

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET  
ON PARSHAS EIKEV - 5756

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"ohr@jer1.co.il" \* TORAH WEEKLY \* Highlights of the Weekly Torah Portion Parshas Eikev

This issue is dedicated in memory of Chava Leah bas Yosef Yitzchak,

Eve Lynn Koppele, on her second Yahrzeit 19 Av 5756

**Summary**

If the Bnei Yisrael are careful to observe even those `minor' mitzvos that are usually `trampled' underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of the Earth. Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before the Bnei Yisrael are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning the Bnei Yisrael to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that The Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance. Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions the Bnei Yisrael not to become haughty and think that what they will have in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather they must always remember that it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of the righteousness of the Bnei Yisrael, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites; for the road from Sinai has been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe. Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aaron's passing is recorded together with the elevation of the Levites to minister to Hashem. Moshe points out that the 70 souls that went down into Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven for abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the Shema, which conceptualizes reward for keeping the mitzvos and penalty for not keeping them.

**Commentaries**

"What - Me Worry?" "When you will say in your heart - these nations are too numerous for me, how will I be able to drive them out - Do not fear them!" (7:17-18) In other words -- only when you understand that left to your own ability, and without the help of Hashem, you will not be able to overcome

the nations -- then you have nothing to fear at all. But if you think you will be able to drive out the nations by your own power, that's when you should start to worry, because then Hashem certainly won't provide the needed support! (Ma'asey Hashem)

Immortal Fear "You shall not be broken before them, for Hashem, your God is among you, a great and awesome God." (7:21) If a person loves his fellow man and gives him respect, in no way does this detract from his love and respect for Hashem. However, if a person fears mere flesh and blood, this is a sure sign that his feeling of awe for Hashem is less than perfect. If a person is genuinely "God-fearing", then he fears no man. (HaKsav V'HaKabbalah in the name of Maharil Margolios z"l)

Soul Food "For Man does not live on bread alone, rather on all that comes from the mouth of Hashem man lives." (8:3) How is it possible for the soul whose very essence is spiritual to be sustained by something as physical as food? The answer is that, in reality, the whole of Creation exists only as a result of the power of Hashem's original utterance at the time of Creation (as it says in Bereishis "By the word of Hashem, the heavens were created"). It is this same power of Hashem's word wrapped inside the food which nourishes the soul. When a Jew takes an apple and makes a blessing over it, he awakens the latent spiritual power implanted in the fruit at the time of the Creation -- that's real "soul-food"! (Adapted from the Arizal) Stealing the World "And you will eat and be satisfied and you will bless Hashem your God" (8:10) Rabbi Levi pointed out a contradiction between two verses in Tehillim (Psalms): One verse states "The world and it's fullness are Hashem's," and a different verse states "The world He has given to Man."

Really there is no contradiction -- the first verse refers to the situation before a person makes a bracha, while the second verse refers to after the bracha. Said Rabbi Chanina "Anyone who takes pleasure from the physical world without making a bracha first is as if he stole from Hashem." (Talmud, Tractate Berachos 35a)

Haftorah: Isaiah 49:14-51:3 To the Lighthouse The underlying theme of the Parsha and the Haftorah is that how ever far the Jewish people fall from favor, they can never lose their status as the Chosen People of Hashem. This is the second of the seven Parshios of consolation after Tisha B'Av. This Haftorah is the source of the famous phrase "light unto the nations." Isaiah tells the Jewish People that despite the terrible tragedies and hardships of exile, he does not despair -- he knows that the end of the exile is coming. And so he pleads with his contemporaries and all of their offspring throughout all the generations to remember that they are the children of Avraham and Sarah, and that Hashem will surely comfort them.

Sing, My Soul! Insights into the Zemiros sung at the Shabbos table throughout the generations. Yismach Moshe - "Moshe Rejoices..." Moshe rejoices in the gift which is his portion, For you called him a faithful servant yismach Moshe b'matnas chelko, ki eved ne'eman karasa lo. Even before the Shabbos was commanded to the Jewish People as a mitzvah it was already observed as a day of rest.

After seeing the suffering of his people in Egypt, Moshe convinced Pharaoh that it was counterproductive to subject his slaves to seven days of hard labor and that one day of rest was vital for them to replenish their strength. Pharaoh gave him the option of choosing which day and Moshe asked for the seventh day of the week.

When Hashem subsequently designated this very day as the day of rest Moshe rejoiced that he had correctly anticipated the will of the Creator and that the precious gift of the Sabbath given by Hashem to His chosen people was in the exact portion of the week which His "faithful servant" had chosen.

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Parshas Ekev  
HALACHA FOR 5756 SELECTED HALACHOS RELATING TO  
PARSHAS EKEV By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt A discussion of  
Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult  
your Rav. You will eat and you will be satisfied and bless Hashem...  
(8:10). Rabbi Yishmael said, 'And you shall bless', that refers to Bircas

Hazimun... (Yerushalmi Brachos 7:7).

QUESTION: In order for the obligation of Zimun to be in force, how many people have to be eating?

DISCUSSION: Three men who ate a meal together are required Mederaban(1) to recite Bircas Hamazon together(2). One of them recites the Bircas Hazimun and the first Bracha of Bircas Hamazon aloud, so that the others can hear him clearly. For this reason, when there is a big crowd, a man with a powerful voice should be chosen for the honor(3).

If two people sit down to a meal including bread and a third person wants to join them, they should ask him to eat bread along with them so that they can recite Bircas Hazimun. If he refuses to eat bread, then even if he eats a K'zayis worth of any food (approx. one fl. oz.), Bircas Hazimun is recited(4).

If the third person drank wine or any natural fruit juice, Zimun may definitely be said(5). Many Poskim rule that coffee or tea is also sufficient to require Zimun(6). Some Poskim allow even soda or lemonade(7), while others do not(8). If the third person drank water only, no Zimun is said(9).

A minimum of seven people can get together for a meal including bread, and join with three other men who did not eat bread in order to recite the name of Hashem ?ElokeinuX when saying Bircas Hazimun, provided that the three men ate or drank something, as stated above(10).

QUESTION: What are the Halachos of Zimun when five men eat together?

DISCUSSION: Five men who eat together must recite Bircas Hamazon together. They may not separate before the Zimun is recited(11).

If one or two need to leave early, they should ask the other three to join them in the Zimun. If only one of the other three joins them, the remaining two may not join with the one who joined previously, even if they all eat again together(12). If, however, there were six(13) or more men eating together and two of them finished early, the one who joins them for Zimun may join the next two when they are finished(14).

QUESTION: May two groups of five people, sitting in a Yeshiva dining room at two separate tables, join together for a Zimun of ten and recite Elokeinu? DISCUSSION: Zimun can only be said in one of the following two cases(15): a) by those who sat together at one table, even though each is eating his own meal; b) by members of one household, even though they are seated at separate tables. Therefore:

If the two groups consider themselves as members of one household, in other words, they would have liked to sit together but could not do so because there was no room for all of them at one table, then they may join together for a Zimun of ten(16). The tables should be in close proximity to each other(17).

If, however, as is usually the caseX, the groups are split according to classes or cliques, and each group wants to sit separately, then they may not join together for a Zimun of ten, unless the two groups had specific intention to join together at the start of the meal(18).

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FOOTNOTES: 1 Shaar Hatzion 197:16 - according to most Rishonim. See, however, Chazon Ish OC 31:1. 2 OC 192:1. 3 Mishna Berurah 193:17. 4 OC 197:3 and Mishnah Berurah 22. 5 OC 197:2 and Mishnah Berura 20. L'hatchilla a Reviis (3.3 fl. oz.) should be drunk. Bedieved 1.7 fl. oz. is sufficient - Biur Halacha, ibid. 6 Harav M. Shternbuch in Teshuvos V'hanagos 1:183; V'zos Ha'bracha (4th printing) pg. 130. 7 Aruch Hashulchan 197:5. 8 Harav Y.Y. Fisher (quoted in V'zos Ha'bracha, ibid). 9 Ruling of the Mishnah Berurah 197:12. S.A. Harav and Chayei Adam rule that Zimun may be said over water. 10 OC 197:2. 11 OC 193:1. 12 Mishnah Berurah 200:9. Aruch Hashulchan 200:5 and Chazon Ish 31:5, however, hold that if they eat again together they can be Mezamen. 13 Mishna Berurah, quoting the Magen Avrohom, says: seven or eight men, but Levushai Srad and Shone Halachos say that six or more is the same. 14

Mishnah Berurah 200:9. 15 Mishnah Berurah 193:18. 16 Harav S.Y. Elyashiv (quoted in V'zos Ha'bracha pg. 133). This is the reason why guests at a wedding may join together for a Zimun even when there are not ten people at their table. See also Sova Semachos pg. 111. 17 Biur Halacha 167:11. 18 Harav S.Z. Auerbach and Harav C.P. Scheinberg (V'zos Ha'bracha ibid). There are other Poskim who hold that Yeshiva students can join together at any time, see Minchas Yitzchok 8:8 and Beis Boruch 48:24. Harav Elyashiv recommends that to avoid any questions and doubts, it is best that the groups clearly intend not to join together, as the Igros Moshe OC 1:56 suggests to a guest who cannot stay late at a wedding.

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The Weekly Internet  
P A R A S H A - P A G E  
by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem (kornfeld@jer1.co.il)

Gitty Reich has dedicated this week's Parasha-Page to Alta Dreisel Bas Harav Yaakov Halevi.

Parashat Ekev 5756 SIDDUROLOGY, or mysteries of the siddur note: this week's essay was abridged to maintain the normal parasha-page length. A full version can be found at: <http://www.shemayisrael.co.il/parsha/kornfeld>

"To serve Hashem with all your heart" (Devarim 11:13) -- What service is done with the heart? Prayer! (Sifri, Devarim #41)

Originally, when a Jew prayed to his Creator he did not follow a standard text. Eventually the daily prayers were canonized in the Siddur, or Jewish prayer book. Nonetheless, the liturgy has evolved considerably over the years. It is interesting to note that until today, various phases in the Siddur's development remain preserved literally "between the lines" of today's Siddur. In a number of places, seemingly inexplicable breaks between prayers have their roots in liturgical customs of old. (For the sake of simplicity, I will limit our discussion to the Ashkenazi, Nusach Ashkenaz prayerbook. Page numbers listed here refer to the "Tefillat Kol Peh" Siddur (TKP), Jerusalem 1980, and the "Rinat Yisrael" Siddur (RY) Jerusalem 1976.)

## II

One would expect that a new paragraph in the Siddur would indicate the beginning of a new prayer. Although this is often the case, there are a number of notable exceptions to this rule in which a break mysteriously divides a single prayer in two. Conversely, unconnected prayers are often joined. What are the factors that determine when there is or is not a break between prayers? (Lest one thinks that the breaks are random, it should be noted that Tosafot (Pesachim, 104b s.v. Chutz) was bothered by an extraneous break in the written text of the blessings for the Haftarah.)

In general, the breaks in the Siddur appear to have been wrought by the insertion of comments or instructions that were not part of the liturgy between the prayers. These added lines, which were printed in a different font or pitch in order to differentiate between them and the prayers themselves, caused a break between the paragraph before and the one after the instructive comment. A cursory glance at the Siddur will suffice to prove the integrity of the following rules:

1) After a blessing, a new paragraph is always started. Presumably the prayer book originally included comments such as, "Amen is to be said here," after blessings (as some prayer books still do today). The comments have since disappeared, but the paragraphs remain. Some examples are: All the pre-prayer blessings known as "Birchot HaShachar" (TKP 6-8,13-15, RY 15-17, 23-25); "Baruch She'amar" and "Yishtabach" (TKP 30,48, RY 43,57); the blessings before and after "Keriyat Shema" (TKP 52,57, RY 60-61, 66); and the "Shemoneh Esrei" blessings (TKP 58-69, RY 67-78).

2) \*Before\* an extended quote (i.e., not just a grouping of non-consecutive verses or two consecutive verses) there is a break. The printer originally must have added the source for the quote and thus separated it from the previous paragraph. Again, the sources have been left out in many Siddurim but the breaks remain. Examples of this are: "Mizmor Shir" (TKP 29, RY 41); "Hodu" (TKP 31, RY 44); "Ashrei" and the "Hallelukahs" (TKP 37-43, RY 48-53); "Vayevarech David," "Vayosha" and "Az Yashir" (TKP 43-46, RY 53-55 -- although "Az Yashir" follows

"Vayosha" in the Torah, it starts both a new chapter and a new parasha) and the parshiot of "Shema" (TKP 53-54, RY 62-64).

It should be noted that there is no need for a break in the prayer book \*after\* the quotes, only before them. Indeed, we find in numerous instances that no break is made between quotes and the prayers that follow them -- for example, following "VeHallel LaHashem" at the end of "Hodu" (TKP 33, RY 45) and following "LeOlam Va'ed" at the end of "Az Yashir" (TKP 47, RY 56).

3) A third situation where paragraphs are inserted involves poems and songs. In order to accent the metre and poetic form, songs are always separated from the preceding and the following sections. Examples of this are: "Adon Olam" (TKP 11, RY 22); "Yigdal" (TKP 12, RY 23); and "Kel Adon" (TKP 212, RY 252).

We are now ready to review the rest of the morning prayer and analyze the mysterious breaks that do not fit into the above categories.

III EZRAT (TKP 55, RY 65): In the blessing that follows "Shema" we find a number of strange breaks. After the word "Zulatecha" (before "Ezrat Avoteinu") a new paragraph starts, at which most congregations wait for the Chazan (cantor). Why should "Ezrat" mark the beginning of a paragraph if it continues the theme of the previous paragraph!

This can be explained with a look at any Machzor, or holiday prayer book. It was customary in times gone by to insert special prayers, known as "Zulat"s, in the holiday prayers before "Ezrat." Although these "Zulat"s can still be found in today's Machzorim, they are recited only by a few staunch holdouts (such as the Breuer community in Washington Heights, New York) since they were blacklisted by the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 68).

The original Siddurim included a line of instruction before "Ezrat," informing the congregants to turn to their "Zulats" on holidays. The break before "Ezrat" remains until today, long after the instructions and "Zulats" were forgotten. The same logic explains the break between "Az Yashir" and "Yishtabach" (TKP 48, RY 56-57), where instructions once informed the congregants to turn to "Nishmat" (which \*is\* still recited today) on Shabbatot and holidays. (See Siddur Chassidei Ashenaz for an alternate reasoning for the break before Ezrat.)

AL HARISHONIM: A slight variation on this theme explains one of the most mysterious of breaks: that between "Avodecha" and "Al HaRishonim" (a few lines before "Ezrat" -- TKP 55, RY 65). For no apparent reason, almost every Ashkenazi Siddur in print has an inexplicable paragraph break right in the middle of a sentence at this point! Let us first turn to some more easily understood breaks before returning to the "Al HaRishonim" mystery.

All Siddurim have "Yehi Chavod" (TKP 36, RY 47) and "Uva L'Tzion" (TKP 88, RY 98) as separate paragraphs. Why were they separated from "Mizmor LeTodah" and "La'menatzeach," the psalms that precede them? The answer is that "Mizmor LeTodah" and "La'menatzeach" are skipped on occasion. Because of this they were printed as separate paragraphs, usually with a different size print, so that the reader could easily see where to pick up on the days that these prayers are skipped.

The same explanation may be applied to the breaks before "HaMeir La'Aretz" and "Titbarach" (TKP 50, RY 58). On Shabbat, this section is skipped and replaced by another prayer. In order to let the reader know what is to be skipped, the weekday selection was written/printed as a separate paragraph with a different pitch.

We can now return to the "Al Harishonim" puzzle. When "Zulat"s were recited, some congregations would start the holiday "Zulat" hymns before "Al Harishonim," substituting a different prayer in its stead. Since "Al Harishonim" until "Ezrat" would be skipped on holidays, it was printed as a separate paragraph, with a break before and after it! THE BLESSING OF "YOTZER" (before "Shema"), provides two more cases of breaks that appear to be uncalled for. In all Siddurim, the verses "Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh," and "Baruch Kevod" appear as separate, one-sentence paragraphs (TKP 51, RY 60). This is particularly strange as that blessing is quoting the angels who "say Kadosh" and "say Baruch." Why should there be a stop between the word "say" and the verse "Kadosh?"

A similar question may be asked of the blessing following "Shema," where the verses "Mi Chamocha" and "Hashem Yimloch" appear as individual paragraphs. (TKP 56-57, RY 66). In this latter instance, the words of the Tur (quoting from his father, the Rosh -- O.C. 49) are enlightening.

The Gemara tells us "that which is written in the Torah may not be recited by heart (Temurah 14a)." According to Tosafot (ad loc.) and the Rosh (Tur, *ibid.*), this prohibition only applies when the words are being recited by a Chazan in order to exempt those who are attending the services from reciting the verses themselves. It was once customary for the Chazan to read aloud all the blessings that precede and follow Keriyat Shema, thereby exempting the attending congregants from saying them. However, the Chazan could not exempt them from reciting Hashem Yimloch and Mi Chamocha unless he was reading the verses from a written Torah, which was not always convenient. The Ashkenazi community found a solution to this problem, says the Tur. When the Chazan reached these verses, he would stop reading out loud and the entire congregation would read them together.

It now becomes clear why these verses were made into separate paragraphs. These verses were originally preceded by a comment bidding the entire congregation to join the Chazan in their recitation, and they were printed/written apart from the rest of the blessing in order to denote the extent of the selection that is read jointly! (See Tosafot Pesachim 104b s.v. Chutz, who uses a similar form of logic to explain a break in the blessings for the Haftarah.)

Although the Chatam Sofer (Hagahot to O.C. 59:3) suggests that "Kadosh" and "Baruch Kevod" were read with the cantor for the same reason, doubt can be cast on this assumption. Tosafot's ruling, that each individual must read biblical verses for himself, only applies to verses from the Five Books of the Torah and not to verses from the Prophets or Ketuvim (Tosafot, *ibid.*). Today, this is witnessed by the fact that "Le'oseh Orim Gedolim" (towards the end of "Birchat Yotzer," TKP 51, RY 60), from Tehillim 136, is not printed as a separate paragraph.

However, the Rema (O.C. 59:3) quotes from early sources that the verses "Kadosh" and "Baruch Kevod" should be read in a louder voice than the rest of the prayers. (In his days, the entire congregation appears to have recited the blessings as we do today). To inform us of the unique status of these verses, they were written as separate paragraphs.

Alternatively, wherever the Siddur tells us, "They would all say the words together..." it became customary for the entire congregation to recite the verse that followed in unison, to act out the prayer. This would explain why all four of the verses we are discussing ("Kadosh," "Baruch," "MiChamocha," and "Yimloch") were recited by the entire congregation in unison and were therefore written as individual paragraphs. "VE'KAROT IMO HABRIT" (TKP 45, RY 54). Why is this a new paragraph? Not only does it not start a new subject, it does not start a new \*verse\* -- it is the end of the preceding verse!

The answer to this is really rather simple. It was once customary for a Mohel who was scheduled to perform a circumcision (Brit Milah) to lead the congregation in the recitation of part of the prayers verse by verse. He would begin with the words, "Ve'Karot Imo Habrit," because of the mention of Brit (Magen Avrohom 51:9). The Siddur had a break before Ve'Karot with a comment telling the Mohel where to start the public recitation.

L'MA'AN YIRBU: One puzzle remains unsolved. Most Ashkenazi Siddurim present the last verse of "V'Haya im Shemo'a (L'MA'AN YIRBU...)" as a separate paragraph. (TKP 54, 127, 176, 215). This uncalled for break is truly enigmatic. The verse "U'Ktavtem... U'Vish'arecha" is the last verse of the paragraph which begins "Shema Yisrael," but the \*next\* to the last verse of the paragraph beginning "V'Haya." Did a confused printer put a break after this verse, thinking that it was the end of the "V'Haya" paragraph? So far, none of the Torah scholars I have asked have offered any explanation for this break. I would appreciate hearing any suggestions on this matter!

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PARSHAT HASHAVUA PARSHAT EKEV  
by Menachem Leibtag

In memory of daniel ben reuven ferziger, z"l, in honor of the Upcoming shloshim. We extend our deepest gratitude to all our Friends from the yeshiva who greeted us at the kevura in beit Shemesh.

-sandra, reuven, jonathan, minna, adam and ari ferziger

L'zecher nishmat avraham ben tzvi whose yahrzeit is 17 av.

Note: I am on vacation this week, so I am resending last year's shiur.

ERETZ YISRAEL AND "MATAR" What is so special about the Land of Israel? From Parshat Ekev it appears that its 'kedusha' (sanctity) is somehow connected to its water supply. The following shiur will attempt to uncover the significance of this relationship.

PART I - THE LAND OF ISRAEL & THE LAND OF EGYPT Towards the beginning of Parshat Ekev, Eretz Yisrael receives a very positive assessment:

"For the Lord your God is bringing you into a GOOD land ... a land of wheat and barley (... the 7 species) ... a land which lacks nothing..." (8:7-9)

Yet, later in the Parsha, it appears that the Promised Land may be lacking certain qualities, at least in comparison to the Land of Egypt: "For the land which you are about to conquer is NOT LIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT, from which you have come, where when you planted your field you watered it with your foot... the Land which you are about to conquer, a land of hills and valleys, receives its water from the rains (MATAR) of the heavens." (11:10-11)

Let's examine this comparison between the Lands of Israel and Egypt. In Egypt, one waters his field "with his foot" (11:10), while in Israel the fields are watered by rain (11:11). What is the meaning of these two statements? Which land does the Torah consider better? The Nile River provides Egypt with a CONSTANT source of water for both drinking and agriculture. To water the fields in Egypt, one must open the irrigation ditches "with his foot". Israel lacks a mighty river such as the Nile, however, when it does rain, the fields are watered 'automatically'. Although each land has its respective advantage, both a careful investor and a responsible family provider would obviously prefer the more secure option of Egyptian agriculture over the 'risky' Israeli alternative. Thus, it would appear that the land of Egypt has a clear advantage (see Rashi & Ramban 11:10). What point is the Torah emphasizing by this comparison? To appreciate this comparison, these psukim must be understood in light of their context. Although the pasuk quoted above begins a new 'parsha', it begins with the word "ki" meaning 'for' ('because...') Therefore, this comparison between the lands of Israel and Egypt must be directly related to the preceding 'parsha' (10:12-11:9), which emphasizes over and over again the importance of "yir'at Hashem" (the fear of God), and begins as follows: "And now, O Israel, what is it that Hashem demands of you? It is to REVERE ("yir'ah") the Lord... Keep, therefore, this entire 'Mitzvah'... that you should conquer the Land ... and in order that you may long endure on this soil promised to your forefathers..."

Thus, it would appear that the Torah's comparison between these two lands emphasizes that the manner in which the Land of Israel receives its water (by rain "matar") enhances one's fear of God. This concept is clearly supported by the pasuk that follows this comparison (11:12): It is a land which the Lord your God LOOKS AFTER ("doresh otah"), on which Hashem always keeps His eye, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."

In other words, the Land of Israel is not better than Egypt, rather it is different. Its agriculture is dependent on the abundance of rain. A good rainy season will bring plenty, while a lack of rain will yield drought and famine. In contrast to Egypt, where the water supply is constant, the rainfall in Israel is sporadic. Thus, survival in the Land of Israel depends heavily on the "matar", whose quantity depends on God's will! As we explained in Parshat Va'etchanan (5:26 etc.), Hashem's primary concern at Maamad Har Sinai was that Bnei Yisrael fear Him and keep His laws. Living in a land whose agriculture is dependent on a 'touchy' rainy season, dependent on God's will, reinforces one's fear of God, thus creating a closer relationship between Hashem and His people. The ensuing parsha, "ve'haya im shamo..." (11:13-21), becomes the logical conclusion of this concept: "If you obey the commandments... I will grant the rain ("matar") for your land in season... then you shall eat and be satisfied... Be careful, lest you be lured after other gods... for Hashem will be angry ... and He will shut up the skies and there will be no rain ("matar")..." [Note the connection between these parshiot in a Tanach Koren!]

Thus, according to Sefer Dvarim, the "matar" (rain) acts not only as a 'barometer' of Am Yisrael's faithfulness to God, but also as a vehicle of divine retribution. Through the "matar", Hashem 'communicates' with His nation in their special land; rainfall, at the proper time, should be considered a divine reward for national 'good behavior', while a drought (the holding back of "matar") should be understood as a sign of divine anger. Which land is better? The answer simply depends on what one is looking for. An individual striving for a closer relationship with God would choose an environment where one's physical condition correlates with his spiritual behavior. He would obviously prefer the Land of Israel. An individual wary of such direct dependence on God, would obviously opt for the more secure life in Egypt.

PART II - BACK TO AVRAHAM AVINU At the onset of our national history, we find this very same comparison between the lands of Egypt and Israel. From the time of his 'aliya' from Ur Kasdim, Avraham Avinu traveled together with his nephew Lot. As Avraham was childless and Lot had lost his father, Lot was most probably regarded as Avraham's potential successor. Yet, when they returned to Israel from a trip to Egypt, a quarrel broke out between them (Breishit 13:5-7). Avraham suggested that Lot choose either North or South (13:8-9). [According to the pasuk - 'right' or 'left', translated by Unkelos 'south' or 'north' (see Sforno, see also JPS -le'havdil). Throughout Chumash "yemin" always refers to the south, kedem - east, etc.]

In other words, Avraham Avinu, standing in Bet El (see 13:3), was offering Lot a choice between the mountain ranges of "Yehuda" (South) or "Shomron" (North). [sounds like the first precedent of "Land for Peace".] Surprisingly, Lot opted for neither. Instead, he decided to 'divorce' himself from Avraham Avinu altogether, rather than split the Land with him. He lifted up his eyes to the East, choosing the Jordan Valley over the mountain range. The Torah explains the reason for Lot's choice: "And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the whole plain of Jordan, for it was all well watered (by the Jordan RIVER)... just like the Garden of the Lord, LIKE THE LAND OF EGYPT..." (13:10-12)

Lot, after his brief visit to Egypt, could no longer endure the hard life in the 'hills and valleys' of the central mountain range of the Land of Israel. He opted for the more secure lifestyle by the banks of the Jordan River, similar to the secure lifestyle in Egypt by the banks of the Nile River. [The reference in the above pasuk to the "Garden of the Lord", Gan Eden, also relates to its four rivers, its abundance of water.]

Lot departed towards Sdom for the 'good life', while Avraham Avinu remained in Bet El, at the heart of the Land of Israel (13:14-16, see also previous shiur Matot/Masei). Rashi (on Br.13:11) quotes a Midrash Chazal which arrives at this very same conclusion: "Va'yisa Lot mi-kedem... He traveled away from He who began the Creation ("kadmono shel olam"), saying, I can no longer endure being with Avraham nor with his God." ("iy efshi, lo be-Avraham, ve-lo be-Elokav").

This quarrel between Avraham and Lot represents a conflict between two opposite lifestyles; one that strives for a dependence, and, therefore, a relationship, with God (Avraham Avinu), and one that totally abandons such goals (Lot). The path taken by Avraham Avinu leads to Bet El, the house of God; the path taken by Lot leads to Sdom, the city of corruption (13:12-13).

PART III - BACK TO THE CREATION Just as we found this concept at the onset of our national history, so we find it at the onset of the history of all mankind. At the opening of the Gan Eden narrative, we find the first use of the word "matar" in a similar context, as the Torah makes a very peculiar statement: "...When Hashem made heaven and earth... And no shrub of the field had yet grown in the land and no grains had yet sprouted, because Hashem had not yet sent rain ("MATAR") on the land, nor was there MAN to work the field..." (Breishit 2:4-5)

This statement would appear to contradict earlier psukim concerning the first account of Creation ("perek aleph"). From the first perek in Breishit, it seems as though water was everywhere ("mayim") even without rain ("matar"). Furthermore, we all know that shrubs and grains grow very nicely even without man's help. Yet, according to this second account of Creation which begins in 'perek bet', it appears as though nothing could grow without "MATAR" (rain) and without MAN. Without going into all the details of the comparison between 'perek aleph' and 'perek bet', we will simply note that 'perek bet' focuses on the special relationship in the Creation between man and God, as reflected in the Gan Eden narrative ("olam ha'hitgalut" b'shem

"Ha'vaya"), while 'perek aleph' focuses on the creation of all 'nature' in seven days ("olam ha'teva" b'shem "Elokim"). [see previous (or wait for forthcoming) shiur on Parshat Breishit.] Thus, according to the second account of Creation, from the perspective of man's relationship with God, "matar" (rain) and "adam" (man) emerge as the two essential ingredients for all growth and development. "Matar" is not merely a 'water source', but symbolizes the connection between heaven and earth, between God and man.

Once again, Rashi cites a Midrash on this pasuk which alludes to this concept: "ki lo himtir...": And why had it not yet rained? ... because "adam ayin la'avod et ha'adama", for man had not yet been created to work the field, and thus no one had yet recognized the significance of rain. And when man was created and recognized their importance, HE PRAYED FOR RAIN. Then the rain fell and the trees and the grass grew..."

In the ideal environment, as reflected in the Land of Israel, God's provision of "matar" is a function of the performance of His will by man. Rain falling from heaven ("matar"), physically connects heaven to earth and provides all living things with their primary source of sustenance. In Chumash, this "matar" becomes symbolic of the spiritual connection between heaven and earth, between God and man. Thus, "matar" symbolizes the essence of all Creation and the ultimate purpose of the Land of Israel.

shabbat shalom Menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN: A. The word "matar" appears many other times in Chumash, note its use in each and relate it to the above shiur. For example: 1. By the Flood, Breishit 7:4-5 2. By the punishment of Sdom, Breishit 19:24! 3. By the manna, "hineni MAMTIR lachem lechem min hashamayim" see Shmot 16:4 and its context (that should keep you busy)

B. Throughout the time period of the Shoftim, and even during the time period of the First Monarchy, many Israelites worshipped the 'Ba'al' - the Cannanite rain god. 1. Relate the nature of this transgression to the above shiur. 2. Relate this to the mishnayot of mesechet ta'anit, which requires national fast days should rain not fall in sufficient quantities early in the rainy season. 3. Relate to Kings I 17:1 & 18:21 and context of perek 18!

C. In the psukim by Lot, the Nile and Jordan rivers are compared to the rivers of Gan Eden. 1. Does this indicate that there may be a positive aspect to the supply of water by a River? 2. Why should a river be appropriate for Gan Eden, while rain is more appropriate for Eretz Yisrael? 3. Relate this to Zecharaya 14:7-9 & Yechezkel 47:1-12!

D. In last week's shiur we noted that the "Mitzvah" section of the main speech includes 'mitzvot' given originally during Maamad Har Sinai, as well as 'tochachot' added in the 40th year by Moshe Rabeinu. 1. Show textually why from 8:1 till 10:11 must be an 'addition' of the 40th year, while 6:4-7:26 is most likely 'original'! Prove your answer. Use Shmot 23:20-33 in your proof! 2. 10:12->11:21. Would you say that these parshiot are also 'additions' or originals, or possibly a combination. Support your answer, and relate it to the above shiur!

E. The story of Chet Ha'egel is repeated in chap 9. 1. In what context is this story now being brought down. Relate to 9:4-6, and especially to "ki am kshe oref ata" (9:6). Relate also to 9:7 2. What other examples of this behavior are cited in this perek? 3. Based on this observation, explain why the story about chet ha'egel is broken up in the middle by psukim 9:22-23! and later by 10:6-9. 4. What is the primary theme of this short 'tochacha'? Copyright (c) 1996 Yeshivat Har Etzion. All rights reserved.

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S OUL HEELER -- DRASHA PARSHAS EIKEV  
"ATERES@aol.com""drasha@torah.org" DRASHA PARSHAS EIKEV --  
SOUL HEELER by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

This week's portion is called Ekev. Simply translated, Ekev means, "if". The Torah promises its bounty of blessing upon the Jewish nation. Hashem will watch you, love you, bless your children and your flocks -- in addition to five other verses all filled with various blessings. There is one caveat, however. These blessing are only bestowed with one condition --  $\perp$ Ekev tishmaoon, if you shall listen to the word of Hashem and fulfill his commandments. Rashi, who usually concentrates on the simple explanations and clarifies nuances in Hebrew terminology, deviates from his norm. In his only commentary to the

opening line of the portion, he translates the word Ekev in an entirely different light. He explains that the word ekev translates as heel. Thus, he explains the verse homiletically. "If you will observe Mitzvos that are ordinarily trampled on by the heel of your foot," then the blessings of Hashem shall follow.

Many commentaries pose the following question: Rashi's usual modus operandi is to first explain a verse in its pashut p'shat, simple explanation. That achieved, he then proceeds to expound the verse in a Midrashic light. In this case, Rashi uses only a Midrashic explanation. Why?

Rav Eliyahu Lopian raised funds for his Yeshiva in England. He once visited one of England's wealthiest Jews. The man was known to contribute to any Yeshiva or Rabbi who asked. The man himself, however, was not the least bit observant. Other than his adoration of Rabbis and support of Yeshivos, the philanthropist had hardly a connection with anything Jewish. Rabbi Lopian went to visit the man out of respect, but decided not ask him for a contribution.

Upon arriving at the opulent mansion, Rav Lopian was greeted warmly, offered hot tea, and was shown to a place in the man's living room. Rabbi Lopian got to the point quickly. "I see that you are not an observant Jew. However, your magnanimity to Yeshivos and Rabbis is remarkable. Tell me, please, why?"

The man settled back and began his tale. "My parents were very wealthy and equally religious. I was very rebellious. They wanted me to go to the Chofetz Chaim's Yeshiva in Radin. I was not in the least bit interested, but I agreed to take an examination. I failed with flying colors and was ever the more happy for that. But I had one request. It was getting late and I had to sleep over. I asked if I could sleep in the dormitory for the evening. The Rabbi who had interviewed me did not know how to respond. I think he was afraid to have me in the Yeshiva even for a night and I could not blame him! He consulted with the Chofetz Chaim.

"The Chofetz Chaim explained to us both, 'a boy that cannot be in the dorm for a year cannot be there for a night. But that does not mean he cannot stay in my home.'

"The Chofetz Chaim took me to his home. He fed me as if I was the most important visitor in the world. He made a bed for me and made sure I went to sleep. A few hours later, in the middle of the night, I heard the door of the tiny room open. The old man was muttering. 'Oy, it's too cold in here. What will I do?' With that he took off his jacket and put it on top of me and tucked it in. It may not have been the most spiritual act he ever did, but I will tell you one thing. That jacket still gives me warmth whenever I see old Rabbis! Perhaps Rashi is not expostulating. He is telling us the secret of spiritual survival. He is relating the formula which may be the secret to the Jew's existence and continuity. It's the small things that merit the blessings. It's the Mitzvos we tend to forget. Those we trample with our heel.

There are certain Mitzvos that anyone who prides himself as a Jew would not forgo. Yom Kippur and Passover are high on the list. Mezuzah and Kosher rank quite high, too. But there are too many others that get trampled. Rashi explains the verse by stating that if the little Mitzvos are ignored, it will not take long before the major Mitzvos join the little ones on their trek to oblivion. The Torah promises us the bounty of its blessing if we observe the mitzvos.

But Rashi gives us a lesson in assuring continuity. Rashi is telling us the Poshut P'shat (the simple meaning)! Don't tread on the little Mitzvos. Watch the Mitzvos that everyone tends to forget. If those heel commandments will be considered important, then all the Mitzvos will ultimately be observed. That's not allegorical discourse. That's the fact! Dedicated by B. David & Shani Schreiber in memory of Rebbitzin Naomi B. Twerski Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Torah Facsimile on the Parsha which is a project of the Henry & Myrtle Hirsch Foundation

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From: "dmgreen@skynet.net" To: "dvar Torah@torah.org"  
Subject: Parshas Eikev THE SH'MA

by Chaim Ozer Shulman (cshulman@paulweiss.com)

The first chapter of the Sh'ma, which is in the Torah Portion of Vaeschanan (6:4), as well as the second chapter of Sh'ma which is in the Torah Portion of Eikev (11:13) both enumerate three Mitzvos (commandments): Torah study, Tefilin and Mezuzah.

Interestingly, the order of these Mitzvos differs in the two chapters of Sh'ma. The first chapter lists first Torah study (Teach your children (6:7)), second Tefilin (Put as a sign on your arm ... and between your eyes (6:8)), and third Mezuzah (Write on your door posts (6:9)). The second chapter of Sh'ma, however, lists first Tefilin (A sign upon your arm (11:18)), second Torah study (Teach your children (11:19)) and third Mezuzah (On your door posts (11:20)). Why is the order of these three commandments different in the two chapters of Sh'ma?

Also, why is the first chapter of Sh'ma written in singular form (V'Ahavta, V'Shinantam L'Vanecha, etc.) while the second chapter of Sh'ma is written in plural form (Tishmiu, U'Keshartem, etc.)?

The answer to these two questions may lie in the fact that the first chapter of Sh'ma discusses accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, while the second chapter of Sh'ma discusses accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos (commandments). We see this in the Mishnah in the second chapter of Berachos (Daf 13.): Said Rabbi Reb Yehoshua Ben Karchah, why is Sh'ma read before V'Haya Im Shmoah? So that a person should accept the yoke of the Kingdom of G-d and afterwards accept the yoke of commandments.

This explains why the first chapter of Sh'ma is written in singular form and the second chapter of Sh'ma is written in plural form. With respect to accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, each person has to work on himself individually and privately to come to believe in, and serve G-d. But with respect to accepting the yoke of Mitzvos, a person can fulfill this publicly, and in fact fulfilling Mitzvos in public is often preferable ("In a large crowd G-d's glory is revealed") Therefore the first chapter of Sh'ma which deals with accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven is in singular form, and the second chapter of Sh'ma which deals with accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos is in plural form.

This also helps us understand why in the first chapter of Sh'ma Torah study is mentioned before Tefilin and in the second chapter of Tefilin is mentioned before Torah study. With regard to accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, a person must first understand with his mind through Torah study that there is a G-d, and only afterwards can he fulfill with his body things that symbolize his belief in the oneness of G-d. Therefore in the first chapter of Sh'ma Torah study is mentioned first. With respect to accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos, however, one can certainly keep the Mitzvos even without understanding the reasons or knowing all the underlying details. That is the concept of Na'aseh ViNishma (we will do and we will listen), that one can accept the Mitzvos even before understanding the reasons. Therefore in the second chapter of Sh'ma Tefilin is mentioned first, since Tefilin symbolizes all the Mitzvos that a person fulfills with his body, while Torah study is mentioned afterwards as that deals with the reasons and the ideology.

A similar explanation was given by both my grandfathers, Rabbi Michal Kossowsky ZT'L and Rabbi Moshe Shulman ZT'L, as to why one first puts on the Tefilin of the hand and afterwards the Tefilin of the head, but one takes off the Tefilin of the head first, because even before understanding the reasons with our head, we must do the Mitzvos with our hands, and even if the reasons escape us we must continue to do the Mitzvos.

What remains to be understood is why Mezuzah is mentioned last in both chapters of Sh'ma. Mezuzah being last in the first chapter of Sh'ma is very logical, because with regard to accepting the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven one first must believe in G-d with one's head through Torah study,

then one can put a sign on one's body to show this belief (through Tefilin), and finally one can put a sign on one's home that this home houses a family that believes in G-d. In the second chapter of Sh'ma, however, Mezuzah should logically belong before Torah study, because one should do Mitzvos in one's house even before one understands the reasons for them. So why is Mitzvah of Mezuzah placed last even in the second chapter of Sh'ma?

Perhaps a Mezuzah on a house shows not only that parents keep the Mitzvos, but also that children who grow up in the house will keep the Mitzvos as well. If parents do not learn Torah and do not understand the reasons and the philosophy behind what they do, they will not be able to instill in their children a devotion for the Torah and the Mitzvos. Therefore, even with respect to accepting the yoke of the Mitzvos, Torah study is a necessary prerequisite to building a house of Mitzvos. And that is why even in the second chapter of Sh'ma, Mezuzah is placed last after Torah study.

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From: "genesis@torah.org" To: "lifeline@torah.org" Subject: \* PG LifeLine - Eikev

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Please pray for the speedy healing of Masha Miriam bas Basya, Tziporah Chaya Sarah bas Basya, Alta Chana Baila bas Basya, Menashe Avigdor ben Miriam, Sarit bas Esther, Yonason haCohen ben Rochel Leah, Eliyahu ben Chana, Esther Miriam bas Alizah Geulah, Zvi Yehuda ben Chaya Esther, Chaim Yaakov Nachmiel Ben Sarah Dabah, Zalman ben Chaya, Shlomo ben Esther, Sara Riva bas Chana, and Reuvain Ben Faygah.

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"And He humbled you, and caused you to feel hunger, and [then] He fed you the Manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, in order to make you realize that not by bread alone does man live, but by all that comes from the mouth of G-d does man live." [8:3]

Our ancestors - by surviving at G-d's hand for forty years - were taught a lesson of incomparable value. We realize that we have physical needs. But do we honestly realize that our spiritual side has needs as well, without which we cannot flourish?

The society around us wants us to believe otherwise. We have jobs in order to... "make a living." Food, clothing, shelter, car - and two weeks vacation in the Bahamas - and that's "a living." Torah? G-d? Religion is "the opiate of the masses!" So Judaism becomes a weekend activity.

It's a critical error - for anyone, but especially for Jews. Cult movements across America became quite large in the 70's and 80's, filling their ranks with college students desperate for "spiritual fulfillment." And one-third to one-half of the adherents were young Jews (only 3% of the U.S. population). In the Talmud Brachos 61b, Rebbe Akiva compares a Jew without Torah to a fish out of water:

The Rabbis taught: at one time, the evil kingdom (the Romans) made a decree that the Jews could not study Torah. Papos ben Yehudah discovered Rebbe Akiva gathering congregations together and teaching Torah in public.

He said, "Akiva! Are you not scared of the government?" Rebbe Akiva replied, "I will give you a parable. To what can our situation be compared?"

To a fox walking on the bank of a river, who saw fish in the water darting from place to place. He asked the fish, "why are you fleeing?" The fish replied, "because of the nets that people bring upon us." So the fox said, "would you like to come up on the dry land? You and I will live together, just as your fathers lived with mine." Asked the fish, "are you the one that they call the clever animal? You are not clever, but a fool! If we are afraid here, where we live, how much more so would we be in a place where we die!" "So it is with us, who are sitting and studying Torah, which says (Deuteronomy 30) 'for it is your lives and the length of your days.' So would we be if we were to get up and leave it," concluded Rebbe Akiva. They [the Rabbis] said, it was not terribly long before they captured Rebbe

Akiva and imprisoned him, and they captured Papos ben Yehudah and placed him into the same cell. Rebbe Akiva said to him, "Papos! What brings you here?" He replied, "happy are you, Akiva, who was captured over words of Torah! Woe is to Papos, who was captured over vain foolishness!"

Is the absence of Torah fatal? No, not on an immediate, physical level. But Rebbe Akiva was saying, "this is life itself." It gives meaning to our entire existence. A Jewish home without Torah... is dead. It doesn't matter if the people are physically healthy, because on a spiritual level, there is nothing. If we don't see it immediately, we see it in the next generation, the generation that - like the fish out of water - so often withers and dries up, and is lost to the Jewish people.

Today, we the Jews have lost sight of this reality. In Jewish communities around the world, "continuity" has become the buzzword. Reacting to surveys showing incredible rates of assimilation (drying fish), various Jewish organizations are acting to "ensure the survival of the Jewish people." Yet how do they spend their (your) money? How often is the answer "education?" Even in Israel, the rate of Yerida (emigration) has become quite frightening - one wit commented that the fourth-largest Israeli population center is Brooklyn, NY, and I don't think this was an exaggeration.

The same surveys show a clear linkage between Jewish education and Jewishly active adults. The only answer - the only road to not merely Jewish survival, but growing and flourishing Jewish life - is a solid commitment to Judaism and Jewish learning.

"And you shall place these words upon your hearts, and upon your souls, and you shall tie them for a sign upon your hands, and they shall be Totafos between your eyes; and you shall teach them to your children, to speak of them when sitting in your house, when walking on the way, when lying down, and when arising; and you shall write them upon the doorposts of your houses and in your gates; in order that your days be increased, and those of your children, upon the land which G-d has sworn to your fathers to give them, like the days of heaven upon the earth." [11:18-21]

If you read our classes - that's a positive step. But do more... and take your Torah home with you. Homes filled with Torah are the building blocks that support the Jewish community.

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Good Shabbos, Rabbi Yaakov Menken

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Friday, August 2, 1996

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SHABBAT SHALOM: Never forget

By RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

(August 1)"And when your herds and flocks multiply, and your silver and gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; then your heart may grow haughty, and you may forget God your Lord." (Deut. 8:13-14) ONE of the thorniest questions is the issue of free will. If we are to assign meaning and significance to human action in a universe created by God, then individuals must be free to do as they please.

On the other hand, free will seems to be precluded by the omniscience of God who, by definition, knows everything in advance. But if God knows what will happen in a person's life, doesn't that mean that there really is no free will?

Turning to this week's portion of Ekev, I'd like to suggest two interpretations of a key biblical verse: The first leans toward a view of the universe wherein God is the only One who makes things happen. But a slightly different stress on the same verse can be shown to yield the opposite idea: not only is God's role central, but our human role is central as well.

In the verses under scrutiny, the Torah confronts those who attribute their success to their own efforts. The issue is a classical one. The day will come when the Israelites shall live in stately homes, adorned with gold and silver, surrounded by vineyards and flocks, and they will glory in the power of their might and in the cleverness of their own minds.

So arrogant will they be that they will forget that had it not been for God's miraculous gifts of manna, the protective cloud and the guiding fire, they would never have survived the dry, snake-infested, scorpion-ridden desert. Blindly, they will claim: "My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth." (Deut. 8:17) And so we are cautioned to "remember the Lord your God, for it is He who has given you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore unto your fathers." (Deut. 8:18) Nahmanides understands this verse to mean that whatever a human may think he accomplished was actually accomplished by God. Indeed, this great Jewish commentator obviates any distinction between natural and supernatural. On an earlier passage (Ex. 13:16), Nahmanides writes that a person must come to recognize the hidden miracles that we generally overlook: "No one can have a part in the Torah of Moses our teacher unless he believes that all our words and all our happenings are miraculous, and that there is no nature or usual order in the world."

What Nahmanides is saying is that most people are quick to acknowledge the Divine role in the seemingly supernatural miracles of the Torah. They are not ready to realize, however, that everything in life is a miracle.

This is the Divine message to the self-appointed Masters of the Universe we cited earlier. Each must understand that everything we think we have achieved is in reality a product of Divine Will. Had God not wanted it to happen, it would never have taken place. A mentch tut, der Aibishter tut uff, "A human being does, but God accomplishes," goes the Yiddish proverb. The idea of a universe in which the prime mover is God certainly seems to chip away at whatever hope we might harbor for free will. But there is another position, that of Maimonides, and we can find in his words a recognition of the significance of choice even in a world which bears the signature of God on every level.

In the last Mishna in the fourth chapter of Tractate Pesachim, we read an account of six actions taken by King Hezekiyah, three of which evoked praise from the Sages, and three of which evoked criticism. Among those he was praised for was concealing a work called the Book of Healings. Rashi suggests that the Sages saw in the king's action a desire to prevent people from ignoring God in their pursuit of health; if the Book of Healings had remained available, people would have come to rely on its formulas rather than on the Creator of the Universe in times of illness.

Maimonides disagrees completely, insisting that the Book of Healings was both ineffective and idolatrous. Imagine a starving individual who cures his hunger by baking bread. Does he then desist from thanking the Almighty in the Grace After Meals?

On the contrary, he shows gratitude to God for providing the agricultural, physical and intellectual wherewithal to turn wheat into bread. After all, God created the world, with its raw grains and herbs, and created human beings with physical and intellectual potentials. However, it is up to us to realize the potential. God lays the groundwork; we must actualize the product. Nahmanides sees human beings as agents through whom the Divine operates; Maimonides sees human beings as partners with God.

Interestingly, the verse: "But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He that gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers" (Deut. 8:18) may be taken either way. When seen from a Nahmanidean perspective, it stresses human frailty and Divine accomplishment; but it can also be viewed through a Maimonidean filter, which merely reminds us that the source of our energy and talents is, after all, the Creator.

It would seem to me that the very usage of the term "covenant" implies a mutual endeavor, a partnership. God will not enable Israel to prosper unless

we take proper action and responsibility. God provides the strength, the knowledge, the ability, the potential - but whether something happens or not depends on us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Riskin, dean of the Ohr Tora institutions, is chief rabbi of Efrat.

Shabbat-B'Shabbato: Eikev 5756

Shabbat-B'Shabbato -- Parshat Eikev

No 607: 18 Av 5756 (3 August 1996) SHABBAT-ZOMET

AS A DIRECT RESULT

by Rabbi Yehudah Shaviv

The word "EIKEV" is used in two opposite passages in this week's Torah portion: "Because you will listen to these laws" [Devarim 7:12], and "So will you be lost, because you will not listen to the voice of your G-d" [Devarim 8:20]. This opposite use shows that the two passages are related, as explained by the Rashbam: "'Because you will not listen' is the end of the section: If you listen, you will inherit the land, if you do not listen, you will lose it."

However, the exact meaning of the word "eikev" is not clear.

Onkolos translates, "Chalaf," meaning "because of," or "as a result of," and the Ramban agrees with this translation. Ibn Ezra relates the word to the ultimate reward which is a result of an action. According to the Ramban, every activity has a start and a finish, "rosh" and "eikev." It can also be interpreted in terms of time, as was evidently the basis of the following commentary: "Moshe said to Yisrael, do not perform the mitzvot in order to achieve the reward immediately but at the end. This can be compared to a king who hired workers for his orchard. He said to them, trust me and I will pay your salary at the end." [Devarim Rabba, Lieberman, page 76].

Rashi takes a different approach, saying that "eikev" refers to a specific type of mitzvah: "If you follow the simple mitzvot that people tend to thresh under their feet." In Midrash Tanchuma, the sages mentioned these mitzvot as opposed to the "serious" ones, which can be assumed to be followed carefully. Rashi adds his own graphic description of ignoring mitzvot that are not perceived to be important.

It may be possible to combine the above concepts. The straightforward meaning of the passage refers to future rewards. But these rewards are obtained as a result of methodical progress, step by step. The most attractive mitzvot are those which appear to give a promise of immediate reward, such as an uplifting of the spirit. However, the real reward will be the result of constant repeated performance of those mitzvot that may at times seem simple and unimportant.

The word used by Rashi, "to thresh," means to separate chaff from wheat. However, this action is only the first step in preparing wheat for food, and it must be followed by other actions. It does not give an immediate reward of food that can be eaten on the spot. It is just the mitzvot that constitute the first step, similar to thrashing, which will be followed by other activities that will lead to the ultimate reward.

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NCYI Divrei Torah - Ekev

Parshat Ekev NCYI Divrei Torah - Ekev 18 Av 5756 Saturday, August 3, 1996 Guest Rabbi: Rabbi Elchanan Snyder Young Israel of San Diego, California As the Jews are poised to enter the Promised Land after forty years in the desert, Moshe Rabbeinu gives them his final instructions. He comments that it was not by accident or caprice that G-d led the Jews through the desert but by design. G-d wished to expose them to a life above nature, to provide for all their needs. G-d could have provided us with natural bread through miraculous means, as he did with the Quail. What lesson can we learn from the Manna (bread that fell from heaven) that sustained us in the desert? Bread is a product of man's intelligence through his interaction with nature. Man plants seeds, harvests the crops, and grinds it to make bread. The necessity of making a living, to provide for our children, and even to pay yeshiva tuition, constricts us. The business of making bread can be so time consuming and all-encompassing that it drives all other considerations out of mind. We get home at night with little energy

to do Mitzvot and study Torah. G-d provided us with Manna for the reason outlined by the Pasuk; "in order to let you know that not by bread alone does man live..." (Devarim 8, 3). Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch elucidates this verse and explains that we live on everything G-d ordains and not by bread and what it represents (which is man's labor). The Manna was a special food tailored to each individual and family, for no matter how much labor one put into gathering the Manna, he would come home with exactly enough to feed his family. This is the marvelous lesson we learn about the care G-d showers on each individual. For forty years the Jews were taught of G-d's everlasting and everproviding presence. The Jews were commanded to take a piece of Manna, put it in a jar and place the jar next to the Aron in the Holy of Holies. Hundreds of years later, Yirmiyahu the prophet went to the people of Yehudah and asked them why they weren't studying Torah. They replied that if they studied, who would support them! The prophet took out the jar of the Manna and said; "See G-d's words! See how your ancestors were supported in the desert. G-d has many agents" (see Shmot 16: 32-35). Moshe Rabbeinu tells the people, especially now as they are about to enter the land of Israel and become farmers; "Remember your sojourn in the desert". Remember how G-d provided for you, so He will provide for you always. Remember the sin of the golden calf when you thought I had died. You went into a panic and made a replacement calf for me, not trusting in G-d Who had provided for you till now. Most of the blessings that we recite are Rabbinic in origin. Brachot that we say before we do a Mitzvah and blessings we make before partaking of a pleasure are not prescribed by the Torah. Two brachot are of Divine origin; the blessing before learning Torah and the blessing after we eat. After we have enjoyed our meal, the culmination of our labor, G-d tells us to remember Who gave us bread. We should not walk away from the table with the thought that it was our labor solely, rather that it was G-d Who provided us with our sustenance. Yehoshua continued this theme when he added the second blessing of the Birkat HaMazon, the blessing of the land. In this part of the blessing, we acknowledge that G-d gave us the Land of Israel and had provided for us in the past. However this gift is dependent on our acceptance of the covenant which He made with us. In describing the land, Moshe tells the people; (Devarim 11, 12) "the land that G-d seeks out, the eyes of G-d are always upon it..." The land of Israel is not like Egypt with an assured source of water, rather it is a land of brooks and springs dependent on rain. G-d tells us that He is the master of the heavens and the earth and he provides the rain and all our needs. But what does He ask of us? G-d asks "Only to fear G-d, to go in His ways, to love and serve Him" (Devarim 10, 12). In Tehillim we say; "turn from evil and do good". It is not enough to refrain from sinning, we must do Mitzvot. The Torah juxtaposes the sin of Idol Worship with the command to do the Mitzvot in order to merit the conclusion of the verse "in order to live in the land...". We must not only refrain from doing evil but also do positive mitzvot. The Talmud in Brachot 35:2 quotes an argument between two great sages. Rabbi Yishmael concludes from the verse in Sh'ma: "You will gather your grain" (Devarim 11, 14), that one must till the soil and work for a livelihood. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai disagrees and says that if man spends his time in toil, when will he be able to study? Rather when Israel does the will of heaven, others will do our work and support us. The Talmud concludes that many did like Rabbi Yishmael and were able to combine work with Torah studies, but we are not at the level to follow Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai's dictum. Rava, the great Amora, told his students that, in the months of Nissan and Tishrei, when laborers were needed for harvest and wine-pressing, they should get jobs in order to be able to study the rest of the year without financial worry. Even though, the Talmud concludes, most people should work- even those who work should focus on serving G-d as their primary concern and their work should be of secondary importance. Then we will get the best of both worlds, spiritual and physical. We must reevaluate our priorities and concentrate on our purpose in life, to fear G-d and to do His commandments. If we have the will to spend more time studying and doing Mitzvot, then G-d will provide. The lesson from the desert is a powerful message to all of us. As a reward for our renewed commitment, may G-d grant us the blessing from the second paragraph of the Sh'ma: "If you will listen to My commandments...then I shall provide rain..." (Devarim 11,13) and all material blessings.



B"H Torah Studies Adaptation of Likutei Sichos by Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks Chief Rabbi of Great Britain Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion EKEV

Last week and this, we read the first two Haftorot of "consolation," two powerful passages from Isaiah which present a vision of hope and solace to Israel in the dark times of the loss of the Temple. A Midrashic source, however, tells us that there is a difference between them. The first is G-d's call to the prophets to comfort the people. But Israel seeks more. It seeks comfort from G-d Himself. And this is what the second Haftorah represents. The Sicha relates this distinction to the difference between the Sidrot of Vaetchanan and Ekev, in particular between the first and second paragraphs of the Shema which they respectively contain. The underlying theme is the difference between two kinds of revelation, that which comes from outside a person, and that which comes from within. The significance for our time is clear: What form must our spiritual life take when visions of G-d no longer break in on us, when the face of G-d is hidden, and we must discover Him from within?

#### CONSOLATION: THE PROPHETS AND G-D

This week's Haftorah, the second of the "Seven Weeks of Consolation," for the destruction of the Temples, is the passage from Isaiah beginning, "But Zion said, the L-rd hath forsaken me, and the L-rd hath forgotten me." The Midrash tells us that this is a continuation of the theme of the previous Haftorah, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people." In that first message of comfort, G-d instructs the prophets to console Israel. To this, Israel's response is, "The L-rd hath forsaken me." They seek, in other words, not the voice of the prophets but a consolation that comes directly from G-d. Each year these Haftorot are read, respectively, with the Sidrot of Vaetchanan and Ekev.

It follows that if the Haftorot are connected by this common theme, so too are the Sidrot. Vaetchanan must contain some reference to the consolation of the prophets, and Ekev, to Israel's demand for the solace that stems from G-d Himself.

#### THE SHEMA

The two Sidrot differ considerably in their content, so that this contrast of emphasis is not immediately apparent. But there is one obvious link, namely that the first paragraph of the Shema is to be found in Vaetchanan and the second in Ekev. These two passages are clearly related; they have many ideas in common; but they also diverge at a number of points. And it is here that we will find an echo of the contrast between the two Haftorot and the two kinds of consolation.

#### CONTRASTS

Amongst the differences between the first and second paragraphs of the Shema are the following:

- (i) In the first, we are commanded (individually) to "love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." But in the second, we are addressed (collectively) only with the phrase "with all your heart and with all your soul." The "might" is missing.
- (ii) In the first paragraph, we are told first "And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and talk of them . . ." and then, "And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand . . ." But in the second, the order is reversed. First "You shall bind them" and only then, "You shall teach them to your children." The commandments follow the study of the Torah in the first paragraph but precede it in the second.
- (iii) The first paragraph contains only commandments. But the second also mentions the rewards ("That your days may be multiplied...") and the punishments ("The anger of the L-rd be kindled against you ...") which attend them.

#### UNDERLYING DIFFERENCES

An underlying difference between the two passages is, as Rashi points out,

that the first (written throughout in the singular) is addressed to the individual Jew, while the second (which uses the plural) is directed to Israel as a community.

This applies to the general command of the love of G-d. In addition, the specific commands of tefillin and mezuzah, which occur in both paragraphs, also convey something new when stated a second time. In Rashi's words, the extra significance is that "Even after you have been exiled, make yourselves distinctive by means of My commands: Lay tefillin, attach mezuzot, so that these shall not be new (unfamiliar) to you when you return."

Lastly, there is a nuance which distinguishes the two commands of spreading the knowledge of Torah. "And you shall teach them diligently" - the version in the first paragraph - refers to the obligation of a teacher to his disciples. "And you shall teach them" - the reading in the second paragraph - refers to the relation of a father to his children.

#### Above and Within

All these distinctions stem from a single point of difference: Vaetchanan concerns the revelation and deliverance that come from Above, from G-d's grace. Thus it begins with Moses' supplication to G-d for His grace, that he be allowed to enter the Promised Land. For Moses was G-d's emissary through whom came the supernatural events of the exodus and those in the wilderness. Had he been permitted to lead the Israelites across the Jordan, the conquest of the land, too, would have been a supernatural event instead of a slow succession of military victories.

But the Sidra of Ekev concerns man's situation, and the revelation he draws down upon himself by his own acts. So it begins with an account of what he can achieve, and how: "And it shall come to pass, because you hearken to these judgments..." Even its name, Ekev ("because"), also has the connotation in Hebrew of a "heel" - the lowliest and least sensitive of man's limbs, and an apt symbolism of his physical nature, which by hearkening to G-d's word he can transform.

This contrast is also reflected in the choice of verbs in the opening of the two Sidrot.

In Vaetchanan, Moses pleads that he might "see the good land." But in Ekev, G-d says "because you hearken to (literally: 'hear') these judgments." "Seeing" describes the vision of the supernatural that G-d confers in moments of grace. "Hearing" refers to the more distant, less lucid perception of the spiritual, to which man can aspire by his own efforts.

#### Seeing and Hearing

Seeing something is clearer and more forceful than hearing about it. Nonetheless, this force and clarity are due to what is seen rather than to the person who sees it. It is the object which is clearly defined; and the man who sees it may still be unaffected by it. But if he has made the effort to hear about something, he has already aroused his feelings and made himself sensitive to what he is about to hear. It can then enter the inwardness of his soul.

This is true, too, of the difference between Vaetchanan and Ekev. Although the "vision" which Moses sought from G-d was a greater revelation than the "hearkening" which the Israelites could achieve by themselves, it was less inward - it would have come to man from outside instead of mounting within him.

The effect on the world would have been different, also. Through G-d, via Moses, the nations who opposed Israel would have had their hostility utterly removed: "All the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them." But through Israel's own faithfulness a greater and more inward transformation would take place: "You shall be blessed above all peoples," meaning that even Israel's adversaries would bless and praise her.

#### The Partial and the Whole

Another difference between the two senses in this: Seeing is only one of man's faculties. But hearing touches them all - his intellect, in striving to understand G-d's command, his will, in choosing to obey, and his practical faculties in translating his intentions into deeds.

Jewish law reflects this. For if someone is guilty of causing a person to become blind, he must compensate him for the loss of his eyes. But if he is responsible for his deafness, he must pay him the whole value of his life, as if he had robbed him of all his faculties.

#### The Two Revelations and the Shema

Now we can trace all the many differences between the two paragraphs of the

Shema to their source.

The first belongs to the Sidra of Vaetchanan, which concerns the revelation from Above, as symbolized by the sense of sight.

The second is from Ekev, which concerns the revelation from within, which is like "hearing."

Thus the first is addressed to the individual, the "one," for it speaks of the revelation from G-d, the "One," which awakens the oneness of man. This vision of infinity makes man restless to cast off his earthly constraints, and this is why it adds "with all your might." But the second paragraph, relating as it does to man within his human situation, speaks in the plural, to the community, for it is addressed to man in his diversity and in the plurality of his powers. The love of G-d which man achieves by himself is settled and serene ("with all your heart and all your soul"). It does not share that violent desire to rise beyond the world which the words "with all your might" signify. The first paragraph, as a consequence, sets the study of Torah (the word of G-d) before the command of Tefillin and mezuzah (the act of man). But the second, starting from man and working towards G-d, reverses the order. The first paragraph also omits any reference to reward and punishment. For in the face of a vision of G-d, man needs no other inducement to do His will. But when he sets out to work towards G-d from his own situation, he needs at the outset some motive (reward and punishment) that he can understand in purely human terms.

#### FAITH IN EXILE

Despite this concession to human frailty, it is here, in the second paragraph, that we find a reference to keeping the commandments "even after you have been exiled." For the first paragraph represents a state of mind where exile might take away the will to obey, might even remove the whole force of the Divine command. If the desire to do G-d's will rests on the vision of His presence, then once it is hidden by the dark clouds of exile, the desire too goes into hiding. But when it comes from within man himself, it remains, even in exile, in its strength. And just as this revelation from within persists whether there is light or darkness in the face that G-d sets towards the world, so it is to be communicated not only to those who have seen the light, the "disciples," but to everyone; the "children."

#### THE TRUE CONSOLATION

Lastly, we can see the link between the two kinds of revelation represented by Vaetchanan and Ekev, and the two kinds of consolation embodied in their Haftorot.

The revelation that comes from outside of man lacks the ultimate dimension of inwardness. That is why the Haftorah of Vaetchanan, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," describes an indirect consolation, one that comes via the prophets.

But the Haftorah of Ekev is set in the human attempt to struggle towards G-d from within. Its opening words dramatically convey this situation at its darkest: "But Zion said, the L-rd hath forsaken me, and the L-rd hath forgotten me." And yet this is a measure of its inwardness, that the consolations of a prophet are not enough. And so, the Midrash tells us, G-d accedes to Israel's request. He admits, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, are not comforted."

And He proclaims "I, even I, am He that comforts you" - with the true, the final and the imminent consolation, the coming of the Messianic Age.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. IX, pp. 79-85.)

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Eikev

Selected, translated and arranged by Rabbi Dov Rabinowitz.

"And HaShem your G-d will also visit the tzir'ah (a poisonous insect) upon them . . . Do not be terrified of them, for HaShem your G-d is in your midst, a great and fear inspiring G-d." (7 20,21)

Rabeinu Bechaia explains: You must know that miracles are of two types, hidden miracles and publicized miracles. (The Torah) mentioned the publicized miracles in the previous possuk, where it says "The great miracles which your eyes saw, and the signs and the wonders." And now it mentions the affliction of the tzir'ah, which is in the (category of) hidden miracles, because it appears to the eye of the

beholder (as if) it comes in a natural way, like the manner of the rains, for they both do not (show any) deviation from the nature of the world, rather they (appear as) a natural occurrence.

This is (the significance of) the term "also," to express that HaShem Yisborach will also save you from your enemies by natural means. Thus (it continues) "Do not be terrified of them" to convey that (you) should not fear the nations, but rather (fear) HaShem who dwells in your midst. . .

And it mentions two tributes of HaKadosh Boruch Hu: "great" and "fear inspiring" corresponding to the two types of miracles. For He is the paragon of mightiness and omnipotence, "great" (with regard to) hidden miracles, and "fear inspiring" (with regard to) publicized miracles, as it says concerning the miracle of the (splitting of the) sea "Fear inspiring in (His) praises, (Who) does wondrous things." (Shmos 15,11) This is why it says further on "these great and fear inspiring (actions)" (10,21) - "great" refers to the hidden miracles, and "fear inspiring" refers to the publicized miracles.

The tzir'ah was a type of insect (literally fly) which could discharge venom. Our Sages said "There were two (instances of) tzir'ah, one in the days of Moshe, and one in the days of Yehoshua. It would attack ahead of them, and blind their eyes and they could not fight, and Yisroel would come and slay them."

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"Not (because of) your virtuosity and the righteousness of your heart are you coming to inherit their land; rather (because of) the wickedness of these nations, HaShem your G-d drives them out from before you, and in order that He may fulfill the word(s) which HaShem vowed to your forefathers, Avraham, Yitschak and Yaakov." (9,5) The Or HaChaim explains, that you are not worthy to inherit the land because of your (own) righteousness, but nevertheless the (generation) who came into the land were a worthy generation. And thus you find that (Moshe) said to them "And you who are clinging to HaShem your G-d, are all living today." (4,4)

However they were not (sufficiently) virtuous to give them the land on their (own) merit if there had not been the covenant of (their) forefathers; despite this, the covenant of their forefathers would not have helped them to inherit the land if they had been wicked. The generation of the Midbar (who did not merit to come into the land because of their sins) proves this, as the Rava"d wrote in his commentary to the Mishna in the second chapter of Eiduyos (Mishna 9) where it is taught "A father (bestows) merit upon (his) son . . . as it is written 'He calls out the generations from the beginning' (Yeshayah 41,4) " and the Rava"d wrote "He sees (in advance) which generation is meritorious, and He postpones (the good which is envisioned) for them until that generation . . . like the generation of Yehoshua . . ." From this (we see that) a generation which is virtuous is also necessary. Nevertheless, they did not have a sufficient measure of virtue for them to deserve to inherit the land if it had not been for the covenant of their forefathers.

For this reason it says "Not (because of) your virtuosity . . ." even though you are a righteous congregation, your merit does not have sufficient power to attain this goal. And it (states) categorically "Not (because of) your virtuosity . . ." to stress that their righteousness did not contribute at all, (not) even to help, for the covenant of the forefathers was sufficient; all that their virtuous deeds facilitated was that the good should not be withheld from them. "Rather (because of) the wickedness . . . and in order that He may fulfill the word(s) which HaShem vowed . . ." One of these (factors alone) was not sufficient, because without the wickedness of the nations, HaShem would not have driven them out, (as this would) not have been just. And (because of) their wickedness alone, Yisroel would not have been worthy to gain their land . . .

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From: "kollel@mcs.com"

MESSAGE FROM THE HAFTORAH PARSHAS EIKEV  
YESHAYA 49:14

This week's haftorah continues the theme of comforting the Jewish nation and presents their strong feelings prior to their redemption. The prophet Yeshaya captures their concern at that time and quotes their unfortunate expression of rejection, "Hashem has forsaken me and has forgotten Zion." (49:14) The long, dark years of exile have allowed the Jewish people to sincerely believe that Hashem has abandoned them and will never return to Zion. There are no indications of redemption in the air and the rapid spiritual decline in those times does not project preparatory stages of the glorious era of Mashiach. Therefore, the Jewish people reluctantly conclude that the master plan has been changed and their long awaited redemption may never come to fruition. Surprisingly, Hashem responds and informs the Jewish people that they are gravely mistaken. The prophet Yeshaya quotes Hashem saying, "Can a mother ever forget her child, ceasing to have compassion for him?!" Hashem continues, "Even if she could forget, I will never forget you!" (49:15) Hashem revealed to His people that His relationship with them is an inseparable one. He truly cares for them even beyond a mother's concern for her own child and He is prepared to do everything in His power to reunite with His children. Hashem adds, "Behold I have engraved you on My palm; your walls are constantly before Me." (49:16) Hashem tells His people that, in reality, they remain His constant focus throughout the day. Hashem awaits their return with such anxiety that He has affixed them to the palm of His hand and continually views them in their final stages of redemption. Contrary to the Jewish people's opinion, Hashem never takes His mind off of them and is anxiously awaiting their return to Him. The prophet completes the picture and says, "Zion, lift your eyes and behold all the children returning to you... And you will ask in your heart, 'Who begot me all of these children after having been so lonely and childless?!'" (49:21) The proportions of the Jewish return will be so overwhelming that the Jewish people themselves will find it difficult to fathom their own numbers. And Yeshaya adds a most comforting dimension and says "The kings of the world will accompany your children's return and their wives will nurse your babes. They will fall to the ground out of respect for you and lick the dirt of your feet." (49:43) At the time of the redemption, the Jewish people will be so highly respected that the kings of the world will offer to be their servants and will demonstrate unprecedented signs of reverence. This is Hashem's view of His people, one that never leaves His mind. In view of this, Yeshaya shares with the Jewish people the reason why they have not merited to sense their inseparable relationship with Hashem. Hashem asks, "Why have I come and no one was there; I called and no one responded?" (50:2) Hashem indicates that He has extended Himself on numerous occasions but the Jewish people did not respond and were not even there. Our Chazal in Mesichta Berachos (6B) share with us a penetrating insight regarding this question. They state that when Hashem brings His presence to a synagogue in anticipation of a quorum of ten and does not find a minyan present He is immediately angered by this. Hashem says, "Why have I brought My presence and no quorum was there for Me!?" (Ibid.) Chazal reveal to us a significant dimension in our relationship with Hashem. The Gemara (Berachos 6A) informs us that when a quorum congregates for the sake of prayer Hashem's presence comes to greet them and even precedes them. Hashem's interest in being with His children is so great that He goes out to meet them and awaits their arrival to His house of worship. However, this relationship should never be abused and we should never cause Hashem to extend Himself in vain. If we fail to appreciate our opportunity we will forfeit it and even bring

upon ourselves the wrath of Hashem. If we truly desire a relationship with Hashem we must do our share in it and certainly be there when He presents Himself to us.

The prophet continues, "Who amongst you reveres Hashem and listens to the voice of His servant, but went in darkness without any radiance? He should trust Hashem and rely upon Him." (50:10) Chazal, (Berachos 6B) again, reveal to us an important insight about prayer based on this passage. They explain that the prophet Yeshaya was denouncing the individual who failed to attend his daily prayer services due to a pressing personal appointment. Instead of turning to Hashem with his need and benefiting from Hashem's radiance, the person passed up the opportunity and opted to do things for himself. Yeshaya says, "He should have trusted Hashem and relied upon Him." (Ibid.) Hashem truly desires to be with His people and provide them with all of their needs but they must, at least, turn to Him and recognize His kindness. If we would truly sense that Hashem is our provider we would certainly make prayer, our contact with Him, our top priority. The opportunity to be with Hashem is always available, providing we take the necessary steps to allow this association to be realized and understood.

This message is quite apropos for this week's sidra, Parshas Ekev. By no coincidence the mitzva and opportunity of prayer is introduced in this week's

sidra. The Torah states, "And when you will hearken to My mitzvos and serve

me with all of your heart." (Devarim 10:12) Our Chazal explain that the "service of the heart" refers to our turning to Hashem in sincere prayer. The Torah continues and states that if we do recognize Hashem as the true provider, "I will give your rain in its proper time and you will reap the produce of the land... and you will eat and be satisfied." (Ibid. 11:14,15) But the Torah also warns us this week not to forget our true source of provision. "Guard yourself lest you eat and are satisfied and have plenty of everything good. And you become arrogant and forget Hashem and attribute your success to your own ability." (Ibid. 8:11,17) Hashem never forgets His people but it is we who tend to forget Him. If we keep our focus on Hashem, we are guaranteed that we will merit to sense His warmth and continuous focus on us.

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