

Kol Rina
An Independent Minyan
Parashat Eikev
August 5, 2023 *** 18 Av, 5783

Eikev in a Nutshell

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/3041/jewish/Eikev-in-a-Nutshell.htm

The name of the Parshah, "Eikev," means "because," and it is found in Deuteronomy 7:12.

In the Parshah of Eikev ("Because"), Moses continues his closing address to the children of Israel, promising them that if they will fulfill the commandments (mitzvot) of the Torah, they will prosper in the Land they are about to conquer and settle in keeping with G-d's promise to their forefathers.

Moses also rebukes them for their failings in their first generation as a people, recalling their worship of the Golden Calf, the rebellion of Korach, the sin of the spies, their angering of G-d at Taveirah, Massah and Kivrot Hataavah ("The Graves of Lust"). "You have been rebellious against G-d," he says to them, "since the day I knew you." But he also speaks of G-d's forgiveness of their sins, and the Second Tablets which G-d inscribed and gave to them following their repentance. Their forty years in the desert, says Moses to the people, during which G-d sustained them with daily manna from heaven, was to teach them "that man does not live on bread alone, but by the utterance of G-d's mouth does man live."

Moses describes the land they are about to enter as "flowing with milk and honey," blessed with the "seven kinds" (wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and dates), and as the place that is the focus of G-d's providence of His world. He commands them to destroy the idols of the land's former masters, and to beware lest they become haughty and begin to believe that "my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."

A key passage in our Parshah is the second chapter of the Shema, which repeats the fundamental mitzvot enumerated in the Shema's first chapter, and describes the rewards of fulfilling G-d's commandments and the adverse results (famine

and exile) of their neglect. It is also the source of the precept of prayer, and includes a reference to the resurrection of the dead in the messianic age.

Eikev Haftorah in a Nutshell: Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3

https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/543183/jewish/Haftorah-in-a-Nutshell.htm

This week's haftorah is the second of a series of seven "haftorot of Consolation." These seven haftarot commence on the Shabbat following Tisha b'Av and continue until Rosh Hashanah.

The exiled Jewish people express their concern that G-d has abandoned them. G-d reassures them that it is not so, comparing His love and mercy for His people to that of a mother for her children, and even greater than that, too.

The prophet Isaiah then touchingly describes the ingathering of the exiles which will occur with the Messiah's arrival and returning to the initial subject matter of this haftorah, that of the Jewish people's complaint of being abandoned by G-d, he reminds them of their rebellious behavior that brought about the exile and suffering. He concludes with encouraging words, reminding us of what had happened to our ancestors, Abraham and Sarah. Just as they were blessed with a child when they had all but given up hope, so too, G-d will send us the Messiah.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Spirituality of Listening: Eikev by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks z"l

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/eikev/the-spirituality-of-listening/>

It is one of the most important words in Judaism, and also one of the least understood. Its two most famous occurrences are in last week's parsha and this week's: "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4), and "It shall come to pass if you surely listen to My commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul" (Deut. 11:13) – the openings of the first and second paragraphs of the Shema. It also appears in the first line of the parsha: "It shall come to pass, if you listen to these laws" (Deut. 7:12).

The word, of course, is shema. I have argued elsewhere^[1] that it is fundamentally untranslatable into English since it means so many things: to hear,

to listen, to pay attention, to understand, to internalise, to respond, to obey. It is one of the motif-words of the book of Devarim, where it appears no less than 92 times – more than in any other book of the Torah. Time and again in the last month of his life Moses told the people, Shema: listen, heed, pay attention. Hear what I am saying. Hear what God is saying. Listen to what he wants from us. If you would only listen ... Judaism is a religion of listening. This is one of its most original contributions to civilisation.

The twin foundations on which Western culture was built were ancient Greece and ancient Israel. They could not have been more different. Greece was a profoundly visual culture. Its greatest achievements had to do with the eye, with seeing. It produced some of the greatest art, sculpture, and architecture the world has ever seen. Its most characteristic group events – theatrical performances and the Olympic games – were spectacles: performances that were watched. Plato thought of knowledge as a kind of depth vision, seeing beneath the surface to the true form of things.

This idea – that knowing is seeing – remains the dominant metaphor in the West even today. We speak of insight, foresight, and hindsight. We offer an observation. We adopt a perspective. We illustrate. We illuminate. We shed light on an issue. When we understand something, we say, “I see.”[2]

Judaism offered a radical alternative. It is faith in a God we cannot see, a God who cannot be represented visually. The very act of making a graven image – a visual symbol – is a form of idolatry. As Moses reminded the people in last week’s parsha, when the Israelites had a direct encounter with God at Mount Sinai, “You heard the sound of words, but saw no image; there was only a voice.” (Deut. 4:12). God communicates in sounds, not sights. He speaks. He commands. He calls. That is why the supreme religious act is shema. When God speaks, we listen. When He commands, we try to obey.

Rabbi David Cohen (1887–1972), known as the Nazirite, a disciple of Rav Kook and the father of R. Shear-Yashuv Cohen, Chief Rabbi of Haifa, pointed out that in the Babylonian Talmud all the metaphors of understanding are based not on seeing but on hearing. Ta shema, “come and hear.” Ka mashma lan, “It teaches us this.” Shema mina, “Infer from this.” Lo shemiyah lei, “He did not agree.” A traditional teaching is called shamaytta, “that which was heard.” And so on.[3] All of these are variations on the word shema.[4]

This may seem like a small difference, but it is in fact a huge one. For the Greeks, the ideal form of knowledge involved detachment. There is the one who sees, the subject, and there is that which is seen, the object, and they belong to two different realms. A person who looks at a painting or a sculpture or a play in a theatre or the Olympic games is not an active part of the art or the drama or the athletic competition. They are acting as a spectator, not a participant.

Speaking and listening are not forms of detachment. They are forms of engagement. They create a relationship. The Hebrew word for knowledge, da'at, implies involvement, closeness, intimacy. "And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and gave birth" (Gen. 4:1). That is knowing in the Hebrew sense, not the Greek. We can enter into a relationship with God, even though He is infinite and we are finite, because we are linked by words. In revelation, God speaks to us. In prayer, we speak to God. If you want to understand any relationship, between husband and wife, or parent and child, or employer and employee, pay close attention to how they speak and listen to one another. Ignore everything else.

The Greeks taught us the forms of knowledge that come from observing and inferring, namely science and philosophy. The first scientists and the first philosophers came from Greece from the sixth to the fourth centuries BCE. But not everything can be understood by seeing and appearances alone. There is a powerful story about this told in the first book of Samuel. Saul, Israel's first king, looked the part. He was tall. "From his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people," (1 Sam. 9:2, 1 Sam. 10:23). He was the image of a king. But morally, temperamentally, he was not a leader at all; he was a follower. God then told Samuel to anoint another king in his place, and told him it would be one of the children of Jesse. Samuel went to Jesse and was struck by the appearance of one of his sons, Eliab. He thought he must be the one God meant. But God said to him, "Do not be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. God does not see as people do. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

Jews and Judaism taught that we cannot see God, but we can hear Him and He hears us. It is through the word – speaking and listening – that we can have an intimate relationship with God as our parent, our partner, our sovereign, the One who loves us and whom we love. We cannot demonstrate God scientifically. We cannot prove God logically. These are Greek, not Jewish, modes of thought. I

believe that from a Jewish perspective, trying to prove the existence of God logically or scientifically is a mistaken enterprise.[5] God is not an object but a subject. The Jewish mode is to relate to God in intimacy and love, as well as awe and reverence.

One fascinating modern example came from a Jew who, for much of his life, was estranged from Judaism, namely Sigmund Freud. He called psychoanalysis the “speaking cure”, but it is better described as the “listening cure.”[6] It is based on the fact that active listening is in itself therapeutic. It was only after the spread of psychoanalysis, especially in America, that the phrase “I hear you” came into the English language as a way of communicating empathy.[7]

There is something profoundly spiritual about listening. It is the most effective form of conflict resolution I know. Many things can create conflict, but what sustains it is the feeling on the part of at least one of the parties that they have not been heard. They have not been listened to. We have not “heard their pain”. There has been a failure of empathy. That is why the use of force – or for that matter, boycotts – to resolve conflict is so profoundly self-defeating. It may suppress it for a while, but it will return, often more intense than before. Job, who has suffered unjustly, is unmoved by the arguments of his comforters. It is not that he insists on being right: what he wants is to be heard. Not by accident does justice presuppose the rule of *audi alteram partem*, “Hear the other side.” Listening lies at the very heart of relationship. It means that we are open to the other, that we respect them, that their perceptions and feelings matter to us. We give them permission to be honest, even if this means making ourselves vulnerable in so doing. A good parent listens to their child. A good employer listens to their workers. A good company listens to its customers or clients. A good leader listens to those they are leading. Listening does not mean agreeing but it does mean caring. Listening is the climate in which love and respect grow. In Judaism we believe that our relationship with God is an ongoing tutorial in our relationships with other people. How can we expect God to listen to us if we fail to listen to our spouse, our children, or those affected by our work? And how can we expect to encounter God if we have not learned to listen. On Mount Horeb, God taught Elijah that He was not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the *kol demamah dakah*, the “still, small voice” (I Kings 19:12) that I define as a voice you can only hear if you are listening.

Crowds are moved by great speakers, but lives are changed by great listeners. Whether between us and God or us and other people, listening is the prelude to love.[8] [1] See Covenant & Conversation on Mishpatim: “Doing and Hearing.” [2] See George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, University of Chicago Press, 1980. [3] This appears in the opening pages of his work, *Kol Nevuah*. [4] To be sure, the Zohar uses a visual term, *ta chazi*, “Come and see.” There is a broad kinship between Jewish mysticism and Platonic or neo-Platonic thought. For both, knowing is a form of depth-seeing. [5] Indeed, many of the great medieval Jewish philosophers did just that. They did so under the influence of neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelian thought, itself mediated by the great philosophers of Islam. The exception was Judah Halevi in *The Kuzari*. [6] See Adam Philips, *Equals*, London, Faber and Faber, 2002, xii. See also Salman Akhtar, *Listening to Others: Developmental and Clinical Aspects of Empathy and Attunement*. Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2007. [7] Note that there is a difference between empathy and sympathy. Saying “I hear you” is a way of indicating – sincerely or otherwise – that I take note of your feelings, not that I necessarily agree with them or you. [8] For more on the theme of listening, see above, *Covenant & Conversation* on parshat Bereishit, “The Art of Listening,” and on parshat Bamidbar, “The Sound of Silence.”

Eikev: Shivat Haminim, The Seven Fruits of Israel
by Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum

<https://www.growtorah.org/devarim/2023/7/28/eikev-shivat-haminim-the-seven-fruits-of-israel>

The Land of Israel is described as “A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and [date] honey.”[1][2] The praise of Eretz Yisrael for its fruit trees is a lesson in itself, testifying to the symbolic significance of nature. The Torah paints the shade of the grape vine and fig tree as a metaphor for the idyllic world-peace we await. Our ultimate trust in Hashem is expressed through the serene environment where “Judah and Israel will sit securely, each person under his vine and fig tree...”[3] There is no greater sign of the coming redemption than when the Land of Israel produces fruits in abundance.[4]

Each individual fruit of the seven species is also symbolic, as accentuated by the great Kabbalist Arizal, [5] who attributes the spiritual energies of each fruit to one of the seven lower sefirot (spiritual emanations) that we count during each week of the Omer.[6][7] Wheat corresponds to *chesed* (kindness); barley reflects *gevura* (restraint); grapes represent *tiferet* (beauty); figs correspond to *netzach* (endurance); pomegranates correspond to *hod* (glory, majesty, gratitude and recognition); olives and olive oil are *yesod* (foundation); and dates correspond to *malchut* (kingdom).

The offerings of the choicest fruits—the bikkurim—brought to the Temple in Jerusalem on Shavuot were only from these seven species. Nogah Hareuveni [11] explains that the seven species flower and fruit during the period between Pesach and Shavuot, a season that depends on the delicate balance between contradictory forces of nature. It is characterized by climatic contrasts between extreme dryness and heat on the one hand and cold storms on the other. Therefore, the seven species are selected to reaffirm our pure faith in Hashem, by our expressing thanks to the One and only Hashem specifically for the fruits of the Land.

The flowering and fruiting of the seven species coincides with our own spiritual development during the season between Pesach and Shavuot, as we count the Omer during the 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot, preparing for receiving the Torah. [12] Both are a part of an annual reaffirmation of faith in Hashem and appreciation for the gifts we were given.

With the effects of anthropogenic climate change, our environment and agriculture are in an even more delicate balance these days. Weather events are increasingly more extreme, and other fluctuations can affect the growing window and yield. [13] In these conditions, the significance of the seven species and the appreciation of Hashem's role in sustaining us are all the more valuable.

These seven species were the staple foods consumed by the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael during biblical times. Their holiness is crystalized in the unique blessing recited after eating them, thanking Hashem for the goodness of the land. This blessing, said after eating grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives or dates, differs from the blessing said after any other fruits in its effusive praise of the land of Israel and its fruits: "Blessed are You, Hashem our God, King of the universe, for the tree and the fruit of the tree, for the produce of the field, and for the precious, good, and spacious land which You have graciously given as a heritage to our ancestors, to eat of its fruit and be satiated with its goodness... For You, Hashem, are good and do good to all, and we will thank You for the land and for her fruits. Blessed are You Hashem, for the land and for her fruits." [14]

These seven species are central to a Jewish spiritual path that endeavors to elevate the physical through intentional living. Through them, we can better connect to the land, promote our spiritual and physical health, and deepen our relationship with Hashem. *(Rebbetzin Chana Bracha Siegelbaum, a native of Denmark, is founder and director of Midreshet B'erot Bat Ayin: Holistic Torah Study for Women on the Land. She holds a*

Bachelor of Education in Bible and Jewish Philosophy from Michlala Jerusalem College for Women, and a Masters of Art in Jewish History from Touro College. Rebbetzin Chana Bracha creates curricula emphasizing women's spiritual empowerment through traditional Torah values.)

[1] Devarim 8:8 (All Tanach translations are the author's own adaptations from The Jerusalem Bible [Koren]). [2] The Sages understand the verse's mention of honey to be date honey. See Mishna Brura 202:44. [3] I Melachim, 5:5. [4] Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a. [5] Rabbi Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi, Tzfat 1534-1572. [6] Arizal, Sefer Halikutim, Parshat Eikev, chapter 8. [7] [Click here](#) for more on Omer and the sefirot. [8] See [here](#) for a source on grains and cardiovascular health. [9] See [here](#) for a source on grape skins and diabetes. [10] See [here](#) for a source on the health benefits of figs. [11] Nogah Hareuveni is the founder and chairman of Neot Kedumim, The Biblical Landscape Reserve in Israel, and author of numerous books on Judaism and nature. [12] The Counting of the Omer is a verbal counting of each of the forty-nine days between Passover and Shavuot. This mitzvah derives from the Torah commandment to count from the day following Passover when the Omer, (a sacrifice containing an omer-measure of barley), was offered in the Temple, until Shavuot when an offering of wheat breads was brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. Moreover, counting the Omer is a spiritual preparation for the receiving of the Torah on Shavuot. According to Kabbalists, each day corresponds to one of the seven lower sefirot with its sub-sefira. [13] Read the [IPCC report on food security](#). [14] Translation from chabad.org with author's amendments.

Ekev: Seeking a Greater Wholeness Through Civilian Oversight by Rabbi Lina Zerbarini

<https://truah.org/resources/lina-zerbarini-moraltorah-2023/>

A driver in my New York county was recently pulled over a few blocks from his home. When he asked why he was pulled over, the officer offered a reason. When the driver was able to disprove the officer's concern, he was given a ticket for a previously unmentioned and unrelated issue.

In case you are wondering, the driver was Black.

The statistics are stark. In my county, Black and brown people are:

- 4 times more likely to be stopped by the police while driving.
- 5 times more likely to be pulled over, not for a safety violation, but for a regulatory violation like an equipment issue.
- 15 times as likely to be searched for drugs or weapons.
- 24 times more likely to be frisked.
- 13 times as likely to be forcibly removed from the car.
- 14 times as likely to be placed in the back of the police car.
- 20 times as likely to encounter a police dog during a traffic stop.
- 12 times as likely to be physically restrained. 10 times as likely to be arrested.

These numbers come directly from police data, as do statistics that show that Black and brown people are actually less likely than white people in our county to be found with weapons or drugs in their vehicles.

It is indisputable that there is serious, ongoing, and systemic racism in the institution of American law enforcement. Alongside that, my experience as a member of our county Human Rights Commission and of my town's Anti-Bias Task Force has me working closely with the officers from my precinct and the Hate Crimes Unit who have spent their careers fighting bias crimes. I am grateful for their work and partnership while at the same time am concerned about the realities of unequal treatment in policing.

This tension reflects a larger reality of both the brokenness and possibility of our world.

This week's Torah portion, Ekev, points to God, God supreme and Lord supreme, who "shows no favor," or literally "does not raise up faces" (Deuteronomy 10:17). In my county, and in our country, white faces are raised up, or waved through, while Black and brown faces are stopped. The 19th century Italian commentator Shadal comments on this verse: Being all equal before God, God becomes supreme over all. When all are treated equally, and only then, will God take God's rightful place supreme over all. Until then, God is diminished in our world.

At the same time, God is the Ein Sof, without end, beyond separation and difference. God is the wholeness that includes all. This wholeness is, however, very far away. We have been in exile from each other and from God since Adam blamed Eve for eating the fruit and God expelled them from the garden. The world we live in is one of separations and distinction. How can we get ourselves closer to God in whom all are one? Ekev teaches a spiritual path:

"Circumcise the thickening of your hearts and stiffen your necks no more" (Deuteronomy 10:16). It is not an easy thing to soften ourselves, which is perhaps why the text says "cut away"—it may be easier to cut and heal than to soften what has become calloused (and callous).

One way to work on unstiffening our necks and making sure no head gets unduly raised lies in a new assignment that our Human Rights Commission recently received: providing civilian oversight to complaints of police misconduct. The opening story above is one of the complaints brought to our attention. The main goal of civilian oversight is increased transparency. Until now, complaints,

investigations, and dispositions have all resided within the Internal Affairs Bureau of the Police Department.

This is not a unique situation; there are more than 18,000 police departments in the country, but only about 350 of them have civilian oversight bodies. When oversight remains within the department, which is susceptible to “raising up faces,” it is obviously much less effective.

I am hopeful that civilian oversight is one way of bringing people together in the work of building safe communities and a fuller manifestation of the divine.

(Rabbi Lina Zerbarini is spiritual leader of Kehillath Shalom Synagogue, a Reconstructionist congregation on Long Island. She serves on the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission and the Huntington Anti-Bias Task Force.)

Yahrtzeits

Marianne Sender remembers her father Roman Popiel on Sunday August 6th

Harriet Katz remembers her husband Erving Katz on Tuesday August 8th