

BS"D

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## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON EIKEV - 5763

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Eikev Mt. Sinai and the Golden Calf

Rosh Hayeshiva HARAV MORDECHAI GREENBERG, shlita

In this week's parsha, Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael (Devarim 9:4-7):

Do not say ... "Because of my righteousness did Hashem bring me to possess this Land" ... Not because of your righteousness and the uprightedness of your heart are you coming to possess their Land, but because of the wickedness of these nations does Hashem, your G-d, drive them away from before you, and in order to establish the word that Hashem swore to your forefathers ... You should know that not because of your righteousness ... for you are a stiff-necked people. Remember, do not forget, that you provoked Hashem, your G-d, in the Wilderness.

Why was it necessary for Moshe to degrade Israel, and to reemphasize that their inheritance of the Land is not in their merit, and that they are a stiff-necked people that sinned? After all, the generation of the desert all died, so why mention the sins of the fathers to the sons?

In truth, these verses encapsulate the basic tenet of the choice of Israel and of their eternity. Maharal, in Netzach Yisrael, addresses the Ramban's question: Why does the Torah emphasize the righteousness of Noach, that he was a righteous person and that he found favor in the eyes of G-d, whereas regarding Avraham it says: "Go for yourself from your land ... And I will make you a great nation," while nothing is mentioned of his merits?

The Maharal explains based on the Mishna in Avot, that love which is dependent on something, when the reason is gone – so, too, is the love. The Torah intentionally concealed Avraham's righteousness, so that we should not mistakenly think that the covenant was formed with him because of his many merits. This would lead to the conclusion that if, in one of the generations, the descendants would not remain in their righteousness, the covenant is annulled. Therefore the Torah presented the issue in this manner, that the covenant is not dependent and conditional on Israel's righteousness.

Even when they sin, and even with such grave sins as idolatry, they are not rejected, even though they obviously are punished for this. As the Maharal writes, mitzvot and sins "add or detract closeness [to G-d]. However, the very [issue of] closeness is not dependent of the actions of Israel." Chazal say: "Either way they are called sons." The prophet Yechezkel says (20:22-23): "As for what enters your minds – it shall not be! As for what you say: 'We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, to worship wood and stone,' as I live – the word of the L-rd, Hashem/Elokim – I swear that I will rule over you with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath."

Therefore Moshe emphasizes that Israel does not inherit the land in their merit, because even without merits they would inherit it, in order to fulfill the Divine masterplan as He swore to the

forefathers. The proof is that you are a stiff-necked people and sinners, and even so, you are coming to the Land.

The reason for this unconditional choice can be understood from the Gemara Sanhedrin (34a), which addresses the contradiction between two verses. One pasuk says, "You, who cling (de veikim) to Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 4:4), whereas another verse states: "Israel became attached (vayitzamed) to Baal Pe'or."

(Bamidbar 25:3) The Gemara teaches that there is a difference between the words "clinging" and "becoming attached." "Cling" is an absolute bond, which is the relationship between Israel and G-d. On the other hand, Israel "becomes attached" to idolatry, like a bracelet (tzamid) on a woman's hand. In other words, with G-d – they are connected actually, in nature, inherently. However, when they sin with idolatry, this is something casual and external.

Therefore, the sin of idolatry, which is casual, cannot abolish the clinging to G-d, which is natural.

With this, we can understand a fascinating passage of Chazal in this week's Haftorah (Brachot 32b):

"Zion said, 'Hashem has forsaken me; my L-rd has forgotten me.'" (Yeshaya 49:14) ... Knesset Yisrael said before G-d: Master of the Universe, "A man who marries a second wife remembers the actions of his first wife, whereas you have forsaken me and forgotten me." G-d said to her: My daughter, I created twelve constellations in the Heaven ... and they all were created only for you, and you say, "You have forsaken me and forgotten me?!" "Can a woman forget her baby (ulah), or not feel compassion (me'rachem) for the child of her womb?" G-d said, "Will I ever forget the olot (burnt-offerings), the rams and first-born (peter-rechem) that you offered before Me in the Wilderness? She said before Him: Master of the Universe, since you do not forget anything, perhaps you will not forget the act of the [golden] calf? He said to her: Even these (eleh) may forget. (I.e., "These are your gods, Israel.") She said before Him: Since there is forgetting before Your Throne, perhaps you will forget the act of Sinai? He said to her: "But I (anochi) will not forget you." (I.e., "I (anochi) am Hashem, your G-d.") This is what R. Eliezer said: What is written, "Even these (eleh) may forget" – this is the act of the [golden] calf; "But I (anochi) will not forget you" – this is the act of Sinai. This is difficult to comprehend; is there unfair preference here? Why is the golden calf forgotten, but not the act of Sinai? Based on what we said, the issue is clear. Something intrinsic is not forgotten; only something casual and external is forgotten. The sin of idolatry in Israel is not something intrinsic, and is not clinging, and therefore it is forgotten easily and not remembered. Not so, ma'amad Har Sinai, since the Torah is the soul of Israel, and an eternal life that He planted amongst us. Israel cannot exist without the Torah, and therefore – "I (anochi) will not forget you."

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[From 5756]

The Weekly Internet P A R A S H A - P A G E by [RABBI] MORDECAI KORNFELD of Har Nof, Jerusalem Back to Parsha homepage The Weekly Internet P A R A S H A - P A G E by Mordecai Kornfeld of Har Nof, Jerusalem Founder of the Dafyomi Advancement Forum

PARASHAT EKEV 5756 SIDDUROLOGY, or MYSTERIES OF THE SIDDUR "To serve Hashem with all your heart" (Devarim 10:12) -- 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 "AzYashir" (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 A) BIRCHAT HATORAH (TKP 7, RY 16-17): We recite a blessing upon learning Torah before the morning prayers. This double blessing has a seemingly uncalled for break right in middle of the first of the two blessings (--before "VeHa'arev"). In fact, many Siddurim include a comment in the break saying that since the blessing is not yet over, "Amen" should not be

answered here. Would it not have been simpler to leave out both the break and the comment! The answer to this lies in an argument between the early halachic authorities. Although we consider "VeHa'arev" to be no more than a continuation of the first blessing for the Torah (O.C. 47:6), this was not always taken for granted. In fact, most of the early authorities considered it to be the beginning of another, third blessing for learning Torah -- according to them, "Amen" is to be said before "VeHa'arev" (see Bet Yosef ad loc., Berachot 11b). We combine "VeHa'arev" with the bracha that precedes it based on Rabbeinu Tam's (12 cent. France) assertion that if "VeHa'arev" is actually a separate blessing, it should start with "Baruch Atta." (Tosafot Ketubot 8a s.v. SheHakol). Apparently the break in our Siddurim reflects the other, non-halachic opinions, that "Amen" is chanted before "VeHa'arev." According to Rabbeinu Tam, the break was apparently added by an ignorant printer or scribe, who (unaware of Rabbeinu Tam's reasoning) mistook "VeHa'arev" (or "Ha'arev") to be the beginning of a new blessing due to its unusual form. The exact same logic explains the break that appears in our Siddur following "HaMa'avir Sheina" (TKP 15, RY 25) -- see O.C. 46:1, Tosafot Berachot 46a s.v. Kol. B) 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 Ashkenaz for an alternate reasoning for the break before Ezrat.) C) 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 LTzion" (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!

D) 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. E) What remains to be explained are the most mysterious of the breaks. 1) "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. 2) An interesting question is why \*isn't\* there a break between the extended quote from Divrei Hayamim starting "VAYEVARECH DAVID" and the following quote from Nechemya, beginning with "Ata Hu Hashem Levadecha" and ending with "Bemayim Azim?" Wouldn't rule #2 (section II) require a break between them? According to the Arizal (quoted by Magen Avraham 51:9), we stand when reading the quote from Divrei Hayomim until the middle of the quote from Nechemya ("Ata Hu Hashem Ha'Elokim"). A friend, Rav Dovid Zussman, suggested that this is why no break was inserted before the quote from Nechemya -- so that people should not think that they are to sit down upon reaching that break. 3) One of the strangest breaks is the one before "ET SHEM" (TKP 51, RY 59) in Birchat Yotzer, which again comes in the middle of a sentence. Chatam Sofer (Hagahot to O.C. 59:3) offers a simple explanation for this break. The Tur (O.C. 61) warns us that we must pause for a second wherever the word "Et" follows a word ending with a "Mem" because if the two words are read quickly it may sound like "Met" -- dead. One example the Tur provides is "Mamlichim -- Et Shem, the break which we are discussing. The Chatam Sofer suggests that originally, Siddurim had a comment warning the congregation to pause for a second after "Mamlichim" and before "Et Shem." (As Chatam Sofer points out, we must be particularly careful not to combine these words, as there are others who actually are "Mamlich" (crown) a "Met" (dead man) as their lord!) Eventually, "Et Shem" became a new paragraph. Another plausible explanation for the break is that, as Mateh Moshe informs us, there was once a custom to stand when reciting "Et Shem" (until "VeHanora"), in order to honor Hashem's Holy Name. Perhaps instructions to that effect once separated "Et Shem" from the preceding paragraph. 4) 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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 PENINIM ON THE TORAH on the Weekly Torah Portion by  
 Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM Hebrew Academy of Cleveland  
 PARSHAS EIKEV For just as a man chastises his son, Hashem,  
 your G-d, chastises you. (8:5) Yesurim in Hebrew also indicates  
 suffering. Hence, the suffering we sustain in this world is actually  
 Hashem's chastisement of us. Perhaps this is the only way one  
 can endure the pain and anguish of suffering: he knows it comes  
 from a loving Father. He also knows that he is not alone in his  
 suffering. I once visited a young woman who was suffering  
 through the terrible pain of end-stage cancer. I wondered what to  
 say to her. Her life was dependent upon a miracle. The pain she  
 sustained was excruciating. The mental anguish she suffered  
 knowing that she would probably not live to see her son's Bar-  
 Mitzvah, her daughter's chasunah, was overwhelming. I told her  
 the truth, that she was not alone. Hashem was with her in her  
 travail, because everything that she was enduring was from Him. I  
 did not know the reason. The fact was, however, that she was not  
 alone. From that moment on, she faced the future with a positive

attitude. There was to be no future, but she was prepared to accept her fate with a renewed strength. She was not alone. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, suffered a number of personal tragedies that would have destroyed the average person. Eight of his eleven children died in his lifetime, most of them in the prime of their youth or early middle age. His strength of character and trust in the Almighty were incredible. He never once uttered as much as a sigh of complaint over his lot in life. Typical of his personality is the following note which he wrote to his brother during the terrible years of famine and illness that ravaged Yerushalayim during World War I. He wrote the following lines shortly after burying two sons, a son-in-law and a grandson:

"My dear brother,  
I received your precious letter. It is difficult for me to write. Our Father in Heaven has taken away from me to the World of Truth my dear son Shmuel Binyamin, who had lain ill with typhus for fourteen days. He was a man at the apex of his achievement, and we had expected great things from him. The ways of G-d are hidden, but we believe with complete faith that everything that appears to us now as incomprehensible - like the mystery of the world in its entirety - will have an explanation in the future, when it will become clear that it was all for the good. This is actually the underlying meaning of our Kaddish prayer."

Rav Yosef Chaim was wont to relate the story of the chasid who went to the Mezritcher Maggid, zl, and asked, "Rebbe, how is it possible to fulfill Chazal's dictum that one must bless Hashem when misfortune occurs just as wholeheartedly as when good fortune occurs?"

The Mezritcher responded, "Go to the home of my disciple, Rav Zushia (m'Annipole), and you will understand."

The chasid did as he was instructed. When he arrived at Rav Zushia's home, he was taken aback with the abject poverty which he saw. Moreover, Rav Zushia was not a well person. Yet, he spent his entire day in avodas Hashem, serving the Almighty. The chasid entered the home and told Rav Zushia, "The Maggid sent me to you to find an answer to my query. How can it be expected of a person to react in the same manner to misfortune as to good fortune?"

Rav Zushia looked at his visitor incredulously and said, "I am afraid there must be some error! I have no idea why the Rebbe would send you to me. I have never experienced misfortune in my life. In fact, I have no idea what misfortune is!"

While this narrative gives us insight into the profound perspective of Rav Zushia, it also indicates the total acquiescence to accepting Divine judgment that exemplified Rav Yosef Chaim's life.

Bnei Yisrael journeyed from Beeros Bnei Yaakov to Moserah; there Aharon died. (10:6)

The story of Aharon Hakohen's passing is juxtaposed upon the breaking of the Luchos. Chazal derive from here that the death of a tzaddik carries with it the same impact as the breaking of the Luchos. Chazal teach us that when a tzaddik passes from this world, he is immediately replaced by another tzaddik. Once the sun "sets" on one tzaddik, it begins to shine on another. This is especially true if the son of a tzaddik is eminently qualified and capable to assume his father's leadership role. Aharon passed away from this world after an exemplary "career" of leadership and inspiration. His son, Elazar, assumed the position of Kohen Gadol. If this is the case, why is the death of a tzaddik more of a tragedy than the passing of any person? The righteous influence does not wane with the passing of the tzaddik.

Horav Tzvi Hirsch Ferber, zl, explains that this is the reason that Aharon's passing is connected to the breaking of the Luchos. When Moshe Rabbeinu descended the mountain on that fateful

day and shattered the Luchos, it became an eternal day of infamy for our people. Although it was a great tragedy, were the first Luchos not replaced soon after by the second Luchos? The replacement is never the same as the original. Elazar Hakohen was truly a great nachas to his father. He had incredible leadership capabilities and was a great spiritual inspiration to the Jewish people. He was not, however, Aharon Hakohen. He was not his father. The second Luchos could not take the place of the first Luchos. While they were the Luchos which accompanied Klal Yisrael all those years, they still were not the original ones. We must remember that the spiritual status-quo of Torah diminishes as we move farther away from Har Sinai. When a tzaddik leaves this world his mission and legacy is immediately transferred to another tzaddik, who takes his place. The tragedy is that he is not the same as the original whom he replaced.

You shall place these words of mine upon your heart? you shall bind them for a sign upon your arm? you shall teach them to your children? and you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house. (11:18,19,20)

Three mitzvos following in close succession after Hashe m's threat of exile. Is there a relationship between these mitzvos and the exile? Rashi cites the Sifri that connects the juxtaposition in the following manner. We are enjoined to observe these commandments even in exile, so that when the redemption occurs, these mitzvos will not be foreign to us. There is a danger that when the Jewish people are in exile living in a non-Jewish environment, speaking the language of the host nation, adopting its customs and lifestyle, there is a real threat of assimilation. It is for this reason that we are to distinguish ourselves as a separate nation by performing mitzvos while we are in exile. Rashi cites the pasuk in Yirmiyahu 31:20, "Set up signposts for yourself." Surprisingly, the reason given here for continuing to perform the mitzvos of Tefillin, limud haTorah and Mezuzah in exile is to prevent them from being forgotten. In our journey throughout galus, exile, these mitzvos will serve as signposts, markers, to insure that we find our way back to Eretz Yisrael.

The question is obvious: are these mitzvos functional only in Eretz Yisrael and to be practiced in galus only so that they are not to be forgotten? What relationship is there between these mitzvos and Eretz Yisrael? While the Ramban says that, indeed, the mitzvah applies equally everywhere, it has greater significance in Eretz Yisrael because of its greater sanctity. The Ramban concludes by saying, "This Midrash contains a deep secret." What is the Sifri teaching us? Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, explains that while these three mitzvos have no specific connection to Eretz Yisrael, they are not practiced in their ideal way when we are in galus. We practice them meanwhile as tziyunim, road markers, keeping us on course, until that special day when we will return to Eretz Yisrael with the advent of Moshiach.

The way we learn Torah she'Baal Peh, oral law, today is not the optimal way of doing so. Oral law is supposed to be transmitted orally from teacher to student in the manner it was taught before Rabbeinu Hakadosh codified the Mishnah. He saw a crisis about to occur, and he did something about it. Ever since then, however, we have been studying Torah through the medium of seforim, written volumes. When Moshiach arrives, we will revert to the "old" system of studying from a rebbe. For now, Torah study from printed books is only a temporary measure, a marker to keep us on course for the day when the correct manner of learning Torah she'Baal Peh will be reintroduced.

Rav Schwab makes a noteworthy observation. The printing press, upon which the propagation of Torah among our people has depended heavily for the past 500 years, was invented by a German non-Jew named Gutenberg. This invention was truly a

simple idea that had already been invented 1,000 years earlier in China, but had not reached Europe. It impacted Judaism in a manner that is indescribable, for without it Torah scholarship would practically have come to a standstill. Why did Hashem give this unparalleled zchus, merit, to a gentile? Why could it not have been a Jew that would be the father of the printing press? The reason is that learning Torah she'Baal Peh from a written book is an emergency measure that was necessitated by the long galus in order to insure that Torah would not be forgotten. For the present, learning from a printed book is only a "road marker" which we are compelled to employ. This is not the ultimate destiny of the oral law. One day it will revert to the original. The gentile's zchus will suffice for a road "marker."

The mitzvah of Tefillin is also not practiced in the original designated manner. Originally, Tefillin were to be worn all day, at home as well as in our place of business. As a consequence of our galus environment, this devotion to Tefillin is no longer practical. Yet, we continue wearing the Tefillin for Shacharis, so that we maintain our "road marker" for that glorious day when we will once again wear our Tefillin all day long.

Mezuzah is also not practiced optimally. According to halachah, a Mezuzah should be placed even on our city gates. B'ishea'recha, your city gates, applies to a Jewish city in which every entranceway to the city, a street, a neighborhood should have a Mezuzah. For example, the Jaffa Gate in Yerushalayim needs a Mezuzah. Rav Schwab remembered seeing a Mezuzah on the gate to the old city of Rottenberg, Germany, where the Maharal lived. The mitzvah of Mezuzah was to be a public affair for the community - not just relegated to one's private home. Accordingly, when Moshiach arrives, we will perform this mitzvah in the most advantageous manner. It, as well as the other mitzvos, will then appear to us as the natural progression of the mitzvah from its minimum as observed in galus to its fulfillment in the most optimum form.

<http://www.moreshet.co.il/zomet/index-e.html>  
Sermon of the week

How Does Fear of G-d Become a Simple Thing?  
by RABBI SHAUL ISRAELI Of Blessed Memory, from the book, "Sermons for the High Holidays"  
"What does G-d want from you? Merely to fear Him." [Devarim 10:12]. As the sages asked, "Is fear of G-d a simple thing?" And their answer is that it is: "For Moshe, fear is indeed a simple thing." [Megilla 25a].  
The main purpose of our lives is fear of G-d. "I will tell them my words, so that they will learn to fear me" [Devarim 4:10]. "He shall keep it with him and read it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear" [17:19]. For this purpose, "G-d created man upright" [Kohellet 7:29], but he left the straight path because "they asked for many intrigues" [ibid]. In this way, the straight path of creation was distorted. The line leading from man to G-d is in its very essence straight. A pure soul in a pure body necessarily yearns for G-d, but the many intrigues have twisted the line so that it is no longer possible to go in a straight path. It is now necessary to work harder and harder to bend the line back, in order that it will in the end reach the correct point. While in the beginning man could have walked a straight line without intrigues, today there is no alternative save to "come and think" [Bamidbar 21:27] - Come and let us make plans for the world" [Bava Batra 78b]. When the natural intuition of the proper path is lost, when the feet on the path no longer feel solid ground underneath, there is no other way than to make plans and calculations. It is necessary to weigh and to measure, to analyze

and search for the proper path, even if the search itself sometimes entails twisting and turning.  
For Moshe, our mentor, fear of heaven is very simple, as natural as on the day that man was created. However, somebody whose fear has become clouded must strive, study, and repeat his studies: "So that he will learn to fear." When the first Tablets were given, our hearts straightened out and we returned to our natural status. But the sin of the Golden Calf twisted the path once again and made it necessary to perform more labor. From this point on, the command was "Carve out for you" [Devarim 10:1]. We must make an effort, concentrate all of our spiritual strength, to wage a constant war and make plans, in order to achieve the goal of "merely to fear."  
"Carve out for you... And I will write on the tablets" [10:1-2] - this is what the Almighty says to Moshe. After all the labor that you perform with your own energy, if you make an opening even as small as the eye of a needle, then "I will write." We have experienced an entire year of twisting, distancing ourselves from G-d, going along the path with closed eyes, making calves and worshipping them. The approaching month of Elul is a time for reckoning, to return to the straight path, a time for carving new tablets on which we have the writing of G-d Himself.

<http://www.ou.org/torah/tt/eikev58/aliya.htm>

NCSY TORAH TIDBITS

Parshat Eikev [Numbers] are mitzvot in Sefer HaChinuch

KOHEN - First Aliya - 25 p'sukim (7:12-8:8)

This is the longest Shabbat Mincha - Monday - Thursday reading. B'reishit and Ki Tisa have longer first-Aliyot, but we don't read the whole portion on Monday- Thursday or Shabbat Mincha. Mas'ei, according to the custom of no stopping in the middle of the "travels" would be much longer, but most shuls do not follow that minhag.

SDT - In the context of the opening verses of the sedra, the word EKEV means "in the wake of..." (following G-d's words). The Baal HaTurim presents a mini-mussar lesson based on the choice of the word EKEV, which means "heel". The heel represents humility, in that it always follows the toes and the rest of the foot (and body). Since it does not initiate action, it does not run the risk of becoming arrogant. We must realize that humility is an important key in our following G-d's words. Thus, the opening words of the sedra can be saying: "If you are humble and follow G-d's commands, then..."

Another observation of the Baal HaTurim: EKEV is numerically 172 - the number of words in the Aseret HaDibrot (Yitro version); hence a connection between the name of the sedra and the mitzvot mentioned in the first pasuk.

Moshe Rabeinu reiterates the "simple" deal that HaShem offers us: If we observe the mitzvot then He will keep the promises that He made to our ancestors. (Allusion is made to the "small" mitzvot that one would tend to trample upon with his heel.)

He will love us, bless us, and see to it that we flourish. We will be the most blessed among all the nations.

Following this, Moshe issues another of the many warnings against idolatry. Do not wonder how it will be possible to prevail against the many nations in the Land and do not fear them. The miracles witnessed in Egypt (and in the Midbar) will be repeated with other nations. Conquest of Eretz Yisrael will be slow so that the Land will not be overrun by wild animals.

SDT - Commentators ask, could not G-d Who split the sea and performed countless other miracles, prevent the problem with animals without drawing out the period of conquest. They explain that the period from Yetziat Mitzrayim until entering the Land was supernatural, which was filled with miracles, but it was an unnatural time. Food from heaven, miraculous well water, clothes that we did not outgrow, shoes that did not wear out, and protection from the Clouds of Glory, all demonstrated G-d's special relationship with the People, helped develop within them a special faith in G-d, but was not to be their way of life. Just as the fetus is protected and provided for during gestation and then emerges into the less perfect but "natural" world, so too Israel is soon to emerge from its womb to face the reality of the natural world. Hence, the warning about the animals.

No one will be able to stand before Israel. The idols of the nation shall be destroyed and we shall not desire their rich trappings. It is forbidden to derive benefit from the adornments of idolatry, even if they have not been worshipped. Nor may we have anything to do with idolatry, directly or peripherally. We may not benefit from that which is consecrated to idolatry [428,429].

All that G-d commands us in the Torah is for the purpose of living... in Eretz Yisrael.

SDT - This is an oft-repeated theme of Moshe's words to the new generation that is soon to cross the Jordan River. It emphasizes the interdependence and inseparable nature of the three fundamental events that define the Jewish People - the Exodus, Matan Torah, and entry into the Land.

Moshe next asks us to remember the experiences of the years of wandering, the miracles as well as the tribulations. That was a testing period which set the stage for real life in E. Yisrael.

The Land is beautifully described and the Seven Species are enumerated. This gives prominence to grain products (bread, pastry, etc.) in the realm of brachot and gives priority to wine and the five special fruits.

The Torah commands us to "bensch" after meals [430], Chazal augmented this rule with a wide range of brachot to be recited before & after partaking of food by which we express our appreciation and thanks to G-d for the bounty of His world. Similarly, the Sages required us to say brachot before (many) mitzvot, as well as blessings of praise, request, and acknowledgment - all geared to make us and keep us constantly aware of G-d and His role in the Creation and continuing maintenance of the world. SDT - Based on the words of the command to say Birkat HaMazon, we are not only thanking G-d for the food, as would be expected, but also for the Land. This is reflected in the texts of Birkat HaMazon and "Al HaMichya" (a.k.a "bracha me'ein shalosh"). Since Birkat HaMazon is a mitzva which applies in all places (not just in Israel), commentaries ponder the significance of the reference to the Land.

The Ramban says that when one looks back at the oppression in Egypt and remembers the harshness of the wilderness, and is now enjoying the bounty of the Land of Israel, there is special cause to thank G-d. Even during times of exile, the significance of the Land (and the Torah) to the life of the Jewish People must not be overlooked. To paraphrase a chassidic interpretation of the verse which commands us to "bensch": One can eat anywhere and be satisfied physically, but to be spiritually satisfied as well - that happens only in the natural environment of the Jew and his Torah - in Eretz Yisrael. Perhaps this is why the Sefer HaChinuch speaks of the brachot for Torah learning in the same context as Birkat HaMazon. "And you will eat and you will be satisfied..." - this refers to both physical and spiritual food.

The implication of the Ramban's words is that only in Eretz Yisrael can one be genuinely fulfilled in the performance of mitzvot. One can keep (many) mitzvot outside of Israel, but there is something vital lacking under those circumstances. This message is often repeated by Moshe Rabeinu during these final weeks of his life.

When the Jewish People were in the wilderness, Moshe Rabeinu taught them to thank G-d for their sustenance - the Manna. This is represented by the first bracha of Birkat HaMazon. When Yehoshua brought the People into Eretz Yisrael, he inspired the second bracha which acknowledges that there is much more to thank G-d for - the Land, the Torah, the Covenant with HaShem. These add the spiritual dimension to the otherwise physical act of eating.

LEVI - Second Aliya - 13 p'sukim (8:11-9:3)

Until now, the People have periodically displayed lack of faith in G-d in troubled times (hunger, thirst, fear). At this point, Moshe issues a very different kind of warning. When the People will enter the Land, success fully defeat the nations therein, and begin to benefit from the spoils of war and the bounty of the Land, the potential exists to discount G-d's role in their good fortune. Moshe warns: be careful to remember He Who took us out of Egypt and fed us in the wilderness. Do not say: look what I accomplished with my own powers. Always remember that it is G-d who continuously keeps his promises to our ancestors. Know that turning from G-d towards idolatry will result in annihilation, as with the other nations. Notwithstanding the might of the nations we are about to face, have confidence that G-d will lead us to victory.

Note that the words that Moshe uses to describe the nations that we will face in Eretz Yisrael are very similar to the words used by the Meraglim when they panicked the People with their evil report on the Land. Moshe is not glossing over the difficulties that lie ahead. He is rather instilling

confidence in the People that will come from faith in G-d and His promise to fight on our behalf.

The Perfect 10

The pasuk that describes the Land of Israel as a land of the 7 species contains 10 words. The bracha for BREAD, the premier item in the verse, has 10 words. When one makes HaMotzi, his 10 fingers should be on the bread. Bread comes to the table through the observance of 10 mitzvot - Do not plow with an ox and donkey together; do not plant mixed seeds, leave the gleanings for the poor, so too the forgotten bundle of wheat, and the corner of the field; do not muzzle an animal on the threshing floor; give the Kohen his T'ruma; Maaser to the Levi, take the second tithe, and give Challa to the Kohen.

SHLISHI - 3rd Aliya - 26 p'sukim (9:4-29)

Moshe next "put things in perspective". We must not think that we deserve all that G-d is giving us, but rather we must remember the many times we angered G-d in the wilderness AND even at Sinai! [Some mitzva-counters consider this Zachor to be among the Torah's 613; Rambam and the Chinuch do not. Some people have the custom of reciting the 6 or 10 Remembrances daily after Shacharit.]

Moshe now recounts for the People the devastating event of the Golden Calf. How glorious the events should have been when Moshe descended the Mount with the first Luchot. Moshe tells how G-d wanted to destroy the People and how he (Moshe) interceded on behalf of the People and returned to the mountain for an additional 40 days and 40 nights. Even Aharon was a subject of G-d's anger. Rashi explains that G-d was angry at Aharon for "going along" with the People as far as he did. The implication, is that Aharon lost his sons as a result of G-d's anger with him. Moshe's prayers on behalf of his brother were partially successful - Aharon's other two sons lived. Inter alia, Moshe mentions other places where the People angered G-d.

Moshe tells the People that he smashed the Luchot when he saw the Golden Calf.

SDT - The Midrash says that when Moshe broke the Luchot, its letters flew back to Heaven and all that remained were the broken pieces of the Tablets. The Midrash adds that the command to "Remember the Shabbat day to sanctify it" remained intact. This is alluded to in the Shabbat morning Amida where we say: "And two tablets of stone, he brought down in his hand, and on them was written SH'MIRAT SHABBAT". That's all that was still written on the first set of Luchot.

Until schools are back in session, we can use some extra help distributing TT. Thursday is prime day for helping. Please call us.

R'VII - Fourth Aliya - 11 p'sukim (10:1-11)

Moshe continues the account by telling about the second set of Luchot and the Ark constructed to contain them. He then tells of the travels of the People, the death of Aharon, and the succession of his son, Elazar. Moshe also tells of the special role given to the tribe of Levi as a result of the (improper) behavior of the People.

The juxtaposition of the breaking of the Luchot and the death of Aharon teaches us several things: The death of a Talmid Chacham is as hard on us as the smashing of the Luchot. When a Talmid Chacham dies, we all become like mourning relatives - just like the national mourning for the Luchot. An irreparable, invalid Sefer Torah is to be buried next to a Talmid Chacham. (Baal HaTurim)

CHAMISHI - Fifth Aliya - 20 p'sukim (10:12-11:9)

"And now, People of Israel, what does G-d want from you? ONLY to revere Him, follow His ways, love Him, and serve Him with all your heart and soul. To fulfill all that he commands - for our own good." Moshe tells the People that even though G-d is the Master of all, He has a special relationship with our ancestors and their descendants (us). We must not be stubborn; we must be good, for G-d is truly great and not subject to bribery. We are required to especially love the convert [431] - we know how it is to be a stranger among others. Revere G-d [432], serve Him [433], cling to Him (by adhering to Torah scholars [434]), and swear in His Name [435] when necessary to swear.

Mitzva Watch

Rambam counts the commandment to pray daily as Biblical, based on "and Him you shall serve" and "and to serve Him with all your heart", defining service of the heart as prayer. It seems that the Rambam splits the Biblical and Rabbinic aspects of prayer - Almost any words to G-d in the course of one's day would constitute a fulfillment of the Torah Law, whereas specific texts, frequency, and timing would be required by the Sages.

Ramban holds that prayer is a rabbinic mitzva and that "Serve Him" is a general, all-encompassing "do mitzvot well" reminder. The Ramban

accepts the idea that the p'sukim from the Torah inspired the Sages to require prayer.

At first look, it seems problematic that there is no specific command in the Torah "Thou shalt daven" (or words to that affect). The use of the indirect form - serve Him, serve Him with all your heart, what is service of the heart, prayer - leads to different views on exactly what is commanded here. If you think about it, SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART is the best way to command us to daven, because it tells us clearly the high premium placed on KAVANA in the case of davening. Of course, all mitzvot should be performed with proper intention, thought, and feeling. But if one falls short in the Kavana Department, most mitzvot are still acceptable that way. With davening, kavana is the whole story, not just a component of the mitzva. This is so specifically because the Torah did NOT command us to pray, but rather to serve G-d with all our hearts.

He is our G-d and He formed a mighty nation from a family of 70 souls. Love Him and do His mitzvot (do his mitzvot out of love for Him). Learn the lessons of Jewish history - the miracles and wonders of the Exodus, the crossing of the sea, and the punishment of Datan and Aviram (here singled out for their arrogant, unforgivable insult to Eretz Yisrael, as opposed to Korach whom Moshe was able to forgive [SG]). Once again, Moshe emphasizes that the purpose of mitzvot and the proper environment for Torah is Eretz Yisrael.

SHISHI - Sixth Aliya 12 p'sukim (11:10-21)

The Land that the People are about to enter is a land that is "accountable to G-d" in obvious (and less obvious) ways. G-d is demanding of it and of its soon-to-be inhabitants (us). The sedra concludes with a restating of the "deal" that opened the sedra. (This passage is the second part of Shma...) If we keep the mitzvot then we will have bountiful rain and abundant yields; if not, then...

"And you shall serve him with all your heart" (meaning to pray) is followed by G-d's promise of bountiful rain - from here we learn to include the mention of G-d as rainmaker and the request for rain (in its proper season) in the Amida.

The promise of "grasses in your fields for your animals and you shall eat and be satisfied" is the source of the rule that one feeds his animals BEFORE he feeds himself. This primarily applies to one's farm animals, but even feeding fish in an aquarium or providing for the cat who visits your doorstep before you sit down to breakfast, is a fulfillment of this concept (and a lesson for others).

T'filin, Torah learning, and Mezuzah are restated as is the correlation between mitzvot and long life in the Land. This second portion of the Shma is one of the two passages in a Mezuzah and one of the four portions in T'filin.

SH'V'I (and Maftir) - 7th Aliya 4 p'sukim (11:22-25)

Once again, the "deal" that the sedra began with is repeated at its conclusion - If we will keep all the mitzvot, motivated by a love of G-d; if we follow in his footsteps (by performing acts of kindness) and cling to Him... then we will prevail against mightier nations than ourselves. The sedra concludes with promises of successful conquest of the Land - if we keep our side of the deal.

Haftara - 27 p'sukim Yeshayahu 49:14-51:3

2nd of the 7 Haftaras of Consolation read between Tish'a b'Av and Rosh HaShana. G-d's message through the prophet, is that He has not forgotten Zion nor forsaken His People. It might seem that He has abandoned His People and His Land, but there will come a time when the People will return to their roots and be restored to their Land. The exile is not permanent; there was never a "divorce" between G-d and the People of Israel. G-d will help in the battles against the mighty nations that oppress His People. G-d has (will) comforted Zion; the desolated areas will flourish; joy and gladness, thanks and song will be found in Zion.

In Parshat Eikev alone, G-d has told us several times that we exist in order to keep the Torah, and if we do keep the Torah, then we will keep Eretz Yisrael as well. That The People of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and the Land of Israel are (supposed to be) inseparable. Jewish History has shown us that we don't stay faithful to that deal. With all the times that the Torah repeats this message, and all the times we renege on our commitment, we could become quite depressed as to the hopelessness of our exile. Comes the prophet and gives us the hopeful message of the Redemption. This is our consolation following the repeated destructions we have suffered.

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<http://www.torah.org/learning/hamaayan/5763/eikev.html>  
Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by SHLOMO KATZ Eikev: Steps on a Ladder Volume XVII, No. 44 18 Av 5763 August 16, 2003

Our parashah contains repeated adjurations to love and fear G-d and to walk in His ways. Yet each such instruction is different. First we read (8:6), "You shall observe the commandments of Hashem, your G-d, to go in His ways and fear Him." First, go in His ways, then fear Him. Next we read (10:12), "Now, O Israel, what does Hashem, your G-d, ask of you? Only to fear Hashem, your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him." In this pasuk, fearing Hashem is before going in His ways, which is followed by loving Him.

Finally we read (11:22), "To love Hashem, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him." Here, loving G-d comes before going in His ways, which is followed by cleaving to Him. Why?

R' Yisrael Meir Hakohen z"l (the Chafetz Chaim; died 1933) explains: The Torah is teaching us that fear of G-d and love of G-d are steps on a ladder. As described in the first verse, the first step is to observe the Torah's commandments. One must then follow in Hashem's footsteps - just as He is kind, you must be kind; just as He is merciful, you must be merciful, and so on. This will eventually bring a person to fear G-d.

Then the process begins anew. As the second verse describes, even after one has attained fear of G-d, he must again walk in Hashem's ways if he wishes to attain love of G-d. Now, of course, his performance of mitzvot will be of a higher caliber. Eventually, this will lead to love of G-d.

But that is not the end. Beyond love of G-d is cleaving to G-d. How does one get there? The third verse tells us - one must walk in G-d's ways on a higher level yet. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

"He afflicted you and let you hunger, then He fed you the mahn that you did not know, nor did your forefathers know, in order to make you know that not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live" (8:3)

As related in Parashat Beshalach, Hashem did not feed Bnei Yisrael the mahn until they cried for food. R' Dr. Avraham J. Twerski shlita explains that had Hashem anticipated all of the Jewish People's needs -- for example, had He provided the mahn before they were hungry -- they would never have developed trust in Him. This, writes R' Twerski, is an important principle in parenting as well. If parents anticipate all of their child's needs and provide for them before the child has had an opportunity to identify those needs, the child may never learn that his needs will be met. A child must be allowed to feel his needs. When the parents respond in a way that meets those needs, then the child learns to trust his parents. (Successful Relationships p.32)

"Not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live." (8:3)

"And you may say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!' Then you shall remember Hashem, your G-d -- that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth." (8:17-18)

A wealthy chassid, an owner of forests, once came to visit his rebbe, R' David Moshe Friedman of Chortkov z"l (1828-1904), for Sukkot. When he entered the rebbe's study for a personal interview, he related with joy that he had been offered a rare deal - to buy all the forests of a certain count at half price. The profits, the chassid said, would double his wealth.

The rebbe listened, and then he said, "Take my advice. Cancel the deal."

The chassid was stunned. He had already given a deposit, and the profit was as good as in his pocket. And so, his desires got the best of him, and he disregarded the rebbe's advice and went through with the deal.

Soon, the first trees were felled and the first shipment was on its way to the mill. After several days, the chassid received an urgent telegram: "The trees are rotten. Your shipment will be returned." Darkness descended upon the chassid. He hurried to examine what remained of his forest, and sure enough, it was all rotten. His entire investment was lost. Worse yet, he was left with the expenses of felling and shipping the trees, expenses that would never be recovered. In short order, the chassid's entire fortune was lost.

The chassid reasoned that this fate had befallen him because he did not listen to his rebbe. At first, he was embarrassed to even visit the rebbe, but then he reasoned, "I've nothing left in this world. Shall I cut myself off from Olam Haba also?" Mustering all his courage, he set out for Chortkov. He entered the rebbe's study and begged for forgiveness for disobeying the rebbe. "I've been punished enough," he said. "My entire fortune is lost."

A look of bewilderment appeared on the rebbe's face. "No Jew has ever been punished on my account," R' David Moshe said. "True, I advised you not to buy the forest, but do you know why? When you told me about the wonderful deal that was offered to you and the riches that were almost within your grasp, I saw that you were so sure of yourself that you had forgotten that success is possible only with G-d's help. You did not place your trust in G-d and you did not pray to Him. Therefore I feared for the outcome, and I advised you not to go through with the deal. Now, however, that you know that Hashem determines who will be wealthy or poor, return to your business, pray to G-d, and your wealth will return." (Haggadah Shel Pesach Adir B'meluchah p.237)

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PARSHAT EKEV

Who 'stops' the rain? According to Parshat Ekev (and what we recite every day in the second 'parshia' of 'kriyat shema'), the answer is G-d Himself. To better appreciate the Biblical significance of rain ['matar'], this week's shiur discusses the correlation between Divine Providence and the climate of the Land of Israel.

**INTRODUCTION** In the beginning of Parshat Ekev, the land of Israel receives what appears to be a very positive assessment: "For the Lord your G-d 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, the Torah describes the land of Egypt as much better: "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).

So which land is better, and on what do we base this comparison? To answer this question, we take a closer look at various other instances where the Torah compares the Lands of Israel to the Land of Egypt.

**THE FIRST 'FAUCET'** We begin our study with the Torah's 'strange' description of how one would water his field in the land of Egypt: "For [your] land is not like the land of Egypt... where you planted your field and watered it with your foot" (see 11:10).

For some reason, Egypt is described as a land that 'you water with your feet'? To appreciate this rather strange depiction, and how it forms the basis of Egypt's comparison to the land of Israel, we must review a few basic facts of world history. In ancient times, civilizations developed along major rivers, as they provided not only a means of transportation, but also the necessary water for agriculture and consumption. It was for this reason that Egypt (developing along the Nile) and Mesopotamia (developing along the Tigris and Euphrates) became two of the greatest centers of ancient civilization. To enhance their agriculture, the Egyptians developed a sophisticated irrigation system by digging ditches from the Nile to their fields. Using this system to water his field, an Egyptian would open his local irrigation ditch by simply kicking away the dirt 'with his foot'. To 'turn off' the water supply, he would use his foot once again to move the dirt to close the ditch. [Consider this the first 'faucet' system.] This background explains why the Torah describes Egypt as a land 'watered by your feet' (see 11:10). In contrast, the Torah describes the land of Israel as: "The land that you are going now to inherit is a land of hills & valleys, which drinks from the rains of Heaven" (11:11).

In contrast to Egypt, Israel lacks a mighty river such as the Nile to provide it with a consistent supply of water. Instead, the agriculture in the Land of Israel is totally dependent on rainfall. Therefore, when it does rain, the fields are watered 'automatically'; however, when it does not rain, nothing will grow for the crops will dry out. [It should be noted that even though Israel does have a river, the Jordan - but it is located some 300

meters below sea level (in the Jordan Valley), and thus not very helpful to water the fields. In modern times, Israel has basically 'solved' this problem by pumping up the water from the Kinneret into a national water carrier.]

Hence, even though the land of Israel may have a slight advantage over Egypt when it does rain [see Rashi 11:10], from an agricultural perspective the land of Egypt has a clear advantage [see Ramban 11:10]. Furthermore, any responsible family provider would obviously prefer the 'secure' option - to establish his home in Egypt, instead of opting for the 'risky' Israeli alternative. So why is the Torah going out of its way to tell us that Egypt is better than Israel, especially in the same Parsha where the Torah first tells us how Israel is a 'great' land, missing nothing! (See 8:9!) Furthermore, why would Moshe Rabbeinu mention this point to Bnei Yisrael specifically at this time, as they prepare to enter their land. To answer these questions, we must re-examine these psukim in their wider context.

**THREE PARSHIOT RELATING TO THE FEAR OF GOD** Using a Tanach Koren (or similar Chumash), take a look at the psukim that we have just quoted (i.e. 11:10-12), noting how these three psukim form their own 'parshia'. Note however how this short 'parshia' begins with the word 'ki' - 'for' or 'because' - which obviously connects it thematically to the previous parshia: 10:12-11:9. Therefore, we must first consider the theme of this preceding 'parshia' and then see how it relates to our topic. Let's begin by taking a quick look at the opening psukim of that 'parshia', noting how it introduces its theme very explicitly: "And now, O Israel, what is it that G-d demands of you? It is to fear ('yir'a) the Lord your G-d, to walk in his ways and to love Him... Keep, therefore, this entire 'mitzva'... that you should conquer the Land..." (see 10:12-14).

As you continue to read this parshia (thru 11:9), you'll also notice how this topic or the 'fear of G-d' continues, as it is emphasized over and over again. Hence, the theme of our short 'parshia' (11:10-12), where the Torah compares the land of Israel to Egypt, must somehow be related to the theme of Yir'at Hashem (fearing G-d). But what does the water source of a country have to do with the fear of G-d? To answer this question, we must read the Torah's conclusion of this comparison (in the final pasuk of our 'parshia'): "It is a land which the Lord your G-d looks after ('doresh otah'), on which Hashem always keeps His eye, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (11:12).

This pasuk informs us that G-d Himself takes direct control over the rain that falls in the Land of Israel! In contrast to Egypt where the water supply from the Nile is basically constant, the water supply in Israel is sporadic, and hence more clearly a vehicle of G-d's will. Considering that one's survival in the Land of Israel is dependent on rain, and the rain itself is dependent on G-d's will, then to survive in the land of Israel, one must depend on G-d - a dependence which should have a direct affect on one's level of Yir't Hashem!

**WHO STOPPED THE RAIN?** In this manner, the Land of Israel is not better than Egypt, rather it is different - for its agriculture is more clearly dependent on the abundance of rain. A good rainy season will bring plenty, while a lack of rain will yield drought and famine. Hence, living in a land with this type of 'touchy' rainy season, dependent on G-d's will, should reinforce one's fear of G-d. The next 'parshia' [i.e. ve-haya im shamo'a...' (11:13-21), the second parshia of daily 'kriyat shema'] not only supports this theme, it forms its logical conclusion: "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)..." (see 11:13-16).

Thus, according to Sefer Devarim, the matar that falls in the land of Israel acts not only as a 'barometer' of Am Yisrael's faithfulness to G-d, but also serves as a vehicle of divine retribution. G-d will use this matar to 'communicate' with His nation. Rainfall, at the proper time, becomes a sign that is pleased with our 'national behavior', while drought (i.e. holding back the matar) becomes a sign of divine anger.

So which land is better? The answer simply depends on what one is looking for in life. An individual striving for a closer relationship with G-d would obviously prefer the Land of Israel, while an individual wary of such direct dependence on G-d would obviously opt for the more secure life in Egypt ['chutz la-aretz']. To support this interpretation, we will now show how the connection between matar and Divine Providence had already emerged as a Biblical theme back in Sefer Breishit.

**BACK TO AVRAHAM AVINU** At the onset of our national history, we find a very similar comparison between the lands of Egypt and Israel.



Recall, that when G-d first chose Avraham Avinu, commanding him to uproot his family from Mesopotamia and travel to the land of Canaan (see 12:1-3), his nephew Lot was consistently mentioned as Avraham's 'travel partner' (see 12:4- 6 & 13:1-2). As Avraham was childless and Lot had lost his father, it would only be logical for Avraham to assume that Lot would become his successor. Nevertheless, after their return from a trip to Egypt, a quarrel broke out between them, which ultimately led to Lot's 'rejection' from Avraham's 'chosen family'. One could suggest that the Torah's description of these events relates directly to this Biblical theme of matar. To show how, let's begin with the Torah's description of that quarrel: "And Avraham said to Lot, let there not be a quarrel between us... if you go to the right [=south], I'll go to the left [=north] (& vice versa)..." (see Breishit 13:8-9). [Note that Avraham suggested that Lot choose either North or South (13:8-9), not East or West as is often assumed! See Targum Unkelos which translate right & left as 'south' or 'north' (see also Seforno). Throughout Chumash 'yemin' always refers to the south, kedem - east, etc.]

In other words, Avraham Avinu, standing in Bet El (see 13:3), is offering Lot a choice between the mountain ranges of 'Yehuda' (to the south) or the hills of the 'Shomron' (to the north). To our surprise, Lot chooses neither option! Instead, Lot prefers to divorce himself from Avraham Avinu altogether, choosing the Jordan Valley instead. Note, however, the connection between Lot's decision to 'go east' and his most recent experience in Egypt: "Then 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).

After his brief visit to Egypt (as described at the end of chapter 12), it seems as though Lot could no longer endure the hard life in the 'hills and valleys' of the Land of Israel. Instead, Lot opts for a more secure lifestyle along the banks of the Jordan River, similar to the secure lifestyle in Egypt by the banks of the Nile River. [Note especially how the Torah (in the above pasuk) connects between this river valley and the 'Garden of the Lord', i.e. Gan Eden (for it was set along four rivers, see Breishit 2:9-14).]

Lot departs towards Sdom for the 'good life', while Avraham Avinu remains in Bet El, at the heart of the Land of Israel (see 13:14-16, see also previous TSC shiur on Matot / Mas'ei). Rashi, commenting on Breishit 13:11, quotes a Midrash which arrives at a very similar thematic conclusion: "Va-yisa Lot mi-kedem... [Lot traveled from 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 G-d" ("iy efshi, lo be-Avraham, ve-lo be- Eloka").

As Rashi alludes to, this quarrel between Avraham and Lot stemmed from a conflict between two opposite lifestyles: \* A life striving for a dependence (and hence a relationship) with G-d (=Avraham Avinu); \* A life where man prefers to be independent of G-d (=Lot).

The path chosen by Avraham Avinu leads to 'Bet El' - the house of G-d, while the path chosen by Lot leads to 'Sdom' - the city of corruption (see 13:12-13).

**BACK TO THE CREATION** This Biblical theme of matar is so fundamental, that it actually begins at the time of Creation! Recall how the Gan Eden narrative (i.e. Breishit 2:4-3:24) opens with a very peculiar statement in regard to matar: "These are the generations of Heavens and Earth from their Creation... 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).

It is rather amazing how this entire account of Creation begins with a statement that nothing could grow without matar or man! Furthermore, this very statement is rather odd, for it appears to contradict what was stated earlier (in the first account of Creation [= 'perek aleph'] which implies that water was just about everywhere (see 1:2,6,9 etc.). Finally, this very statement that man is needed for vegetation to grow seems to contradict what we see in nature. As we all know shrubs and trees (and especially weeds) seem to grow very nicely even without man's help. Yet, according to this opening pasuk of the second account of Creation - nothing could grow without this combination of matar and man. Nonetheless, Chumash emphasizes in this opening statement that both man and matar are key factors in the forthcoming story of creation. To appreciate why, we must first very briefly review our conclusions in regard to the comparison between the two accounts in Sefer Breishit. The first account [perek aleph] focused on G-d's creation of all 'nature' in seven days. G-d's Name - 'Elokim' - reflected its key point that all powers of nature - that appear to

stem from the powers of various gods - are truly the Creation of One G-d. To remind ourselves of this key point, we are commanded to refrain from all creativity once every seven days. ['olam ha-teva'] In contrast, the second account ['perek bet'] - focused on the special relationship between man and his Creator, as reflected in its special environment - Gan Eden - created by G-d for man to work and keep. In that environment, man is responsible to follow G-d's laws, and His Name ['shem Havaya'] reflects His presence and involvement ['olam ha-hitgalut']. [See TSC shiur on Parshat Breishit.] Therefore, this opening pasuk - emphasizing the relationship between matar and man - must relate in some manner to the special relationship between man and G-d. The Midrash (quoted by Rashi), bothered by this peculiarity, offers a very profound interpretation, explaining this connection: "Ki lo himtir..." And why had it not yet rained? ... because "adam ayin a'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..." (see Rashi 2:5).

This interpretation reflects the very same theme that emerged in our discussion of matar in Parshat Ekev. According to this Rashi, G-d created man towards the purpose that he recognize G-d and His Creations. From this perspective, matar emerges as a vehicle to facilitate that recognition. The reason for this may stem from the very meaning of the word matar. Note that matar does not mean only 'rain'. Rather, the 'shores' - 'lehamtir' - relates to anything that falls from heaven to earth. Rain is the classic example; but even 'bread' or 'fire', when they fall from heaven, are described by the Bible as matar. [In regard to bread, see Breishit 19:24 re: the story of Sedom, "Ve-Hashem himtir al Sedom gofrit va-eish min ha-shamayim". In relation to fire coming from heaven, see Shmot 16:4 re: the manna: "hineni mamtir lachem lechem min ha-shamayim" ).]

When man contemplates Creation, there may appear to be an unbridgeable gap between 'heaven' and 'earth'. Man must overcome that gap, raising his goals from the 'earthly' to the 'heavenly'. In this context, matar - a physical proof that something in heaven can come down to earth - may symbolize man's potential (and purpose) to bridge that gap in the opposite direction, i.e. from 'earthly' to 'heavenly'. Hence, Biblical matar emerges as more than just a type of water, but more so as a symbol of a potential connection between the heavens and earth, and hence between G-d and man. In the special spiritual environment created by the climate of the Land of Israel, as described in Parshat Ekev, matar serves as a vehicle by which Am Yisrael can perfect their relationship with G-d. Even though others lands may carry a better potential for prosperity, the Land of Israel becomes an 'ideal' environment for the growth of this spiritual environment,

shabbat shalom,  
menachem