

Parsha: Eikev

Devarim 7:12–11:25

Like the other Parshiyot in the Book of Deuteronomy, the Parshah of Eikev (“Because”) consists entirely of Moses’ final address to the people of Israel, begun on the 1st of Shevat in the year 2488 from creation (1273 BCE), and concluding 37 days later on the 7th of Adar, the day of Moses’ passing.

In this segment of his “repetition of the Torah” Moses extols the blessings of the land that the people are about to enter (without him), but warns that these blessings are dependent upon the people remaining faithful to the covenant they entered into with G-d at Mount Sinai to keep His Torah and fulfill its commandments (mitzvot):

It shall come to pass, because you hearken to these laws, and keep and do them, that the L-rd your G-d shall keep unto you the covenant and the kindness which He swore to your fathers.

He will love you, and bless you, and multiply you; and He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your corn, your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a sterile man or barren woman among you, or among your cattle. G-d will take away from you all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you; but will lay them upon all those who hate you.

Confidence

If the people remain true to G-d, they have nothing to fear from their powerful enemies:

If you should say in your heart: These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them? . . .

Do not be terrified by them; for the L-rd your G-d is among you, a great and awesome G-d.

The only danger they pose is the spiritual one:

The carvings of their gods shall you burn with fire; you shall not desire the silver or gold that is on them, or take it to you, lest you be snared with it, for it is an abomination to the L-rd your G-d. Neither shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you become accursed like it; you shall utterly detest it, and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is taboo.

A 40-Year Lesson

All the mitzvah which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which G-d swore to your fathers.

You shall remember all the way which the L-rd your G-d led you these forty years in the wilderness. . . . He afflicted you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you know not and which your fathers did not know, in order to make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but by the word that proceeds out of the mouth of G-d does man live.

Your garment grew not worn upon you, nor did your foot swell, these forty years.

You shall consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so the L-rd your G-d chastens you.

The Blessed Land

For the L-rd your G-d is bringing you into a good land, a land of watercourses, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.

A land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and [date] honey.

A land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness; you shall not lack any thing in it. A land the stones of which are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig brass.

You shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the L-rd your G-d for the good land which He has given you.

With abundance and plenty, however, come the danger that “your heart grow haughty,” and

You will say in your heart: My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth . . .

No less dangerous is to begin to believe in one’s own righteousness:

Do not speak in your heart: Because of my righteousness has G-d brought me in to possess this land . . .

Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart do you go to possess their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations does the L-rd your G-d drive them out from before you, and that He may perform the word which G-d swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Later in the Parshah, we hear more about the uniqueness of the Land:

The land into which you go to possess it is not as the land of Egypt, from whence you came out, where you sowed your seed, and watered it by foot, like a vegetable garden. [Rather,] the land

into which you go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven.

A land which the L-rd your G-d cares for: the eyes of the L-rd your G-d are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

The Sin of the Golden Calf

Moses reminds the people, "Also in Horeb you provoked G-d to anger, so that G-d was angry with you to have destroyed you."

When I had gone up onto the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which G-d made with you, then I abode in the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water . . .

It came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that G-d . . . said to me:

"Arise, get down quickly from here, for your people which you have brought forth out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image."

G-d spoke to me saying: "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they . . ."

I fell down before G-d, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I neither ate bread, nor drank water; because of all your sins which you sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of G-d, to provoke Him to anger. For I feared the anger and wrath with which G-d was angry against you to destroy you. But G-d hearkened to me at that time also.

Moses describes what happened when he came down from the mountain:

So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the L-rd your G-d, and had made a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly out of the way which G-d had commanded you.

I grabbed hold of the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them before your eyes . . .

After destroying the idol, Moses returns to the summit of Mount Sinai for a third 40 days to receive the second tablets from G-d:

At that time G-d said to me: "Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me onto the mountain, and make for yourself an ark of wood. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark."

I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up to the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.

He wrote on the tablets, according to the first writing, the ten Words which G-d spoke to you in the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and G-d gave them to me. I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they were, as G-d commanded me.

Nor was this the only time that Moses had to intervene with G-d to save them:

And at Tav'eirah, and at Massah, and at Kivrot-Hataavah, you provoked G-d to anger. Likewise when G-d sent you from Kadesh-Barnea, saying, "Go up and possess the land which I have given you," then you rebelled against the commandment of the L-rd your G-d, and you believed Him not, nor hearkened to His voice.

You have been rebellious against G-d from the day that I knew you.

G-d's Way

"And now, Israel," says Moses, "what does the L-rd your G-d require of you, only to fear the L-rd your G-d, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the L-rd your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul; to keep the commandments of G-d, and His statutes, which I command you this day for your good?"

Your generation, Moses also tells them, occupies a unique place in Jewish history: you saw it all yourselves.

I speak not with your children, who have not known, and have not seen the chastisement of the L-rd your G-d, His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm—

And His miracles and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and to all his land—

And what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots, how He made the water of the Sea of Suf overflow them as they pursued after you; and G-d destroyed them unto this day—

And what He did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place . . .

But your own eyes have seen all the great acts of G-d which He did.

The Second Section of the Shema

It shall come to pass, if you hearken diligently to My commandments which I command you this day, to love the L-rd your G-d, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,

that I will give you the rain of your land in its due season, the early rain and the late rain, that you may gather in your corn, your wine and your oil,

and I will give grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be full.

Take heed to yourselves, that your heart not be enticed, and you turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them. Then G-d's anger will be inflamed against you, and He will shut up the heavens that there be no rain, and that the land yield not its fruit; and you will perish quickly from off the good land which G-d gives you.

You shall place these words of Mine in your heart and in your soul; and bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they will be as tefillin between your eyes.

You shall teach them your children, speaking of them when you sit in your home, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise.

And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house, and upon your gates.

In order that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which G-d swore to your forefathers to give to them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

In the Parshah's closing verses, Moses once again calls upon the people to love G-d, fulfill His commandments, and "walk in all His ways and cleave to Him."