

Musings 30 July 2010

This week's Torah portion *Eikev*, continues Moses' second oration to the people. The Book of Deuteronomy is a retelling of the first four books of the Torah and is a series of three orations by Moses to the people. The Israelites have completed their 40 years in the desert and are awaiting word to enter and take over the land that God has promised them. Moses is trying to ensure that the people remember what they and their parents have been through.

Within this week's portion, Moses reminds the people that the land they are about to enter and conquer does not belong to them. It belongs to God and that God is allowing the Israelites to live on the land. Further though, Moses states that ALL land under heaven belongs to God and that all peoples need to understand that they do not own the land but are being allowed to live there by God.

As I read these words I went back to the very opening words of the Torah dealing with the creation of the world. In those opening paragraphs God tells Adam and Eve that all that is on the earth is their dominion. However, as I looked at the Hebrew word and looked up various definitions of the word, I realized that a better translation is "to master" the earth. But it is not master as in a noun but as a verb. So a better reading would be that Adam and Eve are to master the earth.

In both of these portions it seems to me that the earth is not ours to own or to rule over but to learn how to master. That is, we are to learn how the earth works; how the different animals are in a relationship with each other; how all creatures have learned how to deal with the environment in which they find themselves living. This of course, includes humans.

With this in mind, I began to think as to whether or not we humans have mastered this earth. Have we taken the time to understand the intricate workings of the environment and to live within those workings? Have we come to understand the relationships between God's creatures? If God is looking down upon us, would God be proud of us, supposedly the crowning achievement of creation? Or, would God be crying at the mess that human beings have made of things?

In the last Presidential election cycle there was a candidate who seemed to relish saying the phrase, Drill Baby Drill, in regards to how we Americans can stop being dependent upon foreign oil. The Oil Companies liked to crow (prior to April of 2010) how there had not been an accident or major spill of an oil rig in at least 25 years in the Gulf of Mexico. As we learned this past April, there is no room for error when it comes to drilling for oil. We cannot make even one mistake or else we will face environmental ruin in, at least, the general area of the spill.

Well, I am not sure about many things, but I am sure about one thing and that is, human beings make mistakes. Part of what makes us humans is that we make errors. We do not do these things purposely, or with negative intent. They are called accidents for a reason. This is not bad or good, it just is. It is how God made us, we make mistakes. Most of the time we can ask for forgiveness for those mistakes and we can move on. Sometimes however, it is not so easy to just move on.

Since we know that human beings make mistakes and errors, instead of overlooking or ignoring safety measures that could mitigate our mistakes, we should have double or triple measures to ensure that when we make our mistake, there are back up measures to save us. When NASA builds a space craft, not only is there backup systems in case the first system fails, but there are backups to the backups. NASA understands that things can and do go wrong and do not rely on luck to mitigate our mistakes.

We should have known that a blow out would occur when we drill an oil well; especially now that the easy to get to oil is gone and we are digging ever deeper into more extreme environments to retrieve oil. For humans, it is the height of hubris to not only not insist on backup systems, but to allow drilling to occur without fully inspected drilling rigs.

So I leave it to you, do you think God is proud of us or is God crying?