

Ekev opens with the statement that if you listen, keep, and do these laws, then G-d will uphold the brit, the covenant or contract, with mercy, hesed, that he swore to our forefathers. The listening, keeping, and doing the laws should cause G-d to reciprocate.

According to Moshe, this quid pro quo is our contract with G-d. If we uphold our side of the bargain then G-d keeps his promise. The first event, our listening, keeping, and doing, should cause the second, many blessings, most of a material kind.

And if we don't listen, keep, obey, and do, the opposite befalls us.

This theme that is in the parsha's first pasuk is heard again near the end of the parsha where we find the last paragraph of the shema. If we diligently listen, "aim shamo'a tishmau," to the commandments, we will receive the rain in its appointed time. But if we do not diligently listen, love and serve G-d with all our heart and all our soul then G-d's anger will be aroused against us.

Do these statements mean we have a legal contract with G-d? If we fulfill our part of the bargain, He will fulfill His part? Or is it a law of nature? G-d, as ruler of the universe, has established that those who follow His commands will prosper.

What do we obtain as a reward for our actions? What do we have to do? The text seems clear but it is not so simple. What we obtain is material abundance, but the parsha also says that we do not live by bread alone but by the word of the Lord.

What do we have to do? For millennium, it seems we have been trying to figure it out. We have suffered which suggests that we have not lived up to our part of the bargain. Thus, we have books and books of interpretation, rules upon rules about how live our lives.

Do we believe that only if we add to the rules and define them with greater and greater precision we get closer to what we must do? Is what we have to do more in the spirit of love

the stranger or more in the spirit of putting on tefilin every day? Both commands are found in this parsha. Moshe says that all G-d wants of us is to fear and love Him.

To receive the promised rewards, does every Jew have to obey every command or is it enough for some Jews to obey some commands and others to obey others? How far must each Jew go? Would it not be far better if the terms of the contract, our agreement with G-d, were better spelled out? Would we not feel more secure and less anxious?

Moshe seems to contradict himself. On the one hand, he says it is because of our actions that we receive the reward of inheriting the land. On the other hand, he says that it is because the nations which inhabit the land are evil. We will vanquish them not because of our righteousness but because they are bad.

Moshe also warns us that once we have inherited the land and established ourselves we should not think it is because of our merit. We should not take pride in our accomplishment because it is the will of G-d.

Maybe, we must think of our relation to G-d in quantum and not Newtonian terms. In a Newtonian universe, you know where you are located in time and space. In a quantum universe, at best what you know is probabilistic. It depends on the observer and the observed as in the famous thought experiment of Schrodinger's cat. We are the cat in the sealed box with radiation. Are we dead or alive? The odds to us are unknown.

Where we are different from the cat is that we have free-choice to reflect on our situation and act based on what we believe we know.

G-d has put us in this world, a world of danger like the one occupied by the cat, and we cannot know for sure where we exactly stand. At any one moment we could be dead or alive. We experience dread and anxiety because of this uncertainty. The uncertainty motivates us to excel in trying to fulfill the word of G-d but it also may lead us to doubt and despair that we are

not living up to this standard and will not enjoy the blessings that G-d has promised in return.

Jewish history is still open and in our generation we have seen great miracles of return. May we make the right decisions going forward to assure that our actions are in conformance with what G-d seeks from us.

Shabbat Shalom.