



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

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

PARSHAT KI TAVO

Parshat Ki Tavo begins the conclusion of our Torah. The book of Devarim consists of Moshe's long speech at the end of his life. His speech is a magnum opus of past, present and future. He began with a review of our history, including successes and failures and their lessons for the impending settling of the Land. He then outlined what a Jewish society shall look like; 170 mitzvot including ethical monotheism in all its color, nation building of judiciary, legislature and executive and the high ethical calling in the life of the individuals.

Parshat Ki Tavo looks to the future. It transitions from the mitzvah laden parshiot; it has but 6 mitzvot. It is the beginning of the conclusion of Moshe's charge to the people. Ki Tavo is followed by 4 very short parshiot, which combined would be a long parsha. Meaning, we are barely a parsha length from the end of the Torah following Ki Tavo. This is the end of our Torah. And this section deals not with the present task at hand, the impending settling of the Land. But rather, it gazes into the future, the distant future, the exile that follows the successful settlement of the Land.



1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 26:1-11)

When settled in the Land, bring your first fruits as an offering. When offered, declare the following: My

forefathers descended to Egypt, were enslaved, called out and You redeemed them with a strong arm, bringing them to this Land of milk and honey. And I am acknowledging that I have benefitted from all that, rejoicing in all the good I have been given.

This mitzvah of bikkurim, of first fruits, is a rich one. But besides its own beauty, lies its significance in the narrative of Devarim. In bikkurim, the successful farmer gives a full-throated expression of how fortunate he is to be where he is. He stands on the shoulders of our history. Egypt, redemption, the Land and now little me, enjoying a bounty in the Land. That is a beautiful mitzvah of gratitude and appreciation.

But it is also foreshadowing. Moshe is preparing for the horrible predictions of the curses at the end of this parsha. And providing a foil, a contrast. To avoid that, do this. Know, my people, Moshe is saying, know that this is the way you should live. Appreciative, aware, a sense of history, placing G-d at the core of your success. And rejoicing in the presence of G-d. This is a foil to the horrible curses Moshe will outline should this ideal not be realized. Here is the way it should be. And could be.



2ND ALIYA (26:12-15)

In the 3rd year, declare that all tithes have been given: I have given the holy tithes as well as those to the Levi and the needy. I have done all that I have been commanded to do. Gaze down from Your holy place in the heavens and bless us in this Land

flowing with milk and honey.

This too is a foil to the upcoming curses. This is the way to live to avoid those curses. The first aliya was the way to live in relationship to G-d. This mitzvah is the way to live in relationship to man. In my success, my bounty in the Land, I ascribe my success to my Creator. And in my success, I share with others, give the proper tithes. These are the two pillars of Jewish society: monotheism and ethics.



3RD ALIYA (26:16-19)

Today G-d is commanding you to keep His laws with all your heart. You declare today that He will be your G-d and you will keep His laws. And He declares that you will be a treasured nation, to elevate you, to be a glorious and holy people.

A brief statement but a powerful one. We are both committed: we to Him, He to us. This is our noble calling. The entire Torah has been this story; we are His people, He is our G-d.



4TH ALIYA (27:1-10)

Moshe with the elders commanded the people: upon entering the Land, establish a monument of stones with this entire Torah written upon it. Build an altar in front of it, offer offerings and rejoice before your G-d. Moshe, the Kohanim and the Leviim spoke: know that today you are G-d's people.

Monuments, stone, permanence. What do nations express by the monuments they make? Generals on horseback. Arches of triumph. Busts of Emperors. In a word, power.

What do we etch in stone in our entry to the Land? The Torah.

And the word Hayom, today, occurs 3 times in just 4 verses in the previous aliya and 3

times in just 10 verses in this aliya. Rashi comments that the mitzvot should feel to us as if they were given to us today; fresh, exciting, relevant. But the other side of this reciprocal relationship should also be fresh daily; that we should feel daily, all the time, that G-d views us as a treasured nation. The mitzvot should be fresh; but so too, the majesty of our station should be fresh daily as well.



5TH ALIYA (27:11-28:6)

Moshe commanded the people: 6 tribes shall be on Har Gerizim, 6 on Har Eval. The Leviim shall be between the mountains, pronouncing the following, affirmed with Amen by the people. Cursed is the one who: makes idols in private, curses parents, alters the land demarcations with his neighbor, deceives the blind, manipulates justice of the weak, commits incest, strikes another privately, takes a bribe resulting in corporal punishment, or fails to keep the Torah. **The Blessings and Curses: If you keep the mitzvot**, you will be a glorious nation. You will be blessed with children, with produce, and flocks.

There is a similarity in the list of those who are cursed; they are all cursed for things done in private. The core of our religious life is our personal, private relationship with G-d. It is the things done in private that truly convey our allegiance. When no one is looking. And this is a necessary preamble for the upcoming blessings and curses. For we will never truly be in a position to assess the fullness of the righteousness or failing of our people, for who can see into the hearts of human beings.



6TH ALIYA (28:7-69)

You will be blessed with military success, with an abundance of G-d's treasury, and excelling over others.

But if you do not do the mitzvot: you will be cursed. In offspring, produce, flocks, illness. Enemies will chase you. You will be carrion in the field. Illness, blindness, dementia, wandering without direction. You will not enjoy the fruits of your labor; they will be snatched from you. This will all drive you mad. You will be carried off to other nations, serving idols there. Your efforts there will not be successful. You will sink, other nations rise. You will be derided as one who abandoned G-d, refusing to serve Him in your success. All will disintegrate; your family, your social structure, those dear to you. Illnesses will decimate you. In lieu of being as the stars of the heavens, you will be miniscule. You will be thrown around the world, serving idols, finding no solace, fearful day and night. You will even end up back in Egypt, the place you were to never return. This is the covenant of the plains of Moav.

This aliya is the aliya of the curses; what will occur due to our abandonment of G-d and of mitzvot. And it is long; at 63 verses, one of the longest in the entire Torah. There are a lot of curses.

In this, Moshe moves well beyond the present. He has been preoccupied, understandably, with what is necessary to build the Jewish nation successfully. He has described what we can anticipate in life in the Land; its challenges, like idol worship, and its glory, its bounty.

Now, he peers into the distant future. There will be a time of exile. I know, we haven't even entered the Land, but there will be a time when we will lose this Land. We will lack gratitude, lack allegiance and be exiled. Our experience in exile will be horrible; illness, failure, insecurity, total societal breakdown.

And how does it all end? Uh, well, it doesn't. There is no happy ending. We are left hanging; wandering, suffering, decimated. Oh, but that is this parsha. In the most beautiful of parshiot of the Torah, Moshe returns to pick up the future next week, the parsha of Teshuva. But ending this description of the curses with no conclusion is powerfully poetic, leaving us with a feeling of terrible dread.

Now, we have had a parsha of blessings and curses before, in Parshat Bechukotai at the end of Vayikra. Perhaps this warning of our vulnerability is repeated here, specifically following the description of our national institutions of Kings, Judges, military. Back in Vayikra the theme was holiness. You must live a life of holiness in the holy Land.

But, maybe the description of national institutions invites hubris. We are invincible, what with our King and army. We may not be so good at being holy but our army will make us invincible. So, Moshe repeats the warning. As if to say: we live in this rough and tumble world, so build national institutions because you need to govern and protect yourself.

But. No hubris. The best army in the world will not save you if you stray from G-d. You need a good army. But you also need to be good people. Our success in our Land depends on our awareness of our G-d and our loyalty to Him. And a good army.



7TH ALIYA (29:1-8)

Moshe called the people and spoke: You saw all the wonders of Egypt, but it has taken to this day to understand its meaning. He guided you, defeated nations, and gave you their lands. So keep this covenant, to live insightfully.

This deceiving short aliya has a surprising and profound brief statement. "It has taken

until today to understand our history". We shall never allow ourselves to be facile, to be presumptuous, to feel we understand history and G-d's ways. It took those in the desert 40 years to fully appreciate their history, the dynamic of G-d in their history. Understanding His ways is no easy matter.

HAFTORAH YESHAYAHU 60:1-22

This week's *haftorah* is the sixth of a series of seven "*Haftarot* of Consolation." In exhilarating terms the navi describes what will unfold during the Redemption. Beginning with the resurrection of the dead and the ingathering of the exiles, continuing with the joy and abundance the Jewish people will then experience. The navi also spotlights the gifts that will be brought to G-d from all of the nations of the world.

In the end, the Jewish nation will no longer experience the hatred of the other nations, be despised and derided. The day will come when there will no longer be violence nor mourning, Hashem will shine His eternal light on His beloved people. ■



STATS

50th of the 54 sedras; 7th of the 11 in Devarim.
Written on 233 lines (rank: 13th).
21 Parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed.
122 pesukim - rank: 17 (2nd in Devarim).
1747 words - rank: 16 (2nd in Devarim).
6811 letters - rank: 15 (4th in Devarim).
Pesukim are longer than average for the Torah, but short for Devarim.



MITZVOT

6 of the 613; 3 pos. and 3 prohibitions.

A SHORT VORT

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

וְהָיָה בְּיוֹם אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲבְרוּ אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן.....וְהִקְמַתְּ לָךְ אֲבָנִים גְּדוּלוֹת.....וְכָתַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶן אֶת כָּל דְּבָרֵי הַתּוֹרָה (כז:ב,ג)
"And it shall be on the day when you shall pass over the Jordan...you shall set up for yourself great stones....and you shall write upon them all the words of this Torah" (27:2,3)

Why the need to set up these great stones immediately upon entering the Land and transcribe the Torah words on them, and not at a later point?

The Abarbanel (1437-1508, Italy) explains that from this text we can distinguish between the Israelites and the other nations. Other societies commemorate their victories in designing landmarks in honor of their war heroes which have portrayed great courage and valor. The Israelites, on the other hand, give first and foremost, special recognition to the Torah and the words it represents. The Israelites understand currently that their victories to come are because of staying loyal to the Torah before their might and strength of their military ability. For this reason, this monument is documented upon arrival into the Land before any major battles, to affirm our faith.

The great biblical interpreter, Onkelos (35-120) points out that the word "Avanim"-"Stones" has a further meaning. Within the word "Even" found "Av" and "Ben" - Father and Son, (Onkelos Bereishit 49:24) perhaps to emphasize the true important message upon entering the Promised Land. We are here to ensure the smooth transition from one generation to the next. With this the Israelites stand apart from other nations by emphasizing our belief in the importance of passing on the tradition over to our children.