice my first born to him?”

פְּרִי בְטְנֵי חַטָּאת נַפְשִׁי (*p'ri vitni chatat nafshi?*), “shall I atone for whatever sins I might have by killing my children, handing them back to God?”

Now the prophet is obviously being sarcastic here—he is not advocating any of these—but you can see, he is developing a kind of staircase for you.

The first level in the staircase is you might think you would offer an offering but once you think you have offered all offerings then you must offer the best offerings. You have to offer **בְּעֵגְלִים בְּנֵי שָׁנָה** (*ba-a'galim benei shanah*), fine calves, just a year old; and then you think maybe a thousand offerings would be better than that, maybe 10, 000 rivers of oil; and if that weren't good enough, you think you may make the supreme sacrifice, you would give your first born, maybe give all your kids to God.

¹ <https://members.alephbeta.org/playlist/how-to-be-a-good-person>

There is a dangerous staircase here, at the top of the staircase is a cliff, don't go over that cliff, Micah says. It is not what I want you to do and then, he offers you an alternative staircase. **The alternative vision of what it means to be a good person.**

Understanding Micah's Bible Verses on Being a Good Person

Being a good person doesn't mean finding all sorts of beyond-the-letter-of-the-law possibilities in how to serve God, offering extra offerings, even more offerings, culminating in offering the hardest thing to offer. But before you know it, you are sacrificing your kids. He is giving you an alternative vision of what goodness is.

Three levels that are built upon each other.

Level one: עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט, “be just, be fair,” **decency begins with fairness but it doesn't end with fairness**. Fairness is just the ground level. If all you can say about yourself is that you are a fair person, you are a just person, that doesn't still make you a good person.

Right, if I am fair, so it's a level playing field, so if you are poor, it is not my fault that you are poor. Lift yourself up by your bootstraps. And, you know, what about basic garden variety neighborliness? Oh I see, you need to borrow my lawnmower, well what did you do for me lately? Fairness isn't the only thing that goodness consists of. **On top of fairness, rides kindness** and that's the next thing, Micah says.

אַהֲבַת הַחֵן, “You should love kindness,” it should be a part of your daily regimen. Kindness without justice is mush. Justice without kindness is hard and steely edged. Those are only the first two steps.

There is a third step on top of that. What do you mean a third step? I am a decent person if I am fair and kind, what more could you ask of me? **Decency actually requires a third thing**. A just person, a kind person would also want to extend himself towards God. He will want to walk with God.

You must walk with God—with humility. You must walk with Him modestly because what if you do not? **What if you walk with God arrogantly? Then what, it will get in the way of you being a decent person**. Because **you can be the fairest guy in the world and the kindest guy in the world but if you walk with God arrogantly, you know what's going to happen? You are going to end up mistreating people despite your fairness and despite your kindness**.

Here's why. When you walk with God you are going to realize that not everybody walks with God the same way you walk with God. They walk with God a little differently. How are you going to deal with that?

What Is the Meaning of Goodness in the Bible?

Well, let's say you deal with it arrogantly. What do you say? You know why they walk with God that way—because they are idiots, that is why. Because they don't care about the truth. The truth is so obvious, I see the truth, all my friends see the truth, why can't that idiot see the truth? Because he doesn't want to see the truth, because he is not sincere, because he is a charlatan.

If you walk with God arrogantly, everybody is the other; and once that happens, your kindness and your fairness just doesn't matter any more. Kindness and fairness that's for people like us, not for the idiots out there.

Micah in a way is giving you a vision of tolerance. If you walk humbly with God, I have the humility to understand that I do it this way but you are a sincere seeker of God and you do it that way and that changes everything. **I can still be fair to you, I can still be kind to you because I walk with humility with God**.

1. *What I want to look at with you today is the fact that later on, centuries later we have a prophet who tries to do the exact same thing, boil down for you what it is that God wants in just a few words ...*

a. Makkot (Lashes) 23b-24a

R. Simlai when preaching said: Six hundred and thirteen precepts were communicated to Moses, three hundred and sixty-five negative precepts, corresponding to the number of solar days [in the year], and two hundred and forty-eight positive precepts, corresponding to the number of the members⁴⁰ of man's body ...

(40) Joints, or bones, covered with flesh and sinews (excluding the teeth).

David came and **reduced them to eleven** [principles] (Psa 15) as it is written, A Psalm of David.⁽⁴⁾ Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy mountain?—[i] He that walketh uprightly, and [ii] worketh righteousness, and [iii] speaketh truth in his heart; that [iv] hath no slander upon his tongue, [v] nor doeth evil to his fellow, [vi] nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour, [vii] in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but [viii] he honoureth them that fear the Lord, [ix] He sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not, [x] He putteth not out his money on interest, [xi] nor taketh a bribe against the innocent ...

Isaiah came and **reduced them to six** [principles] (Isa 33:15) as it is written, [i] He that walketh righteously, and [ii] speaketh uprightly, [iii] He that despiseth the gain of oppressions, [iv] that shaketh his hand from holding of bribes, [v] that stoppeth his ear from hearing of blood, [vi] and shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil; he shall dwell on high ...

Micah came and **reduced them to three** [principles], as it is writ-

ten, It hath been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord doth require of thee: [i] only to do justly, and [ii] to love mercy and [iii] to walk humbly before thy God (Mic 6:8).

Again came **Isaiah** and **reduced them to two** [principles], as it is said, Thus saith the Lord, [i] Keep ye justice and [ii] do righteousness [etc.] (Isa 56:1). **Amos** came and **reduced them to one** [principle], as it is said, For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye Me and live (Amos 5:4). To this R. Nahman b. Isaac ... (said): [Might it not be taken as,] Seek Me by observing the whole Torah and live?—But it is **Habakuk** who came and **based them all on one** [principle], as it is said, But **the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab 2:4)**.

1) Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹⁷For **in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”**

2) Romans 10:1-4

¹Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. ²For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. ³Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. ⁴**Messiah is the end (i.e., the aim or goal) of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.**

b. Matthew 7:12

So in everything, **do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

1) Shabbat 31a

It happened that a certain heathen came before Shammai and said to him, “Take me as a proselyte, but on condition that you teach me the entire Torah, all of it, while I stand on one foot.” Shammai instantly drove him away with a builder’s measuring rod he happened to have in his hand. When the heathen came before Hillel, Hillel agreed to make him a proselyte, saying **“What you don’t like, don’t do to your neighbor—this is the entire [substance of] Torah, all of it; the rest is commentary.** Go and study it.”

c. Matthew 22:34-39

³⁴Hearing that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. ³⁵One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” ³⁷Yeshua replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart

and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸**This is the first and greatest commandment.** ³⁹**And the second is like it:** ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰**All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”**

d. Romans 13:8-10

⁸Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

⁹The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰Love does no harm to its neighbor. **Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.**

e. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

¹If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁸Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.

¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹²Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But **the greatest of these is love.**

1) אָהַבָה (ahavah)—(5) הָ (2) בָּ (5) הָ (1) אָ = 13.

f. Generally speaking, the *mitzvot* are divided into two categories: logical *mishpatim* (“laws” or “judgements”) and supra-rational *chukkim* (“decrees” or “statutes”).

The *mishpatim* are *mitzvot* such as the commandment to give charity or the prohibitions against theft and murder, whose reason and utility are obvious to us, and which we would arguably have instituted on our own if G-d had not commanded them. The *chukkim* are

those *mitzvot*, such as the dietary laws or the laws of family purity, which we accept as divine decrees, **despite their incomprehensibility** and—in the most extreme of *chukkim*—their irrationality.

[A third category, the *eidot* ("testimonials"), occupies the middle ground between the decrees and the laws. A testimonial is a *mitzvah* which commemorates or represents something—e.g., the commandments to put on *tefillin*, rest on Shabbat, or eat *matzah* on Passover. These are laws which we would not have devised on our own, certainly not in the exact manner in which the Torah commands; nevertheless, they are rational acts. Once their significance is explained to us, we can appreciate their import and utility.]

Yet each of these terms—*mishpatim*, *chukkim* and *eidot*—**is also used by the Torah as a synonym for "mitzvah" AND A REFERENCE TO ALL COMMANDMENTS OF THE TORAH.** A case in point is the Torah section of *Mishpatim* (Exodus 21-24), which opens with G-d's words to Moses, "And these are the *mishpatim* that you shall set before them." The 53 *mitzvot* that follow are indeed primarily logical laws, but they also include a number of "testimonials" and at least one supra-rational "decree"—the last *mitzvah* in the series, which is the prohibition against mixing meat with milk ("Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk").²

1) Ephesians 6:1-3

¹Children, obey your parents in the Lord, **for this is right.**

²"Honor your father and mother"—which is **the first commandment with a promise**—³"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Exo 20:12; Deu 5:16).

2) Timothy 3:16-17

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for **teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness**, ¹⁷**so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good WORK.**

a) ἔργον (*ergon*), מְלָאכָה (*m'lacha*)—*work, deed, action; task, occupation, undertaking; practical expression; handiwork, workmanship*—all things which are prohibited on Shabbat.

b) Exodus 20:9-10

⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your **work**, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. **On it you shall not do any work**, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.

2. *There is a third step on top of that. What do you mean a third step? I am a decent person if I am fair and kind, what more could you ask of me? ... A just person, a kind person would also want to extend himself towards God. He will want to walk with God.*

You must walk with God—with humility. You must walk with Him modestly because what if you do not? What if you walk with God arrogantly? Then what, it will get in the way of you being a decent person. Because you can be the fairest guy in the world and the kindest guy in the world but if you walk with God arrogantly, you know what's going to happen? You are going to end up mistreating people despite your fairness and despite your kindness.

a. Proverbs 11:1-5

¹The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him. ²When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but **with humility comes wisdom.** ³The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity. ⁴Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death. ⁵The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.

b. Proverbs 18:12

¹²Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but **humility comes before honor.**

c. Psalm 5:4-6

⁴For you are not a God who is pleased with wickedness; with you, evil people are not welcome. ⁵**The arrogant cannot stand in your presence.** You hate all who do wrong; ⁶you destroy those who tell lies. The bloodthirsty and deceitful you, LORD, detest.

d. Zephaniah 2:3

³Seek the LORD, **all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands.** Seek righteousness, **seek humility**; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

1) John 14:15-21

¹⁵If you love me, **keep my commands.** ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷the Spirit of truth ...

¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹**Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me.** The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

² www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2797/jewish/The-Logic-of-the-Mitzvot.htm

2) In my personal opinion³ and walk with the Lord I believe all of God's word we should try to follow. Some believe (Yeshua) came to fulfill the "Old Testament" laws **and they don't apply to us anymore. That is true** but my take on it is He told us not to in the first place **for an important reason that could harm our health**. We want to eat ... seafood and wear whatever we want but truly think about it ... **God didn't write what not to do in the Bible for his benefit. It's for our benefit and our health. I'm not saying you can't eat seafood or where what you want. I still eat seafood and wear mixed fabrics as most of us do.** There're (are) absolute scientific facts on this particular topic (that the woman speaking in the video) is teaching on. It just sucks because "they" know this and have done away with or made it super expensive to get your hands on. **God's word stands true for us to have the best possible life and health we can but it's up to us to follow and take heed to his word but thank you (Yeshua) for Grace ...**

e. Romans 11:17-24

¹⁷If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, **have been grafted in among the others** and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸**do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches**. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." ²⁰Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. **Do not be arrogant, but tremble.** ²¹For **if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you** either. ²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, **provided that you continue in his kindness**. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. ²³And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted **INTO THEIR OWN OLIVE TREE!**

f. 1Corinthians 4:14-21

¹⁴I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Messiah, you do not have many fathers, for in Messiah Yeshua **I became your father through the gospel**. ¹⁶Therefore **I urge you to imitate me**. ¹⁷For

this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. **He will remind you of my way of life in Messiah Yeshua, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every K'hilah.** ¹⁸ **Some of you have become arrogant**, as if I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these **arrogant people** are talking, but what power they have. ²⁰For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹What do you prefer? **Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?**

g. Philippians 2:3-4

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, **in humility value others above yourselves**, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

³ Holly Nicole Flynt in response to a video Elaine Kirkland posted on FaceBook re: the Biblical prohibition against wearing garments made of "mixed" fabrics.