

# EIKEV

46th of the 54 sedras;  
3rd of 11 in D'varim

231.83 lines in a Torah; rank: 14th

10 Parshiyot; 6 open, 4 closed

111 p'sukim - rank: 26th (4th in D'varim)  
Same number as Vayikra, but larger

1747 words - rank: 16th (3rd in D'varim)  
Same number as Ki Tavo; Ki Tavo has  
more p'sukim; Eikev has more letters

6865 letters - rank: 14th (3rd in D'varim)

Eikev's p'sukim are long - 3rd longest in  
the Torah in words and letters per  
pasuk. This accounts for rise in ranking  
in those categories.

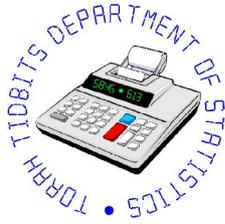
## MITZVOT

8 of 613: 6 positives, 2 prohibitions



[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate  
start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y  
is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the  
parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in  
the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the  
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND  
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI  
(positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition).  
X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which  
the mitzva comes.



## Kohen - First Aliya 25 p'sukim - 7:12-8:10

[P> 7:12 (5)] Moshe Rabeinu reiterates  
the "simple" deal that HaShem offers  
us: If we observe the mitzvot then He  
will keep the promises that He made to  
our ancestors. He will love us, bless us,  
and see to it that we flourish. We will  
be the most blessed among all the  
nations.

It behooves us to consider this fact  
that G-d repeatedly presents us with  
the alternative results of our  
faithfulness to Him and the opposite.  
This is what makes the second passage  
of the Sh'ma (see later in this sedra) so  
important to our daily routine.  
Although there is much overlap  
between the first two passages, it is the  
second one that states "the Deal", and  
it is supposed to be a (twice) daily  
reminder and warning.

Following this, Moshe issues another  
of the many warnings against idolatry.

**SDT** In the context of the opening  
p'sukim of the sedra, the word EIKEV  
means "on the heels of", "in the wake  
of..." (following G-d's words).

Rashi takes the word to indicate  
mitzvot that people belittle and crush  
under their heel. With the careful  
observance of these mitzvot, G-d will  
keep His side of the deal.

Baal HaTurim presents a mini-mussar  
lesson based on the choice of the word

EIKEV. The heel represents humility... We must realize that humility is an important key in our following G-d's words. Thus, the opening words of the sedra can be saying: "If you are humble and follow G-d's commands, then..." (Note also that the heels support the entire body.)

**[S> 7:17 (10)]** Do not wonder how it will be possible to prevail against the many nations in the Land and do not fear them. The miracles witnessed in Egypt (and in the Midbar) will be repeated with other nations. Conquest of Eretz Yisrael will be slow so that the Land will not be overrun by wild animals.

**Ponder this:** Commentators ask, could not G-d Who split the sea and performed countless other miracles, prevent the problem with animals without drawing out the period of conquest? They explain that the period from Yetzi'at Mitzrayim until entering the Land was supernatural, filled with miracles, but it was an unnatural time. Food from heaven, miraculous well-water, clothes that we did not outgrow, feet that did not blister or swell despite difficult walking conditions, and protection of the Clouds of Glory, all demonstrated G-d's special relationship with the People and helped develop within them a special faith in G-d, but was not to be their way of life. Just as the fetus is protected and provided for during gestation and then emerges from the womb into the less perfect but "natural" world, so too Israel is soon to emerge from its womb to face the reality of the natural, "real" world.

Hence, the warning about the animals. One can say that by warning us about the length of the period of conquest, G-d is telling us that the period of open miracles is ending (not completely), but a more exciting, more alive, more "real" period is to come.

No one will be able to stand before Israel. [This is as it SHOULD be, but its happening in reality depends on our "behavior".] The idols of the nations shall be destroyed and we shall not desire their rich trappings. It is forbidden to derive benefit from the adornments of idolatry, even if they have not been worshiped **[428, L22 7:25]**. Nor may we have anything to do with idolatry, directly or even peripherally. We may not benefit from that which is consecrated to idolatry **[429, L25 7:26]**.

**[S> 8:1 (18)]** All that G-d commands us in the Torah is for the purpose of living... in Eretz Yisrael.

**SDT** This is an oft-repeated theme of Moshe's words to the new generation that is soon to cross the Jordan River. It emphasizes the interdependence and inseparable nature of the three fundamental events that define the Jewish People - the Exodus, Matan Torah, and entry into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe next asks us to remember the experiences of the years of wandering, the miracles as well as the tribulations. That was a testing period which set the stage for real life in Eretz Yisrael.

The Land is beautifully described and the Seven Species are enumerated.

This gives prominence to grain products (bread, pastry, etc.) in the realm of brachot and gives priority to wine and the five special fruits (among the Seven Species - the first two are grains).

The Torah commands us to "bench" after meals [430, A19 8:10].

## MitzvaWatch

Chazal augmented this rule with a wide range of brachot to be recited before and after partaking of food, by which we express our appreciation and thanks to G-d for the bounty of His world. So too, the Sages required us to say brachot before mitzvot, as well as blessings of praise, request, and acknowledgment - to make us constantly aware of G-d and His role in the Creation and continuing maintenance of the world.

The gemara in Brachot (20b) relates a conversation (so to speak) between G-d and the heavenly angels. The angels said to G-d: Master of the World, You wrote in Your Torah that You are impartial and do not show favoritism or take bribes. Yet You definitely favor the Jewish people as evidenced by the blessings You bestow upon them via Birkat Kohanim. G-d answers them: And how should I not favor them? I commanded them to bless Me after they eat and are satisfied. And the Sages of Israel require Birkat HaMazon even after consuming a KAZAYIT

and/or a K'BEITZA. (And they require a before-bracha on even the tiniest quantity).

Based on the words of the command to say Birkat HaMazon, we are not only thanking G-d for the food, as would be expected, but also for the Land. This is reflected in the texts of Birkat HaMazon and "Al HaMichya" Since Birkat HaMazon is a mitzva which applies in all places (not just in Israel), commentaries ponder the significance of the reference to the Land.

Ramban says that when one looks back at the oppression in Egypt and remembers the harshness of the Wilderness, and is now enjoying the bounty of the Land of Israel, there is special cause to thank G-d. Even during times of exile, the significance of the Land (and the Torah) to the life of the Jewish People must not be overlooked. To paraphrase a chassidic interpretation of the pasuk which commands us to "bench": One can eat anywhere and be satisfied physically, but to be spiritually satisfied as well - that happens only in THE natural environment of the Jew and his Torah - in Eretz Yisrael. Perhaps this is why Sefer HaChinuch speaks of the brachot for Torah-learning in the same context as Birkat HaMazon. "And you will eat and you will be satisfied..." - this refers to both physical and spiritual food - food of the body and food for the mind and soul.

The implication of Ramban's words is that only in Eretz Yisrael can one be genuinely fulfilled in the performance of mitzvot. One can keep (many)

mitzvot outside of Israel, but there is something vital lacking under those circumstances.

## Levi - Second Aliya

### 13 p'sukim - 8:11-9:3

Until now, the People have periodically displayed lack of faith in G-d in troubled times (hunger, thirst, fear). At this point, Moshe issues a very different kind of warning. When the People will enter the Land, successfully defeat the nations therein, and begin to benefit from the spoils of war and the bounty of the Land, the potential exists to discount G-d's role in their good fortune. Moshe warns: be careful to remember the One Who took us out of Egypt and fed us in the wilderness. Do not say: look what I accomplished with my own powers. Always remember that it is G-d who continuously keeps his promises to our ancestors.

**SDT** In the opening passage of Rosh Chodesh Benching we ask G-d to give us a long life, a life of peace, a life of... many different things. There is one thing that we ask for twice - A life that has in it YIR'AT SHAMAYIM, fear of G-d. Why do we ask for this twice? One answer suggested is that after asking for YIR'AT SHAMAYIM, we ask for CHAYIM SHEL OSHER V'CHAVOD, a life of wealth and honor. In that case, we had better repeat our request for YIR'AT SHAMAYIM, since wealth often turns a person away for proper fear of G-d. This

is similar to the warning that Moshe Rabeinu issues at this point in the sedra.

[P> 8:19 (2)] Know well that turning from G-d towards idolatry will result in annihilation, as it does for other nations.

[P> 9:1 (26)] Notwithstanding the might of the nations we are about to face, have confidence that G-d will lead us to victory.

**Note** that the words that Moshe uses to describe the nations that we will face in Eretz Yisrael are very similar to the words used by the Meraglim when they panicked the People with their evil report on the Land. Moshe is not glossing over the difficulties that lie ahead. He is rather instilling confidence in the People that will come from faith in G-d and His promise to fight on our behalf. If an enemy is strong, you don't mislead the people by saying that he is weak. You tell the truth and explain the special protection and help that we will have from G-d in battle.

## Sh'lishi Third Aliya

### 26 p'sukim - 9:4-29

Moshe next "put things in perspective". We must not think that we deserve all that G-d is giving us, but rather we must remember the many times we angered G-d in the wilderness AND even at Sinai!

It is not that generation that deserves to enter Eretz Yisrael. Rather, it is a

combination of the wickedness of the current inhabitants of the land and the promises that G-d made to our patriarchs.

Some mitzva-counters consider this ZACHOR to be among the 613; Rambam and the Chinuch do not. This does not, however, minimize the significance of this command.

Moshe now tells the People about the devastating event of the Golden Calf. How glorious the events should have been when Moshe descended the Mount with the first Luchot. Moshe tells how G-d wanted to destroy the People and how he (Moshe) smashed the Luchot, interceded on behalf of the People, and returned to the mountain for another 40 days and nights of fasting and prayer.

Aharon too was subject to G-d's anger. Rashi explains that G-d was angry at Aharon for "going along" with the People as far as he did. The implication, is that Aharon lost his sons as a result of G-d's anger with him. Moshe's prayers on behalf of his brother were partially successful - Aharon's other two sons lived.

Inter alia, Moshe mentions other places and events where the People angered G-d.

Moshe tells the People that he smashed the Luchot when he saw the Golden Calf. He also tells them of the different "arguments" he put to HaShem to get His forgiveness.

## R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya

### 11 p'sukim - 10:1-11

[P> 10:1 (11)] Moshe continues by telling about the second set of Luchot and the ARON constructed to contain them.

He then tells of the travels of the People, the death of Aharon (again), and the succession of his son, Elazar. Moshe also tells of the special role given to the tribe of Levi as a result of the (improper) behavior of the rest of the People.

## Chamishi 5th Aliya

### 20 p'sukim - 10:12-11:9

[S> 10:12 (20)] "And now, People of Israel, what does G-d want from you? ONLY to revere Him, follow His ways, love Him, and serve Him with all your heart and soul. To fulfill all that He commands - for our own good."

Moshe says, even though G-d is the Master of all, He has a special relationship with our ancestors and with us. We must not be stubborn; we must be good, for G-d is truly great and not subject to bribery.

We are required to especially love the convert [431, A207 10:19] - we know how being a stranger among others is.

Revere (fear) G-d [432,A4 10:20], serve Him [433,A5 10:20], cling to Him

(by adhering to Torah scholars) [434, A6 10:20], and swear in His Name [435,A7 10:20] when necessary to swear.

## MitzvaWatch

Rambam counts the commandment to pray daily as Biblical (needs further details to be understood properly), based on "and Him you shall serve" and "and to serve Him with all your heart" (and other similar texts), defining service of the heart as prayer. Ramban, on the other hand, holds that prayer is a rabbinic mitzva altogether, albeit inspired by the p'sukim in the Torah and stories of the Avot, who prayed on various occasions. At first look, it seems problematic that there is no specific command in the Torah "Thou shalt daven."

But if you think about it, SERVE HIM WITH ALL YOUR HEART is the best way to command us to daven, because it tells us clearly the high value placed on KAVANA in respect to davening. With davening, kavana is the essential element, not just a component of the mitzva. This is so, specifically because the Torah did NOT command us to pray, but rather to serve G-d with all our hearts.

To further clarify the issue of T'FILA being a Torah law or Rabbinic. Everyone agrees that the number of times a day, the timings of the different davenings, and what to say at each time - these are all by Rabbinic rules. The dispute is only on the level of the basic mitzva to pray - anything. When a

mother has a son in the army and his unit is sent to the Gaza area, and she turns to G-d with a heartfelt plea to Him for her son's safety - this is an example of a basic prayer. The Rambam would hold that this prayer is a fulfillment of the Torah's requirement to pray. Ramban would consider it a Rabbinic mitzva. OTOH, saying Ashrei, the Amida, and Aleinu sometime between half of a halachic hour after halachic noon (the time known as Mincha Gedola) and sunset - this is the fulfillment of the Rabbinic mitzva to daven Mincha. (These were just examples.)

He is our G-d and He formed a mighty nation from a family of 70 souls. Love Him and do His mitzvot (do His mitzvot out of love for Him). Learn the lessons of Jewish history - the miracles and wonders of the Exodus, the crossing of the Sea, and the punishment of Datan and Aviram (here singled out for their arrogant, unforgivable insult to Eretz Yisrael, as opposed to Korach whom Moshe was able to forgive, sort of).

Again, Moshe emphasizes that the purpose and proper environment for Torah is Eretz Yisrael.

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya 12 p'sukim - 11:10-21

[S> 11:10 (3)] The Land that the People are about to enter is a land that is "accountable to G-d" in obvious (and

less obvious) ways. G-d is demanding of it and of its soon-to-be inhabitants (us). The main physical distinction mentioned is Israel's reliance upon rain.

G-d is demanding of the Land of Israel and of the People of Israel - always, from one end of the year to the other.

[S> 11:13 (9)] This Aliya concludes with a restating of the "deal" that opened the sedra. This parsha is the second passage of the Sh'ma. If we keep the mitzvot then we will have bountiful rain and abundant yields; if not, then...

T'filin, Torah learning, and Mezuzah are restated as is the correlation between mitzvot and long life in the Land. This second portion of the Sh'ma is one of the two passages in a Mezuzah and one of the four portions in T'filin.

Remember that four weeks after Parshat Eikev we will be reading Ki Tavo [with the Tochacha. Essentially, the Tochacha says the same thing as the second passage of the Sh'ma from Eikev - but in a much more heavy-handed way. V'HAYA IM SHAMO'A is a firm but 'calmer' (not the best word) warning than what's coming in Ki Tavo. And, Ki Tavo is once a year (add B'chukotai with the other Tochacha for twice a year) and Sh'ma is every day - twice a day. Maybe if we properly heed the daily reminder, we won't need the devastating warning of the Tochacha. And different people react differently to the different styles of reproach and warning.

## Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 4 p'sukim - 11:22-25

[S> 11:22 (4)] Once again, the "deal" that the sedra began with is repeated at its conclusion - If we will keep all the mitzvot, motivated by a love of G-d; if we follow in his footsteps (by performing acts of kindness) and cling to Him... then we will prevail against mightier nations than ourselves. Every place in Eretz Yisrael that we walk upon, will be ours. No one will stand up against us. The sedra concludes with promises of successful conquest of the Land - if we keep our side of the deal. That's all it takes.

These four p'sukim are not only Sh'vii, but they are reread for the Maftir, as well.

## Haftara 27 p'sukim Yeshayahu 49:14-51:3

2nd of the 7 Consolation Haftarot. G-d's message is that He has not forgotten Zion nor forsaken His People. Sometimes it might seem like that, but there will come a time when the People will return to their roots and be restored to their Land. There was never a "divorce" between G-d and the People of Israel. G-d will help in the battles against the mighty nations that oppress His People. G-d has (will) comforted Zion; the desolated areas

will flourish...

## **PROBING the PROPHETS**

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The tragic words that open this week's haftara ("Vatomer Tziyon Azavani Hashem, Vashem sh'chei-chani") reflect the hopelessness of post-exile Israel who exclaim that G-d had abandoned and forgotten her. But these words also reflect the belief held by many in the nation that the exile and the destruction of the Temple meant that they need no longer worship the One G-d. Having been overwhelmed by the Babylonians and having seen the enemy destroy Hashem's "house", convinced them that they now must worship the Babylonian "god" who, clearly, they believed, proved his power to be greater than that of Hashem (r"l).

We should not be surprised at their statement because that false belief is echoed throughout the writings of the prophets. Yirmiyahu, for example, writes Sefer M'lachim in which he records the growing sinfulness of the people, in order to convince the population that their defeat was NOT G-d's defeat. Rather, it was a tragedy brought upon them by G-d Himself due to their corruption and immorality; a tragedy of which Hashem had warned them through His prophets over the course of many years.

We see this attitude addressed by Yechezkel HaNavi as well, when he warns the exiles quite clearly (chapter 20;32): "And that which you believe will not be, when you say: 'We will be like other nations and worship (gods of) wood and stone' "

However, as we see from our haftara, Yishayahu's response to these thoughts is different from both Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel. Yishayahu turns to Israel in a soothing tone and with comforting words, explaining that, as a mother could never forget her baby or fail to be compassionate to it, so G-d could never forget His nation or fail to be merciful to them. The navi reasserts that Israel is eternally bound to G-d through the covenant made to their ancestors and, sin though they might, they remain chosen by G-d. To put it simply, Yishayahu reminds them that punishment does not mean rejection.

The navi supports his comforting words with a prophecy of a massive return to Israel, of a repopulating of the now-barren cities and of the rebuilding of destroyed edifices. He even adds that the other nations will lend their support to Israel's return and he closes his message with the promise that joy and gladness will return to the grieving land, a land that will be filled with joyful music and prayers of thanksgiving.

It is a vision that we see with our

own eyes today.

*Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*

## Eretz Yisrael in the Haftara

by Rabbis Ethan Eisen and Tuly Weisz

### Why the First Zionist Congress was in Switzerland

The First Zionist Congress in 1897, which ultimately formulated the first Zionist platform, was supposed to be held in Munich, but Theodore Herzl, the chair of the Congress, received strong opposition from both Orthodox and Reform leaders. The Reform were concerned about seeming ungrateful to their host country at a time when they had just received their emancipation, and the Orthodox rejected the secular Herzl for being against the Torah. Herzl was forced to host his conference in Basel, Switzerland, far away from the center of European Jewry.

Our haftara (Yeshayahu 49:14-51:3) is the second of the Shiva d'Nechemta and deals with a fundamental question: does the fact that our enemies twice destroyed our Beit HaMikdash show that Hashem had abandoned the Jewish people? Have we caused irreparable harm to our relationship with Hashem?

In fact, the gentile world, particularly Christians, arrived at this very conclusion - the Jewish people rejected their prophet just as the Romans were preparing to wage war against

Yerushalayim. Early Christians saw the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash as evidence that Hashem was rejecting Israel, chas v'shalom, an argument buttressed by the rapid expansion of Christianity.

The nechama of our haftara combats this misperception in a direct, almost simple manner: "Zion said 'Hashem has forsaken me; My Lord has forgotten me.'" But Hashem responds back "Can a woman forget her baby, or not feel compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, but I would not forget you" (49:14-15). Famously, the Navi challenges the Jewish people to prove that He has forsaken them: "What is your mother's bill of divorce by which I sent her away?" Although the relationship has been injured, the Jewish people are not, and will never be completely severed from Him.

The Maharal of Prague reflects on the possibility that, maybe, Hashem did in fact abandon the Jewish people and answers in a different way than our haftara. The great 16th century philosopher points to our history to answer this troubling question. He concludes that the exile has been so difficult, with so much persecution and suffering, that it would be impossible for us to have survived but for Divine intervention. The Maharal continues that in every generation of Galut, Hashem assigned different individuals to help us navigate through.

Our haftara provides a surprising glimpse of just who will help support us when we are downtrodden. "For thus

said my Lord, Hashem/Elokim: Behold I will raise My hand toward nations, and I will hoist my banner towards peoples, and they will bring your children in their arms, and your daughters will be carried on their shoulder. Kings will be your nurturers and their princess your wet nurses."

Radak adds, "[the Jewish people] will no longer experience shame from the other nations who used to say that the Jews have no hope." Instead, God will direct a miracle that these other nations, who may have participated in our persecution, will one day raise the Jews up and bring them back to Israel in order to restore Bnei Yisrael's relationship with Hashem.

Just over 100 years ago, Herzl was running around Europe trying to find supporters for his idea of a Jewish State, but he was unable to find significant Jewish allies on the right or the left who were willing to aid him in developing political connections to advance the Zionist cause. Rejected by much of the Jewish community, he instead found unwavering support from a Christian Pastor named William Hechler who introduced Herzl to the leading Kings and Queens of Europe, including German Kaiser Wilhelm, the Queen Victoria of England, and the Sultan of Turkey who controlled the land at the time.

Since then, there have been many important non-Jews who have played crucial roles in the return of Israel to the Land, and who saw themselves as God's messengers - seemingly put there

specially to help lift the Jewish people out of exile, just as the Maharal described - including William Hechler, Lord Balfour, and President Truman.

This fulfillment of the prophecy is in some ways the greatest nechama. After thousands of years of persecution, Gentile leaders acknowledge the errors of their predecessors and that, indeed, God has remained true to His covenant with the Jewish people.

*Rabbi Tuly Weisz is the director of Israel365 and editor of "The Israel Bible"; Rabbi Dr. Ethan Eisen is a licensed clinical psychologist.*

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# R'EI

47th of the 54 sedras;  
4th of 11 in D'varim

257.8 lines in a Torah (rank: 4th)

20 Parshiyot; 5 open; 15 closed

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th (1st in D'varim)

Same number of p'sukim as Lech L'cha,  
but Lech L'cha ranks 23 in size,  
compared with 4th for R'ei. Interesting.

1932 words - ranks 7th (first in D'varim)

7442 letters - ranks 7th (first in D'varim)

Relatively long p'sukim like most sedras  
in D'varim (hence, the jump in ranking  
from p'sukim to words and letters)

## MITZVOT

55 of 613; 17 positive, 38 prohibition  
Only Ki Teitzei & Emor have more



[P> X:Y (Z)] and [S> X:Y (Z)] indicate  
start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y  
is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the  
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Numbers in [square brackets] are the  
Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND  
Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI  
(positive mitzva); L=LAV (prohibition).  
X:Y is the perek and pasuk from which  
the mitzva comes.

## Kohen - First Aliya 17 p'sukim - 11:26-12:1

[S> 11:26 (3)] After setting down the  
fundamentals of Judaism (including the  
formative history of the Nation, Aseret  
HaDibrot, Sh'ma, Brachot & Davening,  
and more) in the first three sedras of  
D'varim, Moshe Rabeinu proceeds with  
the "Tachlis" part of the Book - mitzvot.  
The sedras of R'ei, Shoftim, and Ki  
Teitzei contain 170 mitzvot, the  
greatest concentration for three  
consecutive sedras. They are 3 of the  
top 6 mitzva-sedras of the Torah.

Blessing = keeping the mitzvot; curse =  
not keeping them. These are the  
simple equations that Moshe presents  
here and that Yehoshua will again  
present when the People stand on  
Har G'rizim and Har Eival.

**SDT** Note the phraseology in the  
opening p'sukim: the Blessing - THAT  
you will keep the mitzvot. The Curse - IF  
you won't... There is an implied  
"recommendation" to choose Blessing.  
(Similarly, "And you shall choose Life" in  
Nitzavim.) The Bracha, of course, WHEN  
you choose it... good things will  
happen. The curse, IF (not assumed)  
you are misguided enough not to  
choose the bracha and the path of  
Torah and mitzvot...

[S> 11:29 (23)] The Nation was born  
in Egypt, had its infancy in the  
wilderness, and will grow and flourish  
in the Promised Land. "These are the  
mitzvot to be preserved in the Land..."  
Note that not all of the mitzvot that

follow are Israel-related, yet it is possible to suggest - as Rashi and Ramban do, very strongly - that ALL mitzvot were meant to be observed in Eretz Yisrael.

Ramban goes further and states clearly: You must keep mitzvot meticulously in Chutz LaAretz so that they will not be new (unknown) to you upon your return to the Land. The means that a Jew living outside Eretz Yisrael who is totally Shomer Shabbat, meticulous in observance, tends to be machmir in many areas of Shabbat (and other mitzvot)... is basically practicing how to keep Shabbat so that when he comes to live in Eretz Yisrael he will be able to keep Shabbat in the PLACE that it was meant to be kept.

To put it differently...

Why would a very talented baseball player with the opportunity to play in the majors, choose to play for a class A minor league team? (or even Triple-A team like the New York Fivetowners) Especially when he is major league level where the salaries (reward) are amazingly greater than the minors.

Carrying the analogy a bit further, let's say that the player has a strong reason to play in the minors - for example, he has elderly parents whom he must be close to and help when called upon, and a major league commitment and schedule would make that difficult. Would such a player at least dream and aspire to the time when things might change and allow him to accept the major league offers?

Sites, altars, idols, etc. of the nations

in Eretz Yisrael are to be destroyed [436,A185 12:2]. However, we must be careful not to do the same to G-d [437,L65 12:4] - this mitzva includes the prohibition of erasing G-d's Holy Names.

While their places are to be eliminated, THE Place (site of the Mikdash) is to be the focal point of Jewish spiritual life and energy. All sacrifices and offerings are to be made there and only there, at the first festival encountered [438, A83 12:5]. It is on those occasions (the Shalosh Regalim, the three Pilgrimage Festivals) that sacred foods (such as Ma'aser Sheni, Neta Reva'i) are eaten in Jerusalem. Things won't be as "do your own thing" as they are in the wilderness. Soon we will be entering the Land for a more "permanent", down to earth life.

## MitzvaWatch

There is a fairly common situation among the Torah's mitzvot, of a positive command and a prohibition basically saying the same thing. We have a mitzva to fast on Yom Kippur and a prohibition of eating and drinking. Same thing. We may not do Melacha on Shabbat and we must abstain from Melacha on Shabbat. Same thing. In R'ei, we are commanded to "cancel" uncollected loans at the end of Sh'mita year. We are forbidden from collecting loans after the Sh'mita year has past. Same thing. There are many examples of these "two-sides of the

same coin" mitzvot. And there are reasons for the positive mitzva and a "partner" prohibition.

But let's take a look at another aspect of mitzva pairs. Less common than the perfectly matched positive mitzva and prohibition, is the pair of mitzvot that overlap, but not completely. Take a look at [438], the mitzva to fulfill a pledge of a korban or other donation to the Beit HaMikdash. There is a partner prohibition (in Ki Teitzei) which forbids delaying the fulfillment of a pledge to the Mikdash. These mitzvot do not perfectly align. To fulfill the positive mitzva, one must "pay up" by the next Regel. However, one is not in violation of the prohibition unless three Regalim have past since the pledge. This means that a pledge to the Beit HaMikdash made during Aseret Y'mei T'shuva, for example, should be fulfilled on Sukkot. If so, then the person is fulfilling an ASEI and also not in violation of a LAV. If he doesn't fulfill the pledge until Pesach, then he has NOT fulfilled the positive mitzva, but neither has he violated the prohibition. If Isru Chag Shavuot comes and he still hasn't fulfilled the pledge, then he is in violation of the LAV (because three chagim have passed).

## Levi - Second Aliya

### 18 p'sukim - 12:11-28

There, a special place will be designated for the bringing of all offerings. There, spiritual rejoicing will take place, and there, we shall help the Levite and the less fortunate to also have cause to rejoice. It will be forbidden to bring sacrifices

anywhere else [439, L89 12:13]. All Korbanot are to be brought only at the Mikdash [440, A84 12:14] (this is another matched mitzva-pair). Only those consecrated animals that become unfit for the Altar due to blemishes must be redeemed [441, A86 12:15] (without an invalidating blemish, a consecrated animal may NOT be redeemed) and then may be eaten as "regular" meat. The animals' blood, of course, may not be consumed.

It is forbidden to eat Ma'aser Sheni outside Yerushalayim, neither of grain [442, L141 12:17], nor of wine (or grapes) [443, L142 12:17], nor olive oil (or olives) [444, L143 12:17]; nor to eat sacred firstborn animals outside of Yerushalayim [445, L144 12:17], nor the more sacred sacrificial meat outside of the Temple courtyard [446, L145 12:17], nor eat the meat of an Olah (completely-burnt offering) at all [447, L146 12:17], nor other korbanot before their blood is properly sprinkled on the Altar [448, L147 12:17], nor eat First Fruits before they are placed in front of the Altar [449, L149 12:17].

Deep breath. The previous paragraph lists 8 mitzvot that all come from a single pasuk (12:17). (We sometimes refer to this pasuk as the Nolan Ryan pasuk, since its 8 mitzvot is so many more than the next place pasuk, just as Ryan's 7 no-hitters are by far, more than any other pitcher's.) Here too is an example of how we would be lost in

trying to understand all that this pasuk is commanding us, without the Oral Law. It is important to remember that this is not rabbinic interpretation nor extension that we are dealing with; it is Torah as much from HaShem as Matza on the Seder night or Shofar on Rosh HaShana. That which we are taught from the Oral Law is part of Torah MiSinai, just like the Written Word.

All of the above-mentioned foods are to be eaten where they are supposed to be eaten. Be careful not to forget the Levi, the gifts due him, and other forms of help [450, L229 12:19].

[S> 12:20 (9)] "When G-d will expand your borders as promised..."

Notice that the Torah speaks of prosperity immediately following the portion about generous charity-giving and concern for others. This is G-d's "illogical" promise: the more you give, the more you will have.

If and when we desire to eat meat (other than the sacred meat of korbanot), we may do so anywhere we choose, but we must properly slaughter the animals we eat first [451, A146 12:21].

**SDT** In the pasuk commanding Sh'chita, G-d says "(slaughter the animal) as I have commanded you". Yet we do not find the details of Sh'chita in the Written Torah. This is one of the sources for the concept that the Torah consists of a written portion and an Oral Law - both the Word of G-d.

Non-sacred meat does not have the

same restrictions as sacred meat (i.e. ritual impurity - yours or the animal's - is not an impediment to eating it). Many other halachot, of course, do apply.

An animal must be killed before its meat is taken. This is the universal prohibition (it is both one of our 613 and one of the 7 Noahide Laws) of "Limb from a living animal" [452, L182 12:23], EIVER MIN HACHAI. Blood must be removed from meat before we may eat it.

Korbanot shall be brought from all over (even from outside of Israel) to the "Place of G-d's choosing" - the Mikdash [453, A85 12:26]. These korbanot shall be offered on the Mizbei'ach, the blood sprinkled thereon, the meat (when permitted) to be eaten there.

Be careful to do all that G-d asks, so that things will be good for us and our children.

## Shlishi - Third Aliya 22 p'sukim - 12:29-13:19

[S> 12:29 (4)] Repeat warning: Do not get interested in the idolatrous practices of the nations whom we will replace in the Land, lest we too anger G-d and be punished by Him.

We shall do all that we are commanded, neither adding to [454, L313 13:1], nor diminishing from [455, L314 13:1] Torah & mitzvot.

**[P> 13:2 (5)]** If (when) there arises among us a prophet or dreamer - even one who performs miracles or signs to back up his words - who prophesies in the name of idolatry, it is forbidden to listen him **[456, L28 13:4]**. This is to be viewed as a test by G-d of our faith in Him. We must be true to G-d, follow Him, revere Him, keep His mitzvot, serve Him, and cling to Him. The above-mentioned false prophet shall be put to death for his attempts to turn us away from G-d. We thus uproot evil from our midst.

**[S> 13:7 (6)]** If any fellow Jew (even a close relative or beloved friend) tries to entice us to idolatry of any type (familiar, exotic, or foreign), we must show no love to such a person **[457, L17 13:9]**, nor overcome our hatred of him **[458, L18 13:9]**, nor rescue him from danger **[459, L19 13:9]**, nor speak on his behalf in court **[460, L20 13:9]** nor refrain from speaking against him **[461, L21 13:9]**.

The Torah must be very clear and strong in these commands, because it has become second-nature (ideally) for us to love our fellow, not hate him, and try to save him. But not in this case. These mitzvot stand in stark contrast to the mitzvot from K'doshim (and other places) which command love of fellow Jew, not to hate him, to save him from danger, etc. These mitzvot (from this week's sedra) underline the seriousness with which the Torah treats the enticer to idolatry. He is a cancer in our midst that must be removed.

But rather, the enticer shall be put to death by stoning (after trial and conviction), the accusing witnesses initiating the execution. And (it almost goes without saying that) it is forbidden to entice a fellow Jew to leave G-d and worship idols **[462, L16 13:12]**.

**[S> 13:13 (7)]** If we find out that an entire city is being enticed to idolatry, we must very carefully investigate the matter. This command is generalized to require thorough examination and questioning of witnesses in all types of cases **[463, A179 13:15]**. If the charges are substantiated, the population of the "city gone astray" is to be killed by sword, the possessions of the people are to be burned, and the city itself destroyed **[464, A186 13:17]**. The city may not ever be rebuilt **[465, L23 13:17]** (unless security considerations determine other wise). No one may benefit from anything from the city **[466, L24 13:18]** so as not to provoke G-d's anger. Proper fulfillment of these and other mitzvot will find favor in G-d's eyes.

## **R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya** **21 p'sukim - 14:1-21**

**[S> 14:1 (2)]** As "G-d's children", it is forbidden to gash oneself (for idolatrous purposes or to mourn the dead) **[467, L45 14:1]** nor tear out one's hair in grief **[468, L171 14:1]**.

[Mitzva [\[467\]](#) also prohibits factionalization of the community when it is detrimental to Jewish unity - two totally different mitzvot attributed to the same source.]

It is our destiny to be the chosen from among the nations of the earth.

[\[S> 14:3 \(6\)\]](#) It is forbidden to eat “any abomination”, defined here as the meat of a korban that had become “disqualified” [\[469, L140 14:3\]](#).

The Torah next lists 10 types of mammals that are kosher (3 domestic, 7 wild), and then gives signs to determine a kosher animal (split hoof, cud-chewing). This is followed by four examples of animals we may not eat.

NOTE that in Sh'mini, the first place where kosher and non-kosher animals are presented, only non-kosher animals are named.

The kosher domesticated animals are very familiar to us: Cow, Goat, Sheep. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan z"l identifies the 7 wild kosher animals (Chayot T'hortot) as gazelle, deer, antelope, ibex, chamois, bison (or wild ox, maybe water buffalo), giraffe. In his footnotes, he brings different opinions about the Hebrew terms for different animals. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, on the other hand, translates very few of the animals and birds mention in this parsha, and leaves all the rest in transliteration only. He defends his refusal to translate some of the animals because a mis-translation (which he considers very likely) can

result in someone eating non-kosher.

[\[S> 14:9 \(2\)\]](#) Fish with scales and fins are permitted to be eaten; that which has no scales (or fins) is forbidden to us. Scales (that are easily scraped off without damaging the skin of the fish) determine the kashrut of a fish.

[\[S> 14:11 \(11\)\]](#) We may eat kosher birds. We are therefore obligated to examine and determine the kosher status of a bird we would like to eat [\[470, A150 14:11\]](#) (The corresponding mitzvot for the other types of animals have been counted as mitzvot from Shmini.)

The Torah lists 21 types of birds that are forbidden.

(Don't confuse the term species with type. Torah types do not necessarily conform to modern taxonomy.)

The characteristics of kosher and non-kosher birds are NOT mentioned in the Torah (unlike those of mammals and fish). The Gemara gives us guidelines to distinguish between kosher and non-kosher birds. Practically speaking, neither the list nor the guidelines are what determine which birds we eat. MASORET (tradition) does. Basically, we do not trust ourselves to be able to properly identify the birds named in the Torah (modern Hebrew sometimes does not match Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew - this is one problem). If we have a tradition in our communities that a particular type of bird is kosher, then we will eat it. Otherwise we take the cautious position of SAFEK (doubt) and choose

to be strict with ourselves. A Masoret for some partridge and pheasant species have been recently confirmed. These birds now join chicken, duck, goose, (some pigeon and dove) on the kosher birds list. Note, however, that some of the 'new masorets' (it's not the oxymoron that it seems to be) have not yet been accepted by some kashrut organizations.

It is also forbidden to eat non-kosher locust and other winged insects [471, L175 14:19].

Even though we may eat meat, it is forbidden to eat of an animal that died other than by sh'chita. This is the prohibition of N'VEILA [472, L180 14:21]. Benefit may be derived from N'VEILA but not from milk-meat mixtures (when cooked together).

Although this third occurrence of BASAR B'CHALAV teaches the prohibition of benefit from cooked together meat-in-milk mixtures, it is not counted as a separate mitzva, but is included in the prohibition of eating M-in-M from Ki Tisa. We have three p'sukim that each teach a prohibition - cooking, eating, benefit - but in counting mitzvot, Meat-in-Milk is not counted as one mitzva or three, but as two of the 613 - one prohibition to cook meat and milk together, and one prohibition that forbids eating and/or deriving benefit from meat and milk that has been cooked together. (It is the third occurrence that "reminds" us of the teaching from the Oral Torah, that benefit is also forbidden - in contrast to most other forbidden foods that are

only forbidden to eat but one may derive other benefits from them. Hence the third pasuk.)

## Chamishi 5th Aliya 8 p'sukim - 14:22-29

[P> 14:22 (6)] (Approx. 2% of the yield of a crop is given to a Kohen as T'ruma. One tenth of the remainder is separated as Ma'aser to be given to a Levi.) One tenth of what is left is separated as Ma'aser Sheni [473, A128 14:22], which remains the possession of the owner but is sacred and must be brought to Yerushalayim and eaten (t)here in a state of ritual purity. If the amount of Ma'aser Sheni is great, a person is permitted to redeem the produce for fair market value plus a fifth (i.e. 1/4 is added, that amount becoming 1/5 of the total). If one redeems the Maaser Sheni of his neighbor, no one adds one fifth. The proceeds of the redemption are to be spent on food and drink in Yerushalayim. Again the Torah reminds us to care of the Levi, who has no property of his own. (Ma'aser Sheni applies in years 1, 2, 4, 5 of the Shmita cycle.)

[S> 14:28 (2)] In the 3rd (& 6th) year of a Shmita cycle, the second tithe is to be given to poor people [474, A130 14:28]. This generous act of tzedaka will be rewarded by G-d's blessings. (Note the ratio of years of Maaseir Sheni and Maaseir Oni. And the order.)

## Shishi - Sixth Aliya

### 18 p'sukim - 15:1-18

[S> 15:1 (6)] If Shmita year passes, repayment of personal loans may not be demanded [475, L230 15:1]. This rule applies when both lender and borrower are Jewish. Loans due from a non-Jew must be collected [476, A142 15:3], but it is a mitzva to cancel the personal debt of a fellow Jew following the Shmita year [477, A141 15:3]

(Again we see an example of a positive mitzva and a prohibition that say the same thing).

If the Jewish People follow the Torah and mitzvot properly, we will be blessed by not having poverty among us. We will also dominate among the nations of the world.

[S> 15:7 (5)] However, when we are confronted with poverty, we must not hold back generous support of those in need [478, L232 15:7]. Rather it is a great mitzva to give tzedaka and support those less fortunate than ourselves in a giving and dignified manner [479, A195 15:8]. Be especially careful not to withhold loans to the poor because the Shmita year is approaching [480, L231 15:9]; if the poor person cries out to G-d, He will hold you accountable for not helping. Be generous in areas of tzedaka and Chessed, thereby meriting blessing from G-d. Poverty

will be a "fact of life" under normal circumstances; give tzedaka freely.

Although a lender must void a debt after Shmita year passes (unless he has executed the PROZBUL document, by which he is considered to have turned over his debts to a Beit Din for collection, in which case Shmita does not terminate such loans), the borrower may/should - offer to repay the loan. The lender is obligated to tell the borrower that the loan has been canceled by Shmita, and the borrower is supposed to say that he would like to give the money back to the lender anyway (as a gift). The lender can accept the repayment in that case, and the borrower is considered to have acted in a proper Jewish manner. The borrower who "takes advantage" of the Shmita-voiding of a debt is considered to have behaved in an improper and un-Jewish manner.

[S> 15:12 (7)] If a Jew becomes an indentured servant to a fellow Jew, he shall work no more than six years and he shall be freed in the seventh. One must not send the freed EVED IVRI away empty-handed [481, L233 15:13] but rather he shall be given a generous allotment upon discharge [482, A196 15:14] (again, a double-sided mitzva). We are to remember that we were AVADIM in Egypt and that G-d redeemed us and expects us to be sensitive to those less fortunate than ourselves. If the EVED IVRI does not want to be released, his ear is ceremonially pierced and he remains in his master's service until

Yovel. Do not be stingy with the servant, for he has served you hard and long.

## Sh'VII Seventh Aliya 22 p'sukim - 15:19-16:17

[S> 15:19 (5)] Firstborns of cow, goat and sheep - if they are male - are sacred (if unblemished); they may neither be worked [483, L113 15:19] nor benefited from [484, L114 15:19], such as shearing the wool for personal use. They are to be given to a Kohen as one of his Torah-granted gifts (after 30 or 50 days of age, depending upon the type of animal). They are to be eaten by the kohen and his family after being brought as a korban - within a year, unless "unfit for the Altar", in which case they are the Kohen's property, to do with as he pleases.

[P> 16:1 (8)] Preserve the spring month and bring Korban Pesach. This is a reiteration of the mitzva to adjust the calendar when necessary, by adding a month - a second Adar - to keep Pesach in the spring.

Chametz is forbidden on Erev Pesach afternoon [485,L199 16:3]. This is a separate prohibition, and of a lesser status (based on comparing punishments for violation), to the prohibition of Chametz on Pesach itself.

The Chagiga cannot be left over beyond two days [486,L118 16:4]. KP cannot be brought on a private altar

[487,\* 16:5].

\* This mitzva is not on Rambam's list - the ONLY mitzva on the Chinuch's list that Rambam does not count. The other shoe drops in Haazinu.

[P> 16:9 (4)] Count seven weeks until Shavuot; this is the OTHER Omer mitzva (in addition to counting 49 days - it's why we count days & weeks). Next, a mention of Sukkot and then the command to rejoice on the Festivals [488, A54 16:14]. Appear in the Mikdash and bring korbanot on Chagim [489, A53 16:15]; do not appear there empty-handed [490, L156 16:16].

## Haftara 12 p'sukim Yeshayahu 54:11-55:5

One of the shortest haftarot

We have the hopeful message that G-d will take back the exile-afflicted people of Israel in great splendor. It is also a prophecy of a time when our enemies will not succeed against us. Spiritual thirst and hunger will be tended to and all will be good for us...

IF we will listen to G-d. There it is. The same deal as in the sedra. A deal repeated over and over again. A deal that is so simple, we should only be able to exercise our free will and keep our end of the covenant.

## **PROBING the PROPHETS**

**Yesterday's prophecies; today's headlines.**

Throughout the seven haftarot of consolation that follow Tish'a b'Av, the navi Yishayahu presents us with descriptions of the final redemption and return to our land. It is difficult for us who live through today's events to ignore the powerful parallels between the prophet's visions and today's realities. Predictions of a once-barren land that will generously give forth her fruit, of ruined cities that would be rebuilt and of empty streets that would be filled with sounds of rejoicing throngs are actualities that we now perceive each and every day.

**Yesterday's prophecies; today's headlines.**

However, the promise that we find in this week's haftara, a short selection taken from the 54th and 55th prakim of Sefer Yishayahu, is rather unique. The navi tells us: "V'chol banayich limudei Hashem," "All of your children will be students of Hashem." It is a nevu'a predicting that the geula will not only mean a physical return to the land, not only a repopulating of the land or an economic resurgence of the desert-like condition that possessed Eretz Yisrael for almost two-thousand years, but would include a spiritual return too, a rebirth marked not by the reinstatement of ritual Temple service alone but by a reawakening of Torah study. "Limudei Hashem" - "Students of Hashem", meant those who would be knowledgeable of G-d and His laws.

But the prophecy continues. This revival in Torah study would bring with it another blessing: "V'rav sh'lom banayich", "and there will be abundant peace to your children." Torah knowledge, an understanding of what Hashem expects of us, will bring us peace. True study of G-d's words should bring with it "ahavat chinam", a love of one another and a respectful unity that would prevail between all segments of Jewish society.

This prediction of Yishayahu has also come true in our time. But only partially. There has never been such widespread study of Torah in our history as we have now. There are more yeshivot, more Torah students, more Torah teachers, more Torah books and publications than ever before. "Ki mitziyon teitzei Torah", the words spoken by Yishayahu and echoed by the prophet Micha that Zion would be the source of Torah study, has been fulfilled in our day. But we still await "v'rav sh'lom banayich", that the study of Torah bring us the blessing of peace.

True scholars and students of our Holy Torah understand that it must be a tool for spreading peace and harmony, not controversy and discord. It is for this very reason that the navi explains why peace would reign during the Messianic era, saying (11;9): "Ki mal'ah ha'aretz de'ah et Hashem", the world will be filled with knowledge of G-d.

As we bask in the joy of "atchalta d'geula", the blossoming of our redemption we pray for the realization of all the prophecies of geula with the blessing of peace - both peace from surrounding enemies and peace within

**our people.**

*Probing the Prophets, weekly insights into the Haftara, is written by Rabbi Nachman (Neil) Winkler, author of Bringing the Prophets to Life (Gefen Publ.)*