



# Parshas Eikev

For the week ending 20 Av 5757  
22 & 23 August 1997

## Overview

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.

## Insights

### THE INK OF ETERNITY

**“Carve for yourself two stone Tablets like the first ones.” (10:1)**

Michaelangelo may have known a thing or two about painting, but when it came to Jewish anatomy he was a bit off. When he painted Moses he gave him little horns. Michaelangelo's problem came from a mis-translation of the Hebrew word *keren*. It's true, *keren* does mean a 'horn,' but it also means a ray of light. The English word *corona*, meaning a glowing halo, is probably a derivation of *keren*.

How did Moshe get his 'horns'?

After the Jewish People heard the Ten Commandments at Sinai, Moshe ascended the mountain on the 7th of Sivan to receive the rest of the Torah. He came down on the 17th of Tammuz and was greeted by the sight of the golden calf. Moshe smashed the two tablets of the Torah to the ground.

These first tablets were made by Hashem and were engraved by Hashem. They contained all the Torah — the *gemaras* and the *agaditas* etc. — everything that was necessary to carry out The Maker's instructions. For example, the first tablets included all the details of how to make *tefillin*: that they had to be perfectly square black boxes made from the hide of a kosher animal. Similarly, it was on these two tablets that Hashem inscribed all the minutiae of the laws of Shabbos. However, when God gave Moshe the second tablets, they only contained the written Torah. The detailed instructions, the Oral Torah, was given to him verbally.

After Hashem forgave the Jewish People their infidelity with the Golden Calf, Moshe ascended the mountain again on the first of Elul to receive the second tablets. He came down 40 days later — on Yom Kippur. When the Children of Israel saw Moshe, his face was shining with a radiant corona.

Why didn't Moshe's face shine before?

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The Midrash says that when Moshe had finished writing the Torah, some of the ink that was left over in his pen touched his face — and that's where the radiance came from. However, the Torah itself says the rays of light came from speaking to Hashem. But Moshe spoke to Hashem many times before, why only now did his face become luminescent?

And which was the real cause of the aura? The ink in the pen or speaking to Hashem?

One would think that the second giving of the Torah was a second-class affair. After all, the first tablets were written by Hashem on rock hewn by Hashem, whereas the second tablets were the work of man, and only the writing was Divine.

It sounds like the first giving was a on higher level, doesn't it?

Really the reverse is true. When Hashem first gave the Torah, the Jewish People were to be the vessel that would contain the Torah. Like the Holy Ark, we would hold the Torah but we would not *be part of* the Torah, just as a box only contains what is inside it. It's not the thing itself.

But with the second tablets, the Jewish People became part of the Torah itself:

The beams that came from the ink that was left in the pen of Moshe was the Oral Torah. Hashem put into the mind of Moshe Rabbeinu — the rabbi, the teacher of Israel — the Oral Torah. All the verbal instructions that were originally written on the first Tablets were now engraved in the mind of Moshe. Everything that is possible for a mortal understanding to attain to was written in the mind of Moshe. The ink of eternity in the pen of Moshe was one and the same as G-d talking to him.

Thus the Jewish People became *partners* in the Torah. We become the parchment on which Hashem wrote with the ink of eternity.

#### 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.

#### 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”!

#### 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.”

## Haftorah: Isaiah 49:14-51:3

#### TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

The underlying theme of the Parsha and the Haftorah is that however 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.

Sources:

*The Ink of Eternity - Beis Halevi*  
*Immortal Fear - HaKsav V'HaKabbalah in the name of*  
*Maharil Margolios z"l*  
*Soul Food - the Arizal*  
*Stealing The World - Talmud, Tractate Berachos 35a*

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