

# Torah

# Weekly



## Parshat Va'etchanan

For the week ending 11 Av 5759  
23 & 24 July 1999

### Overview

**A**lthough Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe now prays to be allowed to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvos*. However, Hashem refuses his request. Moshe reminds *Bnei Yisrael* of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah — that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on *Bnei Yisrael* that the revelation of Sinai took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jewish People will ever be able to claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins *Bnei Yisrael* to “pass over” the event of the gathering at Sinai to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe accurately predicts that after *Bnei Yisrael* have dwelled in *Eretz Yisrael* they will sin, be exiled from the Land, and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but eventually they will return to Hashem. Moshe designates three “cities of refuge” to which a person who kills inadvertently may flee. Moshe repeats the Ten Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Then Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and forget their purpose as a spiritual nation. The Parsha ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter *Eretz Yisrael*, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

### Insights

#### THE MISSING LINK

#### “I am Hashem, your G-d...” (5:6)

**W**hy did G-d give the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone? Why not on one big stone?

The commandments on the first tablet are between Man and G-d. “I am Hashem...You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence...You shall not make a carved image...” The second tablet, however, contains commandments between Man and his fellow: “You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal...”

But why do they need to be on a separate slab? What difference does it make that the second five commandments concern man and his fellow? They're all commandments, aren't they?

Nothing we do affects G-d. If we fail to do one of the *mitzvot*, G-d doesn't get angry. G-d has no human traits whatsoever, be they physical, emotional or spiritual. All we can know about G-d is that He is. The commandments that G-d gives us between us and Him are for one reason only:

To connect us to Him, to bring us closer to Him. From His perspective, however, they do nothing for Him.

Where our fellow beings are concerned, however, mitzvah failure (murder, theft, etc.) affects them greatly.

For this reason, the Ten Commandments are divided onto two tablets. Those commandments between Man and G-d affect Man, but not G-d. Those between Man and Man affect both sides.

This link, this mutuality between the active party and the recipient, is alluded to by the linking of the second five commandments together with the conjunction “and.” “You shall not murder; and you shall not commit adultery; and you shall not steal...”

When we damage the relationship with our fellow, it doesn't just affect ourselves, it impacts him as well. We are linked together.

(Maharal, *Drash al HaTorah*; Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky)

### Haftorah: Isaiah 40:1-26

**T**he Shabbos immediately following Tisha B'Av is called *Shabbos Nachamu* -- The Shabbos of Consolation. It takes its name from the first word of this week's Haftorah -- “Comfort, comfort my people says your G-d.” The Prophet reminds the people that the time of the Exile of Jerusalem has come to an end. The Midrash tells us that Hashem asks Avraham to comfort Jerusalem, but he does not succeed. He is followed by Yitzchak and Yaakov and Moshe who are also unsuccessful. Finally Hashem Himself comes to comfort the Holy City.

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