



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN

Our parsha begins a majestic section of the Torah. It is unlike anything in the Torah up until this point.

All of the book of Devarim is Moshe's final charge to the people. He knows he will not enter the Land of Israel with the people. He has a lot to say before he takes leave of them.

He began his 30-chapter long speech last week with how we got to where we are. We left Mt. Sinai, journeyed to the Land, sent in spies, that ended badly, and now 40 years later we are here, poised to enter the Land.

That introduction was descriptive. He related the history. But it was just an introduction. What he really wants to convey to the people is not a description of history. What he really wants to convey is how special our entire Jewish enterprise is.

In memory of
BUBBY SPIRO a''h

**With every passing day
we wish for
One more day with you.
One more hug.
One more kiss.
One more book.
One more Shabbat together.**

**We love you,
Daniel, Sarah, Rakhel Chava
& Zahava**

And that begins with our parsha. The language changes. It is engaging, uplifting, expressive. It is emotional. Moshe, who engaged with G-d "panim el panim", face to face as it were, knows that relationship is simply unique. There has never been, nor will there ever be such a relationship. And it isn't him. He is merely the messenger, the representative of the Jewish people.

Moshe urgently wants to convey to the Jewish people how special our relationship with G-d is. The unique covenant between us. He doesn't emphasize what to do but why to do it. He is conveying the heart, the essence, the depth of our relationship with G-d, and more importantly, His relationship with us.



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.

Our parsha begins with Moshe's desire to enter the Land of Israel. And with G-d's refusal. This really belongs in last week's parsha, the parsha describing how we got to where we are. Where we are is on the banks of the Jordan, with me, Moshe, about to take leave because G-d has refused my request to enter. That is last week's parsha.

We begin our parsha with Moshe explaining why he is giving this long speech. Moshe

is going to open his heart, his deepest feelings, trying to convey to the people how glorious our relationship with G-d is. This description sets the stage for that, for Moshe has to explain why he is about to make this big long speech. Because, I am not going into the Land with you.

I want to give you a heart transplant, taking my heart and giving it to you, so you will live in the Land without me physically but with my heart.



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 is none other than G-d.

Moshe begins with the incredulous. As if to say to the people: I can describe how we got to where we are, you know, leaving Egypt, getting the Torah. But let's pause a second and think about what that all means.

It means we have an intimate relationship with our G-d. Or more importantly, He with us. He Spoke to us at Sinai! That is unprecedented. Unique. He Redeemed us from Egypt. He wanted us? No other nation has

this embrace from G-d. It is unique to us.

Moshe has pierced the heart of our Jewish life. We have a special covenant, a special bond, initiated not by us, but by Him. His reach to us.

Everything else, the mitzvot, the prohibition of idol worship, it all is a seamless consequence of this covenant. How could you worship idols after He Did all that for you?



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.

But also, his confirmation that entering the Land of Israel is not entering paradise. Our life will never be paradise. We aren't entering a dream. We are entering a special stage in our history. 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

May your learning this Shabbat
be לעלוי נשמת

רחל בת שבת יהושע
יצחק חיים ונעכא ז"ל
RUTH MILLER ז"ל

ט"ז באב

on her 21st yahrzeit

The Miller/Kalish/Kram families

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 relates the Ten Commandments. But less for their content than for the broad sweep of the meaning of Mt. Sinai. 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, and so He spoke with me, Moshe, that is not because of my uniqueness. He was speaking with you. He wanted to speak with you. That is the meaning of the moment. It is an intimate moment; His Love for us.



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. Hence the last verse in the aliya, 8 verses later, comes back to Shema: Shemata Yisrael, you heard Israel and hence, you must keep the mitzvot. There is hearing and there is hearing.

Moshe is your hearing aid to hear; but you are the ones who need to hear. Do you hear what is going on? G-d is reaching for you. You need to hear that 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. Avoid covenants with the people. And avoid marrying them.

HAFTORAH 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

45th of 54 sedras; 2nd of 11 in Devarim.
Written on 249 lines in a Torah, rank: 7.
21 parshiyot; 5 open, 16 closed, 7th (tied with Ki Tavo).
122 pesukim - rank: 17 (2nd in Devarim) same as Vayak'hel & Ki Tavo - but larger.
1878 words; rank: 10th (2nd in Devarim).
7343 letters; rank: 10th (2nd in Devarim).
Va'etchanan's pesukim are longer than average, hence the jump in rank from 17th for pesukim to 10th for words.



MITZVOT

12 of 613 mitzvot: 8 pos., 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).

**May the Torah learning
in this Torah Tidbits be a merit
for our beloved mother
Asna bat Reb Schneur a"h
who personified Ahavat Chinam
on her 22nd Yartzheit, 8 Av
from her daughters,
Shelley Hirshberg and Helen Sher**