



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

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 the Jewish society we will build in the Land of Israel ought to 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.

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.

These last 5 parshiot focus on history. Not the history of the past, but the history we create. Or more specifically, the final push from Moshe that our history is unique.

History is the recounting of events and how they unfold. What caused what or what led to what. History can only deal with people's actions. Economic collapse led to discontent. Discontent led to revolt against the government and the rise of a new government.

Jewish history follows a completely different path. It is not the story of events unfolding, of this action leading to that response.

It is the story of a covenant. Of the intertwining of this physical world of ours, where we humans act. And of the spiritual world, the covenantal world, where we walk with our G-d, do what He commands. In this covenantal world our actions contribute to our history, but not just our overt actions but our private life of mitzvot. Who sees that? Who knows whether my private life is noble or corrupt?

Moshe needs to tutor our people in this unique history of ours, the history not only of the past but the history of the future. It is this tutorial of history that is the theme of Ki Tavo and the final 4 parshiot that follow.



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

**This weeks Torah learning
is dedicated לעילוי נשמת**

ישראל בן רפאל זאב ז"ל

Rabbi Dr. Israel Rivkin ז"ל
on his 2nd Yartzheit - כ' אלול תשפ"ו

**Sorely missed
and fondly remembered
by family and friends**

*His dear wife Rebecca,
children, grandchildren
and great grandchildren*

*The Rivkin, Kestenbaum, Kwestel
and Markowitz families*

and honey. And I am acknowledging that I have benefitted from all that, rejoicing in all the good I have been given.

Last week's parsha, Ki Teitzei, was full of mitzvot. This mitzvah of bikkurim, of first fruits, could have been included last week.

It is deliberately placed in our parsha, the parsha of our covenantal history. Because Bikkurim and the mitzvah following are unusual; they are mitzvot with speeches.

In Bikkurim, the successful farmer brings his first fruits to the Mikdash and then gives a speech; 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.

And it is a perfect introduction to the theme of history. Later Moshe will focus prophetically on the future. But he begins with a mitzvah of history of the past, a paradigm for how we view our history. And in particular, that the Jew lives in two lives. He lives in his private life enjoying the fruits of his labor. And in the broad sweep of Jewish history.



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 mitzvah with a speech. I have given all the gifts I am required to give.

Bikkurim was a speech of history. This, called Vidui Maaser, is a speech of kindness. I gave all the gifts I ought to give.

The first aliya was the way to live in relationship to G-d, recognizing His role in

bringing me to where I am. 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.

This very brief aliya is the statement of the uniqueness of Judaism, that we are a people walking with our G-d. Not just individuals reaching for our G-d. But a collective, a nation with a covenant with our G-d.

There is tension in the modern Jewish world of those wanting to define Judaism as just a religion, with no national element and hence no connection to our people in our Land. It is incomprehensible to read our Torah and to hold such a view. The entire Torah is the story of our people. And the end of the Torah presses this point. We are individuals and part of a people. The covenant is between our people and our G-d.

לעילוי נשמת אמנו וסבתא היקרה
חנה רבקה בת עזריאל שמשון
הלוי ובתשבע מינע ע"ה

Dedicated in loving memory of
our dear Mother and Grandmother
Helen (Honey) Newman a"h
On her 26th Yahrzeit - ח"י אלול

*Judith Berger, Zale Newman,
Chaviva Braun, and families*



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.

In this Moshe presents the uniqueness of Jewish history. The covenant between the Jewish people and G-d is complex. It covers private life. And communal life of Kings and courts. Our success in the Land is a function of how well we do in living holy lives and in building a holy society in the Land.

And the stakes are high. The Land. Or exile.

Sobering thoughts in election season.



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 deceptively short aliya has a surprising and profound brief statement. "It has taken until today to understand our history".

רפואה שלמה מהרה
לליעם יעקב ניסן בן אורה

That is quite surprising. 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 exalting 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 (P), 16 closed (S).
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 positive and 3 prohibitions.