



Wembley Synagogue

עֵקֶב

Insights from the commentators into the Sidra of Ekev

וְהָיָה עֵקֶב תִּשְׁמָעוּן - It shall come to pass because you will listen to these laws (7:12)
 Instead of the word "ekev" – "because" – it could have said "keshetishme'un" – "when you will listen" – or "im tishme'un" – "if you will listen"?

On Mount Sinai Hashem gave the Jewish people the Ten Commandments, which included the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot* of the Torah (see *Shemot* 24:12, Rashi). In the version of the Ten Commandments as they are recorded (*ibid.* 20:2-14), there is a total of one hundred and seventy-two words. The word "ekev," has the numerical value of one hundred and seventy-two. Hence, the Torah is saying, "It shall come to pass, 'ekev tishme'un' – because you will listen i.e. observe 'ekev' – the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvot* which are in the one hundred and seventy-two words of the Ten Commandments. Thus, your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and kindness that He swore to your forefathers." (Source: Vedibarta Bam)

כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְבְּךָ - If you say in your hearts, "these nations are greater than me; how will I be able to inherit them?" Do not be frightened of them. (7:17)

When someone places his trust fully in Hashem, rather than in his own actions, he can rest assured that Hashem will help him. This is indicated by the above verse.

The verse states that "If you say in your hearts, 'these nations are greater than me; how will we be able to inherit them?'" This can mean that the people realised that on their own, there was no way that they could overcome the people who were then occupying the Land of Israel. They could rely only upon Hashem. Consequently, the Torah continues "Do not be frightened of them". If the people realised that their salvation can come only from Hashem then they indeed have nothing to fear. (Ma'asei Hashem - Ma'ayana shel Torah)

וַיַּעַבְדְּךָ וַיַּעֲרֵבְךָ - He afflicted you and let you hunger, and He fed you the manna. (8:3)

There is a *Midrash* that says, "From here we can learn that candles must be lit in honour of *Shabbat*." What connection is there between this *pasuk* and the obligation to light *Shabbat* candles?

While eating the manna, the Jew was able to imagine and enjoy any food. If one wanted a rare delicacy, the manna would assume this taste, and if one wanted a sumptuous dessert, one would taste that. Why, then, does the verse mention the manna in connection with affliction?

Although the taste of the manna varied according to one's desire, the *Gemara Yoma* 74b explains that, "You cannot compare one who sees what he eats with one who does not see what he is eating. Thus, while it is true that a person would experience any taste imaginable, since he did not actually see his food, he did not truly enjoy it.

Scripture instructs us, "You shall proclaim the *Shabbat* 'oneg' – 'a delight' " (Isaiah 58:13), and our sages (*Shabbat* 118b) explain that the way to experience delight is by eating delicious foods. Hence, if the home is not lit, regardless of the quality of the food, not only will one not enjoy the food, but, on the contrary, it will be an affliction. Therefore, one is obligated to light candles to illuminate the *Shabbat* table, so that everyone sitting at the table will proclaim the *Shabbat* an "oneg" – "delight." (Source:Vedibarta Bam)

הַמְוֹלִיכְךָ בַּמִּדְבָּר - Who leads you through the great and awesome Wilderness- of snake, fiery serpent and scorpion and thirst where there was no water – Who brings forth water for you from the rock of flint (8:15)

The *pasuk* begins by relating that the Wilderness contained two dangers – poisonous creatures and no water. Yet it only concludes with a solution for the problem of thirst – that Hashem brought water from a rock. Why is no mention made of how the Jewish people were saved from the other threats? The Talmud Yerushalmi, (Berachot 5:1) informs us that there are poisonous snakes whose effectiveness upon biting a person are dependent upon the actions of the bitten person. If the person drinks water before the snake that bit him does, then the snake will die. In the light of this, the *passuk* can be interpreted as follows. Hashem saved the Jewish people from the poisonous snakes by not placing any water in the Wilderness. Thus if a Jew was bitten by a snake the snake would not be able to reach the water before the bitten person. Then Hashem miraculously created water that was only available for the Jews to drink. If a Jew was bitten, he would drink the water and live. (Source: Shabbos Delights)

אֶרֶץ חִטָּה וּשְׂעֵרָה - A land of wheat, barley, grape, fig, and pomegranate; a land of oil-olives and date-honey. (8:8)

Why does the Torah write "eretz" — "land" — a second time for "zeit shemen u'devash" — "olive-oil and honey"? When the brothers went down to Egypt for the second time, Yaakov told them, "Take of the land's glory and bring it down to the man [Yosef] as a tribute...a bit of honey" (*Bereishit* 43:11). When the Jews complained about the wilderness they said, "Why did you bring us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place — not a place of seed or fig or grape or pomegranate?" (*Bamidbar* 20:5).

From the fact that Yaakov brought honey to Egypt, and that the Jews did not complain in the wilderness about lacking olive-oil and honey, it is apparent that they also did not have these items in Egypt. Therefore, to emphasise the excellence of *Eretz Yisrael*, the Torah separates olive-oil and honey from the other items with the word "eretz," to emphasise that, in *this land*, the Jews would enjoy something which they did not have previously. (Source: VedioBarta Bam)

וְאָכַלְתָּ וְשָׂבַעְתָּ וּבְרַכְתָּ - You will eat and be satisfied and bless Hashem, your G-d (8:10)

The obligation to recite a blessing after eating (Birkat Hamazon) is derived from this verse. The Gemara Berachot 48b teaches that the obligation to recite a blessing before eating is derived from the Birkat Hamazon obligation by means of the following kal vachomer (a fortiori argument): If one must bless Hashem after being satiated is it not certain that he must do so when he is hungry?

The Talmud Berachot 35b teaches that one who partakes of enjoyment in this world without reciting a blessing is deemed to have stolen from Hashem and from the Jewish people.

Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin explains that this verse teaches us that one should derive his sense of satisfaction from reciting the blessing rather than from the act of eating. Hence the verse may be understood as "you will eat and be satisfied by blessing Hashem." (Source: The Torah Treasury)

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A Chassid of Rabbi Yitzchak of Vorka came to visit him. The Chassid was a very wealthy man, but he was known as a miser. Despite his enormous wealth, he lived his entire life eating just bread and salted fish as he loathed the thought of having to spend money. R' Yitzchak offered the man sound rebuke: "If Hashem has given you wealth," he said, "then you should live comfortably! Your meals should consist of meat, fish and old wine!" The other Chassidim asked why the Rebbe should care if this man chooses to live like a pauper and why this man's diet should be of such concern to the Rebbe. "Do you think that it is he I am worried about?" responded R' Yitzchak. "Absolutely not! I am worried about the poor man who will knock on this man's door asking for food. If he will dine on meat, fish and wine, then he will at least give the poor man bread and salted fish. But if he himself chooses to eat like a pauper, what do you think he will give to the poor man?" (Source: A Shabbos Vort)

וּקְשַׁרְתֶּם אֹתָם לְאוֹת עַל יָדְכֶם - You shall bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be a frontlet between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children (11:18-19)

Why, in this *pasuk*, does it first mention the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* followed by the *mitzvah* of teaching the children, while in the first portion of the *Shema* (6:6), it says first, "You shall teach them thoroughly to your children" and the *mitzvah* of *tefillin* afterward?

A parent is obligated to teach his child Torah as soon as he is able to speak (11:19, Rashi). When the child reaches the age of thirteen, he becomes *Bar-Mitzvah* and is required to wear *tefillin*. Many parents take an active interest in their child's education when he is very young. However, as he grows older, their participation wanes.

In the first portion of the *Shema*, the Torah is teaching us that the first obligation of a parent is to teach his child Torah while he is very young, and, when he reaches the age of thirteen, the parent must see to it that he puts on *tefillin*. The second portion is teaching us that even when the child is already wearing *tefillin* i.e. he has become *Bar-Mitzvah*, the parent is not free of his obligation to educate his children. He must continue to teach and always be involved in his children's Torah learning. (Source: VedioBarta Bam)

Shabbat Shalom



Shabbat starts 8.00pm



Shabbat ends: 9.39pm

The *Insights into the Sedra* sheet is produced by Chazan Anthony Wolfson

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