

Divrei Jeshurun

Parshat Ekev 5761

Vol. 01, no. 38

22 Av, 5761 • August 10-11, 2001



A Publication of
Congregation
Kehilath Jeshurun
by Rabbi Joshua Cypess

Statistics: Ekev

- ❖ 46th of the 54 Torah portions
- ❖ 3rd of 11 in Devarim
- ❖ Written on 231.83 lines in a Sefer Torah --ranks 14th
- ❖ 10 parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed (tied for 7th in Torah)
- ❖ 111 verses - ranks 26th (4th in Devarim)
- ❖ 1747 words - ranks 16th (3rd)
- ❖ 6865 letters - ranks 14th (3rd)
- ❖ Ekev's verses are long - 3rd longest in the Torah in words and letters per verse. This accounts for the rise in ranking in the words and letters categories.
- ❖ Ekev contains 8 of the 613 mitzvot according to the *Sefer ha-Hinukh*, 6 positive, 2 negative - (see chart)

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Halakha in the Parsha: Halakha Chart: Ekev

The following is a listing of the commandments in this week's parsha. The first column is a simple ordinal listing within the parsha. The next column lists each mitzva relative to the total of 613. The next column states whether the command is positive or negative. The last column is where the command is listed in Deuteronomy.

#	613	☺	Command	Deu.
1	428	N	Not to derive benefit from images of idol worship	7:25
2	429	N	Not to possess any items of idol worship	7:26
3	430	P	To say grace after meals	8:10
4	431	P	To love those who convert to Judaism	10:19
5	432	P	To fear God	10:20
6	433	P	To pray	10:20
7	434	P	To associate with and cleave to Torah sages	10:20
8	435	P	When swearing an oath, to do so using God's name	10:20

Haftara Insight

(Isaiah 49:14-51:3)

This week we read the second of the seven *Haftarot* of Consolation that follow Tisha B'Av. While normally the Haftara is meant to be a portion of the Bible that relates directly to the weekly Torah reading, this is not so for the weeks of Consolation.

The main message of this prophecy is God's response to the claim that He has abandoned His people, Israel. Looking at the numerous persecutions of Jews over the centuries -- even within the past few days -- we can understand the power of this outcry.

God responds, through the great prophet Isaiah, that "Could a woman forget the child she has nursed? Or not have mercy for the child of her womb?" (Isa. 49:15) God is our birth-mother, and therefore we will never be forsaken. Just as our forebears Abraham and Sarah went through tragedies and pain, yet were ultimately blessed with progeny and power, so will we. (Isa. 51:2)

Halakha in the Parsha: Active Devotion

A number of the commandments in Parshat Ekev are about the proper relationship we are to have with God in both active and passive forms. Passively, we are to consider that God is the Supreme Being -- no other gods are allowed (laws #428-429). When we utter an oath in court, we are to use God's name (#435). This law fulfills the simple dictum in the Torah "*and in His name you shall swear*" (Deut. 10:20), but it is a manifestation of our underlying belief that God is the sole source of power and enforcement in the world.

Another passive relationship is in the command to fear God (#432) -- just as we were commanded to love God in last week's parsha (#418). Emotions are nearly impossible to command, so the fulfillment of these dicta is necessarily murky and exists possibly only in contrast. That is, to fear God may mean fear no other god.

Maimonides, taking his lead from the Talmud, believes that all commands must have a concomitant action; only by active behavior will we fulfill God's commands. Fearing and loving must be put into positive practice. That sounds like a good idea... but how to do it?

(please turn over)

For more and varied Torah resources, go to Rabbi Cypess' Web Site o' Torah: E-PARSHA.COM (<http://eparsha.com>)

Ha-Amek Jeshurun - Deeper Analysis

Halakha in the Parsha: Active Devotion (cont.)

Actively fearing God means to temper all of our behavior with the knowledge that incorrect action will lead to God's disapproval (and you don't want to make God angry, you won't like Him when He's angry).

Loving God is a bit more tricky. According to Maimonides, however, the way to God's Heart is through science. Science is the study of God's work, according to the Maimondiean vision, and when you understand the full perfection of Nature and all that's in it, you will truly love God.

Active Devotion to God is accomplished more with the last laws of the parsha: prayer (#433) and grace after meals (#430). These latter two are more familiar forms of devotion and we understand their purpose. But they fit into the general message of devotion that runs throughout the parsha.

Halakha in the Parsha: The 7 Species

Deuteronomy 8:8 is the source we use for ranking the different species of Israel. The verse states that Israel is "A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig, and pomegranate; a land of [olive] oil and [date] honey." Our sages learn that the order of the species in the Torah determines their relative importance. This is relevant in terms of blessings over foods; if you have to choose between one food or another, the higher-ranking food will take *bracha* precedence.

The ranking is determined by position within the verse (8:8) plus relative position vis-à-vis the word "aretz" (land).

ארץ¹ חטה² ושערה³ וגפן⁴ ותאנה⁵ ורמון ארץ¹ שמן² וזבש

The ranking, thus, is as follows: (1) wheat, (2) barley (because as a grain it is more important), then (1) olive, (2) dates, then (3) grape, (4) fig, and lastly, (5) pomegranate.