

# עֵקֵב ♦ Eikev

DEUTERONOMY 7:12–11:25

## Conditions for Life in the Land

**P**ARASHAT EIKEV (“if” or “as a result of”) contains three speeches (7:12–8:20; 9:1–10:22; 11:1–25), all of which highlight the central position of the Promised Land in the relationship between God and Israel. The “good land” is the object of the divine oath to the ancestors (7:12–13; 8:1; 9:5; 11:9) and the goal reached after forty years of wandering in the wilderness (8:1–20). For Israel’s sake, God constantly keeps an eye on the land of “milk and honey,” which is so different from the land of Egypt (11:12).

Whereas the prior parashah presents categorical demands of loyalty and obedience (as in the Decalogue in 5:6–18 and the *Sh’ma* in 6:4–9), *Eikev* opens with a conditional clause that emphasizes that obedience brings blessings (“And if you do obey these rules . . .”). Throughout the parashah, Moses emphasizes that existence in the land is conditioned upon obedience, observance, and love—all of which are manifestations of Israel’s loyalty to God (8:1–20; 11:8–9, 13–25). This message remains central in Jewish life, as 11:21–31 are traditionally recited twice daily as the second paragraph of

the *Sh’ma*, and the same passage is inserted in the mezuzah and in *t’fillin*.

This parashah mentions women explicitly only a few times. One of the blessings promised if the people follow God’s teachings is the absence of infertile women and men (7:14). A later passage extolling God’s merits mentions that God “upholds the cause of . . . the widow” (10:18). As divine ruler (see at 10:17), God’s role is to defend and provide for the vulnerable

---

*The Promised Land has a central place in the relationship between God and Israel.*

---

members of society, including widows—a frequent topic of concern in Deuteronomy.

With regard to this parashah’s use of feminine imagery, one verse open to interpretation is the analogy comparing the way God disciplines Israel to the actions of a human parent (8:5). Does the masculine language of this verse refer specifically to a father and son, or, more inclusively, to the way that either parent treats a daughter or son? (See further at 8:5.)

—Dalit Rom-Shiloni

## Outline

### I. FAITHFULNESS TO THE COVENANT BY GOD AND ISRAEL (7:12-8:20)

- A. Blessings and possession of the land (7:12-26)
- B. Call to observe and remember, remember and observe (8:1-20)

### II. PRINCIPLES OF REVERENCE

#### *What Does God Demand of You?* (9:1-10:22)

- A. Possession of the land by a stiff-necked people (9:1-6)
- B. Retrospective of wilderness sins (9:7-24)
- C. Reaffirmation that Israel is God's people (9:25-10:11)
- D. Call for reverence, obedience, love, and worship (10:12-22)

### III. OCCUPATION OF THE LAND AS DIVINE REWARD OR PUNISHMENT (11:1-25)

- A. Past lessons as motivations for future actions (vv. 1-9)
- B. Special qualities of the land and incentives to obey God (vv. 10-21)
- C. Victory and territory as rewards for obedience (vv. 22-25)

Moses recounts how he put the Golden Calf to the fire, ground it thoroughly, and threw the dust into the brook. The version in Exodus 32:20 is a bit different, for it describes how Moses burned the calf, ground it into dust, sprinkled the dust on the water, and made the people drink. The latter's similarity to the *sotah* ritual in Numbers 5 is obvious. Just as the wife accused of adultery must be tested by drinking a potion, so the Israelites had to drink the dust of the idol for which they abandoned God. This parallel creates the

*The Rabbis consider women to be better advocates before God than men are.*

impression, further developed by the biblical prophets, that Israel's relationship with God was like that of a wife and husband or a pair of lovers. In worshiping an idol, Israel betrayed an intimate partner; therefore, God's punishment was swift and severe. It is ironic that the Rabbis deduce from the phrase "and all the people took off the gold rings that were in their ears" (Exodus 32:3) that the women refused to hand their rings over to their husbands for inclusion in the Calf. God rewarded the women with a holiday of their own, Rosh Chodesh, the New Moon, a day on which they were to abstain from household chores (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* 45).

*upholds the cause of the fatherless and the widow* (10:18). In the rabbinic period, a principal purpose of the marriage contract (*k'tubah*) was to provide women with economic sustenance when widowed or divorced. Nevertheless, much like the Bible did, talmudic texts often portray widows as needing protection and financial support (see, for example, BT *Gittin* 35a).

*If, then, you obey the commandments* (11:13–21). This passage constitutes the second paragraph of the *Sh'ma* (Mishnah *B'rachot* 2:2) that is traditionally

recited twice daily, together with 6:4–9 (*Sh'ma*) and Numbers 15:37–41 (on *tzitzit*). Mishnah *B'rachot* 3:3 exempts women from the daily obligation to recite the *Sh'ma* and from donning *t'fillin* (11:18), but it obligates them to hang a mezuzah on the doorposts of their home (11:20), pray daily, and recite the blessing after meals (*Birkat HaMazon*). Most of these exemptions and obligations are consistent with the general rules enunciated in Mishnah *Kiddushin* 1:7, that women are exempt from positive time-dependent ritual acts but obligated to all others. Recitation of the *Sh'ma* and donning *t'fillin* must be done at specified times of the day, whereas hanging a mezuzah may be done at any time. But women are obligated to prayer at fixed times because the Rabbis consider them better advocates before God than men are (BT *B'rachot* 20b).

*loving your God יהוה and serving [God] with all your heart and soul* (11:13). The Rabbis attach to these words one of their favorite ideas: that one must be engaged in study for its own sake (*Torah lishmah*). Should people say that they will learn in order to become rich, or to be called "Rabbi," or to receive a reward in the world-to-come, this verse teaches that such motivations are not acceptable. Instead, one should spend time in the study of Torah for its own sake—out of the love both of learning and of engagement with God's words (*Sifrei D'varim, Eikev* 41). Since women were not obligated to study sacred texts, any instance of women engaged in Torah study implies that it was for its own sake. A clear but chilling case of a woman studying Torah can be found in BT *Yoma* 66b: a woman came before Rabbi Eliezer and asked him a detailed question about the punishments meted out by God for worship of the Golden Calf; but he would not answer her. The reason for his reticence, according to another version of this tale (JT *Sotah* 3:3, 19a), was that "it is better to burn the words of Torah than turn them over to women."

—Judith Hauptman

# Parshat Eikev

*Source Sheet by Beth Schafer*

## **Deuteronomy 7:12-16**

(12) And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully, the LORD your God will maintain faithfully for you the covenant that He made on oath with your fathers: (13) He will favor you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the issue of your womb and the produce of your soil, your new grain and wine and oil, the calving of your herd and the lambing of your flock, in the land that He swore to your fathers to assign to you. (14) You shall be blessed above all other peoples: there shall be no sterile male or female among you or among your livestock. (15) The LORD will ward off from you all sickness; He will not bring upon you any of the dreadful diseases of Egypt, about which you know, but will inflict them upon all your enemies. (16) You shall destroy all the peoples that the LORD your God delivers to you, showing them no pity. And you shall not worship their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

## **Deuteronomy 8:2-10**

(2) Remember the long way that the LORD your God has made you travel in the wilderness these past forty years, that He might test you by hardships to learn what was in your hearts: whether you would keep His commandments or not. (3) He subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat, which neither you nor your fathers had ever known, in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the LORD decrees. (4) The clothes upon you did not wear out, nor did your feet swell these forty years. (5) Bear in mind that the LORD your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son. (6) Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God: walk in His ways and revere Him. (7) For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams and springs and fountains issuing from plain and hill; (8) a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees

and honey; (9) a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper. (10) When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.

#### **Deuteronomy 10:12-15**

(12) And now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God demand of you? Only this: to revere the LORD your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, (13) keeping the LORD's commandments and laws, which I enjoin upon you today, for your good. (14) Mark, the heavens to their uttermost reaches belong to the LORD your God, the earth and all that is on it! (15) Yet it was to your fathers that the LORD was drawn in His love for them, so that He chose you, their lineal descendants, from among all peoples—as is now the case.

#### **Deuteronomy 10:16**

(16) Cut away, therefore, the thickening about your hearts and stiffen your necks no more.

#### **Leviticus 26:41**

(41) When I, in turn, have been hostile to them and have removed them into the land of their enemies, then at last shall their obdurate heart humble itself, and they shall atone for their iniquity.

#### **Deuteronomy 30:6**

(6) Then the LORD your God will open up your heart and the hearts of your offspring to love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, in order that you may live.

## **Deuteronomy 11:13-21**

(13) If, then, you obey the commandments that I enjoin upon you this day, loving the LORD your God and serving Him with all your heart and soul,

(14) I will grant the rain for your land in season, the early rain and the late. You shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil— (15) I will also provide grass in the fields for your cattle—and thus you shall eat your fill.

(16) Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods and bow to them. (17) For the LORD's anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce; and you will soon perish from the good land that the LORD is assigning to you. (18) Therefore impress these My words upon your very heart: bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead, (19) and teach them to your children—reciting them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up; (20) and inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates— (21) to the end that you and your children may endure, in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to assign to them, as long as there is a heaven over the earth.

## **Covenant**

*by Sharon Kessler*

In the desert  
where old legends  
conspire, we  
are making fresh  
tracks in the sand,  
carrying our burden  
to some resting place.

Above

the black crest  
of rock,  
an arc of slow fire

rises.

Morning again  
a past hauled up  
from the Zero  
of forgetting  
into the More-than-One  
of surprised memory

Yes,  
says the red and peeling paint  
of the cheerful frame:

Our days will multiply,  
and they do so  
in both directions.

### **Mishnah Berakhot 3:3**

(3) Women, slaves and minors are exempt from reciting the Shema and putting on tefillin, but are obligated for tefillah, mezuzah, and Birkat Hamazon (the blessing after meals).

### **Mishnah Kiddushin 1:7**

(7) All obligations of the son upon the father, men are obligated, but women are exempt. But all obligations of the father upon the son, both men and women are obligated. All positive, time-bound commandments, men are obligated and women are exempt. But all positive non-time-bound commandments both men and women are obligated. And all negative commandments, whether time-bound or not time-bound, both men and women are obligated, except for, the prohibition against rounding [the corners of the head], and the prohibition against marring [the corner of the beard], and the prohibition [for a priest] to become impure through contact with the dead.

## Berakhot 20b

**and from phylacteries, but they are obligated in the mitzvot of prayer, mezuzah, and Grace after Meals.** The Gemara explains the rationale for these exemptions and obligations. GEMARA With regard to the mishna's statement that women are exempt from **the recitation of Shema**, the Gemara asks: That is **obvious**, as *Shema* is a **time-bound, positive mitzva**, and the halakhic principle is: **Women are exempt from any time-bound, positive mitzva**, i.e., any mitzva whose performance is only in effect at a particular time. *Shema* falls into that category as its recitation is restricted to the morning and the evening. Why then did the mishna need to mention it specifically? The Gemara replies: **Lest you say: Since Shema includes** the acceptance of the yoke of **the kingdom of Heaven**, perhaps women are obligated in its recitation despite the fact that it is a time-bound, positive mitzva. Therefore, the mishna **teaches us** that, nevertheless, women are exempt. We also learned in the mishna that women are exempt **from phylacteries**. The Gemara asks: That is **obvious** as well. The donning of phylacteries is only in effect at particular times; during the day but not at night, on weekdays but not on Shabbat or Festivals. The Gemara replies: **Lest you say: Since** the mitzva of phylacteries **is juxtaposed** in the Torah **to** the mitzva of *mezuzah*, as it is written: "And you shall bind them as a sign upon your hands and they shall be frontlets between your eyes" (Deuteronomy 6:8), followed by: "And you shall write them upon the door posts of your house and on your gates" (Deuteronomy 6:9), just as women are obligated in the mitzva of *mezuzah*, so too they are obligated in the mitzva of phylacteries. Therefore, the mishna **teaches us** that nevertheless, women are exempt. We also learned in the mishna that women, slaves, and children are **obligated in prayer**. The Gemara explains that, although the mitzva of prayer is only in effect at particular times, which would lead to the conclusion that women are exempt, nevertheless, since prayer **is supplication for mercy** and women also require divine mercy, they are obligated. However, **lest you say: Since** regarding prayer it is **written: "Evening and morning and afternoon I pray and cry aloud and He hears my voice"** (Psalms 55:18), perhaps prayer should be **considered a time-bound, positive mitzva** and women would be exempt, the mishna **teaches us** that, fundamentally, the mitzva of prayer is not

time-bound and, therefore, everyone is obligated. We also learned in the mishna that women are obligated in the mitzva of *mezuzah*. The Gemara asks: That too is **obvious**. Why would they be exempt from fulfilling this obligation, it is a positive mitzva that is not time-bound? The Gemara replies: **Lest you say: Since the mitzva of *mezuzah* is juxtaposed in the Torah to the mitzva of Torah study (Deuteronomy 11:19–20), just as women are exempt from Torah study, so too they are exempt from the mitzva of *mezuzah*.** Therefore, the mishna explicitly **teaches us** that they are obligated. We also learned in the mishna that women are obligated to recite the **Grace after Meals**. The Gemara asks: That too is **obvious**. The Gemara replies: **Lest you say: Since it is written: “When the Lord shall give you meat to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to the full” (Exodus 16:8), one might conclude that the Torah established fixed times for the meals and, consequently, for the mitzva of Grace after Meals and, therefore, it is considered a time-bound, positive mitzva, exempting women from its recitation. Therefore, the mishna teaches us that women are obligated. Rav Adda bar Ahava said: Women are obligated to recite the sanctification of the Shabbat day [*kiddush*] by Torah law.** The Gemara asks: **Why? Kiddush is a time-bound, positive mitzva, and women are exempt from all time-bound, positive mitzvot. Abaye said: Indeed, women are obligated to recite *kiddush* by rabbinic, but not by Torah law. Rava said to Abaye: There are two refutations to your explanation. First, Rav Adda bar Ahava said that women are obligated to recite *kiddush* by Torah law, and, furthermore, the very explanation is difficult to understand. If the Sages do indeed institute ordinances in these circumstances, let us obligate them to fulfill all time-bound, positive mitzvot by rabbinic law, even though they are exempt by Torah law. Rather, Rava said: This has a unique explanation. In the Ten Commandments in the book of Exodus, the verse said: “Remember Shabbat and sanctify it” (Exodus 20:8), while in the book of Deuteronomy it is said: “Observe Shabbat and sanctify it” (Deuteronomy 5:12). From these two variants we can deduce that anyone included in the obligation to observe Shabbat by avoiding its desecration, is also included in the mitzva to remember Shabbat by reciting *kiddush*. Since these women are included in the mitzva to observe Shabbat, as there is no distinction between men and women in the obligation to observe prohibitions in general and to refrain from the desecration of Shabbat in particular, so too are they included in the**

mitzva of **remembering** Shabbat. **Ravina said to Rava:** We learned in the mishna that **women** are obligated in the mitzva of **Grace after Meals**. However, are they obligated **by Torah law** or merely **by rabbinic law**? **What difference does it make** whether it is by Torah or rabbinic law? The difference is regarding her ability **to fulfill the obligation of others** when reciting the blessing on their behalf. **Granted, if you say that** their obligation **is by Torah law**, one whose obligation **is by Torah law can come and fulfill the obligation** of others who are obligated **by Torah law**. **However, if you say** that their obligation is **by rabbinic law**, then from the perspective of Torah law, women **are considered to be one who is not obligated**, and the general principle is that **one who is not obligated** to fulfill a particular mitzva **cannot fulfill the obligations of the many** in that mitzva. Therefore, it is important to know **what** is the resolution of this dilemma. **Come and hear** from what was taught in a *baraita*: **Actually they said** that **a son may recite a blessing** on behalf of **his father**, and **a slave may recite a blessing** on behalf of **his master**, and **a woman may recite a blessing** on behalf of **her husband**, but the Sages said: **May a curse come to a man** who, due to his ignorance, requires **his wife and children to recite a blessing on his behalf**. From here we may infer: **Granted, if you say that** their obligation **is by Torah law**, one whose obligation **is by Torah law can come and fulfill the obligation** of others who are obligated **by Torah law**. **However, if you say** that their obligation is **by rabbinic law**, can one who is obligated **by rabbinic law, come and fulfill the obligation** of one whose obligation is **by Torah law**? The Gemara challenges this proof: **And according to your reasoning**, is **a minor obligated** by Torah law to perform mitzvot? Everyone agrees that a minor is exempt by Torah law, yet here the *baraita* said that he may recite a blessing on behalf of his father. There must be another way to explain the *baraita*. **With what we are dealing here? With a case where** his father **ate** a quantity of food that did not satisfy his hunger, a **measure** for which one is only obligated **by rabbinic law** to recite Grace after Meals. In that case, one whose obligation **is by rabbinic law can come and fulfill the obligation** of another whose obligation **is by rabbinic law**. After citing the *halakha* that one who eats a quantity of food that does not satisfy his hunger is obligated by rabbinic law to recite Grace after Meals, the Gemara cites a related homiletic interpretation. **Rav Avira taught, sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi Ami, and sometimes he said it in the name of Rabbi**

**Asi: The ministering angels said before the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of the Universe, in Your Torah it is written: “The great, mighty and awesome God who favors no one and takes no bribe” (Deuteronomy 10:17), yet You, nevertheless, show favor to Israel, as it is written: “The Lord shall show favor to you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:26). He replied to them: And how can I not show favor to Israel, as I wrote for them in the Torah: “And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 8:10), meaning that there is no obligation to bless the Lord until one is satiated; yet they are exacting with themselves to recite Grace after Meals even if they have eaten as much as an olive-bulk or an egg-bulk. Since they go beyond the requirements of the law, they are worthy of favor. MISHNA: Ezra the Scribe decreed that one who is ritually impure because of a seminal emission may not engage in matters of Torah until he has immersed in a ritual bath and purified himself. This *halakha* was accepted over the course of many generations; however, many disputes arose with regard to the Torah matters to which it applies. Regarding this, the mishna says: If the time for the recitation of *Shema* arrived and one is impure due to a seminal emission, he may contemplate *Shema* in his heart, but neither recites the blessings preceding *Shema*, nor the blessings following it. Over food which, after partaking, one is obligated by Torah law to recite a blessing, one recites a blessing afterward, but one does not recite a blessing beforehand, because the blessing recited prior to eating is a requirement by rabbinic law. And in all of these instances Rabbi Yehuda says: He recites a blessing beforehand and thereafter in both the case of *Shema* and in the case of food. GEMARA: Ravina said: That is to say, from the mishna that contemplation is tantamount to speech. As if it would enter your mind that it is not tantamount to speech, then why does one who is impure because of a seminal emission contemplate? It must be that it is tantamount to speech. The Gemara rejects this: But what are you saying, that contemplation is tantamount to speech? Then, if one who is impure because of a seminal emission is permitted to contemplate, why does he not utter the words with his lips? The Gemara answers: As we found at Mount Sinai. There one who had sexual relations with a woman was required to immerse himself before receiving the Torah, which was spoken and not merely contemplated. Here, too, it was decreed that one who was impure due to a seminal emission may not recite matters of Torah out loud until he**

immerses himself. **And Rav Hisda said** that the opposite conclusion should be drawn from the mishna: **Contemplation is not tantamount to speech, as if it would enter your mind that contemplation is tantamount to speech,** then one who is impure because of a seminal emission should *ab initio*, **utter Shema with his lips.** The Gemara challenges this argument: **But what** are you saying, that **contemplation is not tantamount to speech?** If so, **why does he contemplate? Rabbi Elazar said: So that** a situation **will not arise where everyone is engaged in** reciting *Shema* **and he sits idly** by. The Gemara asks: If that is the only purpose, **let him study another chapter** and not specifically *Shema* or one of the blessings. **Rav Adda bar Ahava said:** It is fitting that one engage **in a matter in which the community is engaged.**

*Source Sheet created on Sefaria by Beth Schafer*