



Shabbat Table Talk Page

Overview

- **Parashah: Eikev** (עֵקֶב, "because")
- **Chapters: Deut. 7:12-11:25**



בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

– Torah Study Blessing –

Synopsis

Last week's Torah portion (i.e., Va'etchanan) ended with a sober warning to obey the LORD: "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today."

In this week's portion, Moses continues his great admonition by saying, "If you heed these judgments, and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers" (Deut. 7:12). Obedience to the commandments will yield blessings: plentiful children, harvests, livestock, and other material blessings in the land. Indeed, the Israelites would be "blessed above all peoples," free of every type of sickness, living in victory in the Promised Land.

On the other hand, the people were not to live in fear, especially of the seven nations of the land of Canaan. Instead they were to exercise faith, recalling what the LORD did to Pharaoh in Egypt and delivered the people. The people were to have no tolerance for idols of any kind. They were to "devote them to utter destruction," burning them with fire and eradicating them from the land.

Moses then reminded the Israelites how the LORD had taken care of them throughout their wandering in the desert. For nearly 40 years, God humbled the people, feeding them with manna and giving them water from the miraculous Rock. Even the Shechinah glory miraculously kept their clothes fresh and their shoes from wearing out! Moses said that the LORD did all this to teach the people to rely on Him alone to meet all their needs. The hardships in the desert had disciplined them to learn that "man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD" (Deut. 8:3).

And now the Promised Land lay before the people, a land famous for seven species of crops, namely: wheat, barley, figs, pomegranates, olives, dates and grapes, a fruitful land that receives water from heaven. As long as Israel would trust in God, He would give them this good land and continue to care for them, just as He did in the desert.



However, all this blessedness would come through *walking by faith*. Moses warned the people not to forget the LORD by ignoring his commandments, especially after they had settled the land and become prosperous. If the people forgot their supernatural deliverance and origin, turning to idols or believing that their own ingenuity gave them their wealth, God promised that they would soon perish from the land, just like the seven Canaanite nations before them.

Moses then reminded Israel that they were to be given the land, not because they were better than other nations or more righteous, but because the LORD was using the Israelites as a rod of judgment upon the seven Canaanite nations living there, and because the LORD had earlier promised to give the land to the descendants of Abraham (Deut. 9:4-5).

To make his point, Moses then recounted to the people a list of their recent sins. Even after directly hearing the Voice of God at Sinai, their fathers provoked the LORD with the Sin of the Golden Calf, disobeying the very Ten Commandments they had promised to keep. Because of this sin, Moses had to intercede on behalf of the people 40 days and nights, to spare them from complete annihilation at the wrath of the LORD. Then, upon leaving Sinai (at Taberah), the people complained about the lack of meat. At Massah (also called Meribah) the people complained about the lack of water. At Kivrot-hattaavah they lusted for meat. Finally, while at Kadesh-Barnea, right before they were to take possession of the Promised Land, the people rebelled against the commandment of the LORD and did not believe him (the Sin of the Spies), thus forcing the nation into 40 years of exile. Moses concluded this *mussar* (reproof) with these words: “You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you” (Deut. 9:24).

In light of all this, and especially in light of God’s forgiveness as demonstrated by the renewal of the covenant at Sinai, Moses appealed to the people by asking them a rhetorical question: “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?” Moses then pled with the people to “circumcise their hearts,” that is, to remove their “hardheartedness” and no longer be stubborn (or “stiff-necked”).

Moses continued his speech by commanding the people to love the LORD and keep “all his charge,” namely, his statutes (*chukkim*), rules (*mishpatim*), and commandments (*mitzvot*). He again admonished them to consider the discipline of the LORD and to remember His saving acts when He rescued the people from bondage in Egypt. Keeping the commandments gives strength to go in and take possession of the Promised Land and to dwell in it securely. Commitment to the LORD’s will would ensure successful harvests through the regularity of the autumn and spring rains; but these would be withheld if the people became disobedient.



The portion concludes with the passage used liturgically as the second (of three) portions of the Shema (called the *Ve'ayah*). These words, reiterating the connection between Israel’s devotion to the LORD and their blessing as God’s chosen people, are recited twice a day by observant Jews all over the world.



Parashah Questions



1. What does the word *eikev* (עֵקֶב) mean (Deut. 7:12)? ¹
2. What three things were required of the people (Deut. 7:12)? ²
3. If the people obeyed, what would God do (Deut. 7:12-15)? ³
4. What were the people to do the inhabitants of the land (Deut. 7:16)? ⁴
5. What did Moses say to encourage the Israelites to dispossess the seven nations in the land (Deut. 7:17-21)? ⁵
6. Would God expel these nations all at once (Deut. 7:22)? ⁶
7. How would God give the nations over to Israel (Deut. 7:23)? ⁷
8. What promise did God give to the Israelite army (Deut. 7:24)? ⁸
9. What were to be done with the carved images and idols of the Canaanite nations (Deut. 7:25-26)? ⁹
10. Moses warned the people to do and remember what two things (Deut. 8:1-2)? ¹⁰
11. Why did God have Israel wander in the desert forty years (Deut. 8:2)? ¹¹
12. Why did God test the people with hunger (Deut. 8:3)? ¹²

¹ *Eikev* is usually translated “because” or “consequently.” It comes from the shorash *akav* (עֲקַב, to “take by the heel”), as does the name *Ya’akov* (Jacob), who had “grabbed the heel” of his twin brother Esau while still in the womb of Rebekah. Israel is called to “grapple” with the mitzvot and to perform them diligently, lest they themselves be supplanted from the land..

² They were to *listen* to the rules, and then *keep* and *do* them.

³ God would keep covenant with the people as he swore by oath to the patriarchs. He would love and bless the people in abundance and prosper them in the land. He would remove all sickness and disease from the people and put them on their enemies instead.

⁴ To exterminate them from the land. “Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.”

⁵ They were to remember what the LORD did to Pharaoh and to Egypt: “So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.” “You shall not be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.”

⁶ No, God would expel them “little by little” (מִעֵט מִעֵט) so that the land could be settled in an orderly manner.

⁷ He would throw them into “great confusion” (מְהוּמָה גְדוֹלָה) until they were *shamad* – exterminated.

⁸ “No one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them.”

⁹ All the idols and religious artifacts were to be regarded as abominations and were to be “devoted to destruction.”

¹⁰ They were *to do* “all the commandment” (כָּל-הַמִּצְוָה) and they were *to remember* “all the way” (כָּל-הַדֶּרֶךְ) that God had led them during the 40 years in the desert.

¹¹ To humble the people through various tests (*nisayonot*) to see whether they would keep the commandments or not. Note that the aim of God’s testing was “to do you good in the end” (Deut. 8:16).

¹² To teach that the people were to depend upon God and his word for their lives and their needs.



13. What is manna (Deut. 8:3)? ¹³
14. In addition to the manna, what other miracle of provision did God perform for the people while they were in the desert (Deut. 8:4)? ¹⁴
15. What analogy did Moses give regarding God's relationship with the Jewish people (Deut. 8:5)? ¹⁵
16. What are we to "know with the heart" (Deut. 8:5)? ¹⁶
17. In traditional Jewish education, what is *mussar* (Deut. 8:5)? ¹⁷
18. Describe some features of the promised land (Deut. 8:7-9). ¹⁸
19. List *shivat ha-minim* - the seven species of the promised land (Deut. 8:8). ¹⁹
20. After you eat and are satisfied, what is required of you (Deut. 8:10)? ²⁰
21. What is Birkat Hamazon (Deut. 8:10)? ²¹
22. After we experience prosperity, what are we warned against (Deut. 8:11-16)? ²²
23. What are the consequences for forgetting God (Deut. 8:19-20)? ²³
24. Who were the Anakim, the "sons of Anak" (Deut. 9:1-2)? ²⁴

¹³ "Bread from heaven" that looked like coriander seed and tasted in proportion to the measure of one's faith. Manna is called the "bread" from God (Exod. 16:15), "food" from heaven (Psalm 78:24), and "food of the mighty" (Psalm 78:25). The people ate manna from the middle of the second month after the Exodus (Exod. 16) until the day of their arrival in Canaan (Josh. 5:12; Exod. 16:35).

¹⁴ Their clothing did not wear out, nor did their sandals...

¹⁵ God is their heavenly father who disciplines them just as a human father corrects his son.

¹⁶ That God disciplines us because He loves us.

¹⁷ Ethical education; teaching of good character traits (middot). "Hear, my child, the *mussar* of your father, and forsake not the *torah* of your mother" (Prov. 6:20). "My son, despise not the chastening (*mussar*) of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction (*tokhechah*). For whom the Lord loves he corrects; even as a father the son in whom he delights" (Prov. 3:11; see also Heb. 12:5-6).

¹⁸ It is a mineral-rich land, with brooks of water, streams and fountains flowing into valleys. It is a land full of fruit and olive trees, a place where you can eat bread without scarcity, "in which you will lack nothing."

¹⁹ Wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates (or honey made from dates).

²⁰ You are to bless the LORD your God (וּבֵרַכְתָּ אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ) for His provision.

²¹ It is "grace after meals" recited after eating (*birkat ha-mazon* means "the blessing of nourishment"). It is traditionally divided into four separate blessings, ascribed to Moses (hazan – the blessing for manna), Joshua (al ha'aretz), David (boneh Yerushalayim), and the sage Gamaliel at Yavneh (*birkat hatov v'hameitiv*).

²² We are warned not to forget the LORD but rather to remember that He gives us every good gift.

²³ Idolatry. Forgetting about the LORD inevitably leads to idolatry and judgment. Disobedience is forgetfulness.

²⁴ The Anakim ("the long-necked people") were descendants of Anak that dwelt in the south of Canaan, near Hebron. They were the giant nephillim mentioned in the report of the spies about the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32-3). Later, Joshua drove them out of the land, except for a remnant that found a refuge in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The Philistine giant Goliath, whom David later encountered, was supposedly a descendant of the Anakim.



25. What did Moses say to encourage the people about facing the giants (Deut. 9:3)? ²⁵
26. Did God give the Israelites the land because they were righteous (Deut. 9:4-5)? ²⁶
27. What does the term *am kesheh oref* (a “stiff-necked people”) mean? (Deut. 9:6)? ²⁷
28. In Moses’ rebuke, what did he want the people never to forget (Deut. 9:7)? ²⁸
29. When did God want to destroy the entire nation of Israel (Deut. 9:8)? ²⁹
30. How long was Moses on the mountain when he first received the Ten Commandments (Deut. 9:9)? ³⁰
31. What was written on the two tablets of stone (Deut. 9:10)? ³¹
32. When did the people worship the Golden Calf (Deut. 9:11-12)? ³²
33. How do we know Moses interceded for another 40 days and nights *before* going back up the mountain to receive a second set of tablets (Deut. 9:18)? ³³
34. Why wasn’t Aaron judged for the sin of the Golden Calf (Deut. 9:20)? ³⁴
35. Did Sinai have a water source (Deut. 9:21)? ³⁵
36. What happened at Taberah (Deut. 9:22; Num. 11:1-3)? ³⁶
37. What happened at Massah (Deut. 9:22; Exod. 17:7)? ³⁷

²⁵ Moses told them to understand that LORD would go over before them as a “Consuming Fire” (Esh Oklah) to fight on behalf of Israel. Because of this, the people would dispossess and destroy them quickly.

²⁶ No, God drove out the inhabitants of the land because of their wickedness, and because He swore an oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

²⁷ A “stiff necked person” is someone who mulishly refuses to “move his head” and listen to those attempting to guide and help him. The neck, after all, is the “corridor” between the head and the heart, and having a “stiff neck” suggests an inflexible way of thinking and feeling. God called the people *am k’sheh oref* at Sinai (Deut. 9:13, Exod. 32:9).

²⁸ He wanted them to both *remember* (זָכַר) and *not to forget* (אֶל-תִּשְׁכַּח) how they provoked the LORD in the desert.

²⁹ After the sin of the Golden Calf the LORD was so angry He wanted to destroy the people and to “start over” with Moses (Deut. 9:14; Exod. 32:10).

³⁰ Forty days and nights.

³¹ All the words the LORD had spoken to the people from the midst of the fire at Sinai (i.e., the “ten utterances”). Note that there were additional laws given to Moses in addition to this (Deut. 4:14).

³² At the end of the forty days and nights. According to tradition, Moses smashed the tablets on the 17th of Tammuz.

³³ Moses fell before the LORD and fasted another 40 days and nights in teshuvah on behalf of the people.

³⁴ God wanted to destroy Aaron for his part in this sin, but Moses’ intercession saved his brother’s life. Note that this is new information not previously revealed in the earlier account given in Exodus 32.

³⁵ Yes, Moses threw the dust of the “sinful thing” into a stream that ran down the mountain.

³⁶ The people complained and God sent a fire that burned the “edges of the camp.”

³⁷ The people complained about the lack of water, and there God commanded Moses to strike the Rock to bring it forth. Massah was a location in the Rephidim desert, near Sinai.



38. What happened at Kibroth ha-ta'avah (Deut. 9:22; Num. 11:34)? ³⁸
39. What happened at Kadesh-Barnea (Deut. 9:23; Num. 14:1)? ³⁹
40. Why did Moses review all these failures to the people (Deut. 9:25-29)? ⁴⁰
41. When did Moses return to Sinai to renew the covenant (Deut 10:1)? ⁴¹
42. Who made the ark of the covenant (Deut. 10:1)? ⁴²
43. Who carved the *first* stone tablets (Deut. 10:1; Exod. 24:12)? ⁴³
44. What is the Hebrew expression for the “Ten Commandments” (Deut. 10:4)? ⁴⁴
45. When does the phrase “at that time” refer (Deut. 10:8)? ⁴⁵
46. Why did God chose the tribe of Levi to serve Him (Deut. 10:8)? ⁴⁶
47. What did Moses do the second time he went up the mountain (Deut. 10:10)? ⁴⁷
48. After Moses descended with the new tablets, what did God say (Deut. 10:11)? ⁴⁸
49. In light of Israel’s history, what does God require of them (Deut. 10:12-13)? ⁴⁹
50. What makes the children of Israel unique (Deut. 10:14-15)? ⁵⁰
51. What does it mean to “circumcise your heart” (Deut. 10:16)? ⁵¹

³⁸ The people complained about the lack of meat and missed the “free fish” of Egypt. Desiring “meat” led to further judgment as the LORD sent a torrent of plague-riddled quail from the sea to overwhelm the camp.

³⁹ The people rebelled against the LORD after hearing the report of the spies. This sin of unbelief is the “unpardonable sin” of the Torah, which ultimately resulted in Moses likewise being forbidden to enter the land.

⁴⁰ To remind the people of their need for intercession during the forty days of teshuvah after the sin of the Golden Calf. Moses’ intercession for Israel saved the nation from destruction.

⁴¹ Moses ascended the second time on Elul 1 and descended 40 days later on the 10th of Tishri, the end of Yom Kippur.

⁴² Moses made an *aron etz* (אֲרוֹן עֵץ), an “ark of wood” that was used to hold the second set of Tablets (Deut. 10:5). Later Betzalel apparently made another ark as specified by Moses’ instructions regarding the Mishkan (Exod. 37:1).

⁴³ God Himself; the second set of tablets were carved by Moses during the time of teshuvah. In both cases, however, God wrote the same words on the stones (Deut. 10:4).

⁴⁴ The “Ten things” or “ten utterances” (i.e., *aseret ha-devarim*: עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים).

⁴⁵ Not when Aaron died (see Deut. 10:6-7), but after the Golden Calf incident.

⁴⁶ Because they had remained loyal to God and Moses (Exod. 32:26). Note that the term “Levites” here is a general term that includes the four subclans of the tribe...

⁴⁷ He interceded for Israel until God decided not to destroy them. Moses descended on Yom Kippur with the new tablets, and his face shone from the glory of God’s forgiveness and love.

⁴⁸ “Arise, go” (*kum lekh*) on your journey at the head of the people so that Israel would inherit the land. Note that there is no mention of Moses’ protest that God’s angel would lead the people (Exod. 32:34-ff.).

⁴⁹ To fear (i.e., revere) the LORD, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve Him with all your heart, and to keep the commandments.

⁵⁰ God chose Israel above all other peoples of the earth to be his own treasured people.

⁵¹ It means to soften the heart – to “cut away” the thickening part of the self that blocks access to God’s truth.



52. Moses describes the LORD (יהוה) as the “God of gods” and “Lord of lords.” What attributes are associated with these titles in the text (Deut. 10:17-19)? ⁵²
53. What is Israel’s praise (Deut. 10:21)? ⁵³
54. What is the primary duty given to Israel (Deut. 11:1)? ⁵⁴
55. Why did Moses remind the people of Dathan and Abiram here (Deut. 11:6)? ⁵⁵
56. What do you think “the whole commandment” means in Deut. 11:8? ⁵⁶
57. What makes you strong and imparts longevity (Deut. 11:8-9)? ⁵⁷
58. How did Moses describe the land in Egypt, and how did he contrast this with the Promised Land (Deut. 11:10-12)? ⁵⁸
59. What does God have his eye on every day of the year (Deut. 11:12)? ⁵⁹
60. What does God promise if we love and obey Him (Deut. 11:13-15)? ⁶⁰
61. Moses warns us against our hearts being deceived – by what (Deut. 11:16)? ⁶¹
62. What would happen if the people turned aside (Deut. 11:17)? ⁶²
63. What are “totafot” (Deut. 11:18)? ⁶³
64. When should we talk about the commandments of the LORD (Deut. 11:19)? ⁶⁴
65. What is a mezuzah (Deut. 11:20)? ⁶⁵

⁵² God is just and impartial and is not subject to bribery. He cares for the oppressed – the orphan, the widow, and the stranger (ger). Israel is particularly told to love the stranger since they were once strangers in Egypt (Exod. 23:9).

⁵³ The LORD alone, who is the proper object of Israel’s glorification (1 Cor. 1:31; Jer. 9:23-24).

⁵⁴ To love the LORD and to “keep his charge” by means of obedience to the commandments.

⁵⁵ Moses used the swallowing up of Dathan and Abiram to warn the people not to rebel. Note that Moses’ cousin Korach – the instigator of this rebellion- goes unmentioned here.

⁵⁶ Most think this is a synonym for the entire set of laws, statutes, rules, that accompany the covenant given at Sinai.

⁵⁷ You become “chazak” (strong) when you obey God’s instruction.

⁵⁸ Egypt was an irrigated land where seed was sown “like a garden of vegetables”; Canaan is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD Himself cares for.

⁵⁹ The promised land given to Israel.

⁶⁰ He will give the rains in their seasons to refresh the land and to produce bountiful crops.” You shall eat and be full.” The LORD also promises that He would drive out the inhabitants of the land (Deut. 11:22-25).

⁶¹ He warns us against *turning aside* to other gods, especially on account of lust. Note that the word for “deceived” here (פָּתָה) is related to Peor (as in Baal Peor), and to *peti* (פֶּתִי), the word for “foolish.”

⁶² God’s wrath would be kindled. First the people would experience draught, etc., and if they did not repent, God would exile them from the land.

⁶³ “Four compartments” (of the head Tefillin). Usually translated as “frontlets,” “bands,” or “phylacteries” in English.

⁶⁴ At all times: when you are sitting or walking, when you lay down to sleep at night, and when you get up every day.

⁶⁵ A mezuzah is a kosher scroll inscribed with Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21 that is rolled up and inserted into a decorative case and affixed to a doorway in fulfillment of the commandments given in Deut. 6:9, 11:20.



Discussion Topics

1. This Torah portion repeatedly stresses the importance of obeying all of the laws, statutes, rules, and commandments of God revealed by Moses. However, we know through the revelation of Yeshua that we are saved by trusting in His obedience to the law, not our own. So which is it – are we to obey the commandments of the Torah or do we operate from a “different place”? Discuss the relationship between “law” and “grace.” Are these mutually exclusive concepts, or do they overlap? Read Jeremiah 31:33-34. What makes the “new covenant” really *new*?
2. The terms of the covenant given at Sinai appears to be *conditionally* stated: “If you obey, you will be blessed; if you disobey, you will be doomed...” Nonetheless, there is an underlying appeal to God’s *unconditional* oath given to the patriarchs that would preserve Israel. Discuss the tension between the covenant made to Abraham and the later covenant given at Sinai.
3. The trials that Israel faced in the desert are called *yissurim shel ahavah*, “the chastisements of love.” Moses likewise said that God disciplined the people “for their own good.” Soren Kierkegaard regarded life in this world as education for eternity, a “school of suffering.” Discuss the role of divine discipline and correction. Is suffering a prerequisite for becoming a disciple of the Lord?
4. The Torah states that God *tested* the Israelites to see what was within their hearts (Deut. 8:2). Some commentators link the idea of a test (i.e., *nissayon*) with that of a “banner” or “miracle” (i.e., *nes*). Since God already knows the outcome of the test, its purpose is to “raise up” the righteous by lifting them up to a new spiritual level. In other words, testing is therefore inherently soul-building. Discuss some of the hardships in your life and how they have helped you grow spiritually....
5. In this portion God states that Israel is His *uniquely chosen* nation in all the earth: “God chose them from among all people” (Deut. 10:15). However, the Apostle Peter later ascribed a “chosen status” to those who followed Yeshua (1 Pet. 2:9-10). How do you understand God’s special relationship with the Jewish people in light of the *universal* message of God’s love given in the gospel? Discuss the meaning of a “chosen people.” It is possible that God has “two” chosen people groups – Israel and the “church” – or must there only be one?

For Next Week:

- Read Parashat **Re’eh** (Deut. 11:26-16:17)
- Read the Haftarah (Isaiah 54:11-55:5)
- Read the New Testament (John 7:37-52)

