



## ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

**RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS**  
RCA ISRAEL REGION

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a”h**  
**חווה פערסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע”ה**  
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

### PARSHAT VA’ETCHANAN



#### 1ST ALIYA (3:23-4:4)

I beseeched G-d to allow me to enter the Land. He refused: ascend the mountain, gaze at the Land that you will not enter. Charge Yehoshua, for he will lead the people. Now, Yisrael, Shema, listen to the commandments so you will remain in the Land. You saw what occurred with Baal Peor: those who followed Baal Peor were punished while those who did not, survived.

The tone and language of the Torah changes dramatically in this parsha. We have had narrative. And we had commandments. But now we have suasion. Moshe says: listen. He will say listen a lot. He is arguing. Or cajoling. Or better, pleading. Or coaxing. He is making the case for being loyal to G-d and

to the Torah.

Moshe’s long speech that takes up almost the entire book of Devarim began by addressing the people’s present frame of mind. They are standing on the banks of the Jordan, ready to enter the Land. Without Moshe. They are nervous, uncertain, afraid, unsure of their ability to conquer the Land, especially without Moshe as their leader. He addressed those concerns, their immediate frame of mind in last week’s parsha.

In our parsha, he begins to address not the present but the future. He desperately wants the people to stay loyal to G-d. And he knows that is going to be challenging once they enter the Land.



#### 2ND ALIYA (4:5-40)

Keep the mitzvot, for they are wise. The nations will look at the mitzvot and say: what a wise people. And who has a G-d as close as ours is to us? Or who has noble laws as our Torah? Remember the day at Sinai, the mountain on fire and the darkness of the cloud. The Voice emanated but there was no form. Make no images. I taught you the mitzvot; keep them, for they are the covenant G-d commanded from you. Your children will make images and be exiled, flung to the ends of the earth, serving idols there. They will return to G-d, seeking Him with all their heart. He will not forget His covenant. Has any other people heard G-d’s voice amidst fire? Or another one Who took His people with wonders from amidst another? Know and take to heart that there

In loving memory of  
**Syma Spiro a”h - Bubby**

**A true symbol of Torah values  
and loved by all**

**Survived by her loving family,  
husband, children, grandchildren  
and great-grandchildren**

**She passed away on  
Friday, August 1<sup>st</sup> - 7 Av**

is none other than G-d.

Moshe begins with two themes; what we have and who we have. What we have is our Torah. It is unique, wise, noble. Special. And ours. We tend to think what others have is better than what we have. No, no. What we have is a treasure.

And we also have a close friendship with G-d. He spoke to us. That too is special. Unique.

Remember both these things and stay loyal to them. Your success in the Land depends on them.

And then, before they even take one step into the Land, Moshe tells them they will be exiled. Because the Land is the place of intimacy with G-d. If you abandon that, He too abandons you and flings you to the corners of the earth.

Come back to Him, He will bring you back to here.



### 3RD ALIYA (4:41-49)

Moshe separated 3 cities of refuge for those who kill accidentally on the east side of the Jordan. Moshe taught these laws on the east side of the Jordan in the lands already conquered. These conquered lands extend from the Dead Sea all the way to Mt. Hermon.

Moshe's choosing 3 cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan, is his confirmation of the right of Bnei Gad, Bnei Reuven and half of Menashe to dwell there.

And his confirmation that our life will never be paradise. We aren't entering a dream. We are entering a stage in our history that is special, but people are people, terrible things, like manslaughter will happen. You are special, the Land is special, while at the same time we are human beings. That is the

balance we seek; living great lives with full awareness of our human foibles.



### 4TH ALIYA (5:1-18)

Mt. Sinai. Moshe called the people: Shema Yisrael to the commandments, for our G-d made a covenant at Sinai. He made it with you, face to face amidst fire. I communicated it because you were afraid. And He said: I am G-d who took you out of Egypt. Do not make images. Or take My name in vain. Guard Shabbat as a day of rest to remember that you were slaves in Egypt. Honor your father and mother. Do not murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, covet.

Moshe now begins his motivational speech to the people, his coaxing, his pleading, his cajoling. And he begins with G-d's reach for man. *He* made a covenant with us. And *He* spoke with us.

The moment of Sinai is a dramatic moment of love. His love for us. He wanted to descend on the mountain to speak with mankind.

The meaning of Mt. Sinai is not the content of the 10 commandments. It is the drama of G-d bending down, reaching for man, initiating an intimate and direct contact with us. Descending on the mountain to speak directly with us.

And while the people present were fearful, we, upon reflecting on that powerful and intimate moment, we responded to His love for us, with our love for Him.



### 5TH ALIYA (5:19-6:3)

When you heard these words amidst the fire and the cloud you were afraid. You approached and said: now we know man can hear G-d's voice but we are afraid we will die. Moshe, you hear from Him, not us. G-d agreed and said to me: you

stand with Me and I will tell you all the commandments to keep in the Land.

The word Shema appears 8 times in the first 7 verses of this aliya. The people heard the Voice at Sinai but were afraid. So, Moshe, you hear it for us. And G-d heard their suggestion and said it was good. Fine, Moshe will hear G-d's voice.

But who hears is not the issue. The issue is who hears. I mean, who hears the voice with his ear; that can be Moshe. That's fine. But who hears, I mean, hears, gets it, understands it, accepts it; that, is you.

That is Moshe's plea. Let this drama sink in. Absorb it. For this is dramatic. It is your unique relationship with G-d. Do not treat it casually. Hear it loud and clear.



#### 6TH ALIYA (6:4-25)

The Shema. Shema Yisrael, G-d is one. You shall love G-d, and have that on your heart constantly; teaching of it to your children, speaking of it, at all times and in all places. Be bound with love of G-d; let it guide you and your home. When you come into the Land, you will find things that you did not build: large and good cities, homes full of wonderful things, cisterns, vineyards, olive groves. But be careful to not forget G-d. Fear Him, serve Him. Do what is moral and good in His eyes and He will do good for you. When your children ask you about all these commandments, tell them: we were slaves in Egypt, G-d took us out to give us this Land. These commandments are to cultivate awe of Him and bring us merit, to preserve us in this Land.

While we love the first line of the Shema, it is the second that is the emphasis of the paragraph. Love of G-d. All your heart, all your soul, all your might. We are used to saying

this line so we become numb to its power.

Moshe is speaking to the people: pour yourself into this. Let it go. Invest all you got into it. No inhibitions. Love of G-d is to animate all of your life: bubbling over to your children, percolating in you in your travels, your actions, your thoughts, your home. Wow. Little wonder that this paragraph is the heart of our daily tefila. We need to be G-d obsessed. Moshe is plain as day here: love G-d with all your heart, soul and might. All in.



#### 7TH ALIYA (7:1-11)

When you come into the Land, conquer the seven nations. Do not make any covenant with them. Do not marry them, for that will lead to idol worship. You are G-d's holy people. Not because you are numerous but because He loved you and made a covenant with you. Know: He keeps His covenant. You too keep the mitzvot.

The love of G-d is exclusive. Idol worship violates that love. Be wary of the path to infidelity: people. Covenants with the idol worshippers of the Land will soften the way to their gods. And more dramatically, marrying the people of the Land accelerates the path to their gods.

In both it is the allure of belonging. Marry a woman, join her faith group, enjoy the fellowship, camaraderie; the sense of belonging that a faith community brings. There are a lot of wonderful and satisfying elements to any faith community. But. That is a complete violation of your unique relationship with G-d (in addition to the folly of these gods). It is not the mind that attracts you; it is the community that comes with the wife. Marrying the non-Jew can easily begin the process of idol worship. Hence, shun intermarriage.

## YESHAYAHU 40:1-26

This week's *haftorah* is the first of a series of seven "*haftarot* of Consolation." These seven *haftarot* start on the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

This section of Yeshayahu begins with G-d's conveying to the prophet: "Console, O console My people . . . Announce to Jerusalem that her period of exile has been fulfilled and that her sins have been forgiven."

Yeshayahu's prophecy describes some of the remarkable events that will unfold with the onset of the messianic era. These include: the return of the exiles to Yerushalayim, the revelation of Hashem's glory, and the rewards and retribution that will then be meted out to the nations of the world.

The navi then goes on to comfort the people, describing G-d's power and might, and reassuring them of His care for His people. ■

### STATS

45<sup>th</sup> of 54 sedras; 2nd of 11 in D'varim. Written on 249 lines in a Torah, rank: 7. 21 parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed, 7<sup>th</sup> (tied with Ki Tavo).

122 pEsukim - rank: 17 (2<sup>nd</sup> in Devarim) same as Vayak'hel & Ki Tavo - but larger. 1878 words; rank: 10<sup>th</sup> (2nd in Devarim). 7343 letters; rank: 10<sup>th</sup> (2nd in Devarim). Va'etchanan's pesukim are longer than average, hence the jump in rank from 17<sup>th</sup> for pesukim to 10<sup>th</sup> for words.

### MITZVOT

12 of 613 mitzvot: 8 positive, 4 prohibitions and many more that are counted elsewhere - this is so for several sedras, but it really shows for Va'etchanan (e.g. Aseret HaDibrot in Yitro has 14 mitzvot, repeated here but not counted here).

## A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES  
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

ונשמרתם מאד לנפשותיכם כי לא ראיתם כל תמונה... כן תשחתון ועשיתם לכם פסל (ד:טו,טז)  
"Watch out, **immensely**, for yourselves for you saw no manner of form...Lest you deal corruptly and make for yourselves a graven image." (4:15,16)

Why does the pasuk teach us by stressing watching ourselves immensely (meod)?

The Chofetz Chaim (1838-1933) points out that every person must take care of one's health and well-being. A person should be wary of how he treats his body without extreme care. As a taxi driver minds the upkeep of his cab so it does not break down on the road, so too we must maintain our physical health and physique to continue our tasks in this world. The Chofetz Chaim rebuked a Rosh Yeshiva who restrained from eating meat to better provide for his students. He told him that amongst other priorities, it is vital that his students see a healthy Rosh Yeshiva.

The Meshech Chochma (R' Meir Simcha Divinsk 1843-1926) placed emphasis on the context of the verse. One needs to make a great effort to avoid idolatry. One reason given for Moshe being refused entry to Israel was due to his high spiritual level and capabilities. He brought forth great miracles and went without eating or drinking. The Torah was concerned that the new generation entering the Land of Israel, might not remember Moshe's humble beginning, and misconstrue him as Divine. "And the people spoke against G-d and Moshe (Bamidbar 21:5) upon which the Midrash Rabbah (19:12) adds that "They equated the servant with the Master." Due to the fear that the new generation would deify Moshe, his entrance into the Land was denied. - Shabbat Shalom