

Introduction to Parsha #46: Ekev¹

READINGS: ***Torah Ekev:*** **Deuteronomy 7:12 – 11:25**
 Haftarah: **Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3**
 B'rit Chadasha: **Romans 8:31-39**



The Holy One your God, the great and awesome God, is very near to you.

[Deuteronomy 7:21(b)]

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is the Third Blessing, Kadosh [Holiness]

Vehayah ekev - It will come to pass, on the heels of ... ***tishme'un et-ha-mishpatim ha-eleh*** - you [corporately] turning your ear to, paying attention to, listening to, hearing, coming into alignment with, and living in harmony with these decrees of right/excellent living ... ***ushmartem va'asitem otam*** - and cherishing, treasuring, guarding them, and building, making, and implementing them in practical ways **Deuteronomy 7:12a.**

This week's parsha – the 46th of Torah's 54 subdivisions – is entitled *Ekev*². The *devarim* that Moshe releases in this parsha lay the foundation stones for everything the Holy One intends for us to co-labor with Him to bring forth on earth - the Kingdom-of-Heaven-Scented Society, the Nurturing, Potential-Enabling Infrastructure, and the Fruitful, Shalom-Filled Ecosystem.

How Do Kingdom-of-Heaven Impacted/Influenced People Influence/Impact the People, Culture, and Places in Which They Live?

The over-riding question that Moshe will be putting on the table this week will be: "What kind of footprint will you leave on the world?" If your answer to that

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² In Hebrew, *Ekev* is written עֶקֶב - i.e. ayin, qof, veit.

question is that you want to leave a footprint that causes everyone who enters your sphere of influence to experience a foretaste of Messianic Redemption, Moshe is ready to show you the way!

Moshe's Inspiring Vision Of Holy One's 'End-Game'

Ekev constitutes the second installment of Moshe's Discourse of Consolation – the end-game roadmap that will guide us into the High Holy Days. The prophet's allotted time on earth is running out quickly - but he is not going gently into that good night. He does not want to depart this planet without making sure that we understand both our calling and the responsibility that comes with it. He knows that if we are to be recognizable as the sons and daughters of the Covenant, we are going to have to embrace our King's Household's version of *noblesse oblige*. He knows that for the world to even know who we are – the Creator's *special-treasure people*, His *kingdom of priests*, and His *holy nation* - we are absolutely going to have to learn to think, speak, emote, behave, and react in ways that emulate the Holy and Glorious One with Whom we are in Covenant.

Moshe knows the world has slipped way too far down the wormhole for us to think we can redeem it with truisms, cliches, or creeds. He knows that pride-based movements of ethnicity, race, ideology, and nationalism always just make bad situations worse. He knows that there is no cure for this fallen world's ills in 'social justice' movements, revolutions, or holy wars. He knows that spouting platitudes, pronouncing moral judgments, repeating clichés, and rehearsing memorized Scriptures will never cut it in the Kingdom - and that not a single soul will be set free through such means. He knows that the part the Holy One has called us to play in the Covenant – though minimal in comparison to the part He Himself has promised to play - is still far too important to the Grand Redemptive Plan for Him to allow us to claim entitlement to the Covenantal promises without walking in the Covenantal ways He has choreographed. Moshe knows that if the world is to be blessed by the Great Passion Play that our Bridegroom-King has written for us, we are going to have to follow the script closely. Moshe knows that if we are going to leave an Avrahamic mark, we are going to have to leave footprints in the world's cities, seashores, and deserts that look a whole lot like those left in the world by Avraham. His story has to be our story. His wisdom has to be our wisdom. His God has to be our God. His ways have to be our ways. The depth and height and breadth of the footprint his life left on the earth has to be the depth and height and breadth of footprint our lives leave on the earth. If we, as successors to Avraham, are to be a blessing to every family on the face of the earth [Genesis 12:3], we are going to have to walk before the Holy One and be blameless [Genesis 17:1]. We are going to have to know and be known by the Holy One intimately. We are going to have to teach our children and our households to [a]

cherish/treasure/keep/guard the way of the Holy One, [b] build/make/do righteousness and justice [Genesis 18:19].

***All Creation Groans In Eager Expectation,
Longing for the People of the FOOTPRINT to Arise***

Often translated ‘*if/when*’, the name *Ekev* literally means (on the) “heel” or (in the) “footprint”. *Ekev* is first used in Genesis 3:15, in which the Holy One prophesied (to the Serpent) as follows: ***Hu y’shufeicha rosh*** – He [*i.e. Messiah, the seed of woman*] will crush your head³, ***v’ata teshufeinu akev*** – and you will strike His heel [*i.e. ayin, qof, veit*].” This week’s parsha cannot be properly understood outside the context of this Messianic prophecy. If you will bear with me I will explain why.

The secular world is talking a lot about ‘footprints’ these days. Panic-stricken, human-hating, sky-is-falling pseudo-environmentalists accuse every person except themselves and every business enterprise except theirs of leaving a ‘*carbon footprint*’ that threatens the planet. Information Technology specialists ascribe to each device or technology a ‘*technological footprint*’⁴. In the world of fragrance [colognes, perfumes, etc.], each fragrance has its own *olfactory footprint* – *i.e.* changes the sensory environment in a specific geographical area emanating from the one upon whom it is applied and affects the ambiance within that area in its own unique way. Of course, the idea of an *olfactory footprint* applies equally to odors not nearly as pleasant as perfume and cologne. And then there is the basic truth that wherever people go they leave behind unique footprints – sometimes visible, sometimes invisible - which provide evidence that not only someone was there, but that THEY were there.

Each person’s physical *footprint* is as unique as his *fingerprint*. So ... *what kind of footprint do you leave* in the places you visit? I am not talking about how large an impression your feet leave in the sand or snow – I am talking about *how significant an impression your presence and conversation and input and expenditure of creative energy leaves in the heart and minds of the men, women, and children within your sphere of influence*. Are you a *polluter* – or a *remediator*? Are you a *net taker of that which gives life* – or a *net contributor of that which gives life*? On *what frequency*, at *what amperage*, with *what tone* are you broadcasting? Are you leaving a *fragrance* – or an *odor*; a *gaping wound* – or a *soothing, healing balm*; a *reason to despair* – or a *reason to rejoice*?

³ Hebrew *rosh*, meaning head, either anatomically or in the sense of a leader, chief, king.

⁴ A device or technology’s ‘technological footprint’ can refer to either the specific functional “reach” of the device or technology or its geographical area of impact.

What It Looks Like to Leave His Mark On the World Instead of Our Own

In this week's parsha the "footprint" Moshe will be describing will be that of a people who will love the Divine Bridegroom with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their strength. This love will not be emotional or theoretical – but very, very practical. It will involve *sh'ma*-ing His Words, 'keeping' them [*i.e.* treasuring them, cherishing them, clinging to, and carefully guarding them to ensure their impact is felt in the world], *meditating* on them day and night, *teaching* them faithfully to their children, and *speaking of* them when they lie down and when they rise up, when they sit in their houses, and when they walk along the way. People who do such things – I call them *DEVARIM-PEOPLE* - are Divinely energized and empowered. They are not controlled by their emotions. They are not enslaved by nor by their appetites/urges/desires. They are not deceived by the swamp creatures that slither forth from the pseudo-intellectual cesspools common to man - *i.e.* philosophy, ideology, ethno-centricity, political theory, institutional religion, psychobabble, pseudo-science, pseudo-medicine, or pharmakeia - screaming incendiary slogans. They do not buy into false dichotomies. They are not swayed by popularly-trending social offenses. They do not cave into the latest wave of public outrage. They do not fret over evildoers. They do not form opinions. They do not pontificate about abstractions. They do not assign any credibility whatever to gossip, slander, libel or any biased, bribed, self-promoting, or hyper-emotional person or organization's comments on any subject. They do not rely upon human beings' opinions regarding 'news', 'virtue', 'worth', 'justice', 'injustice', 'equality', 'fairness', 'privilege', 'morality', or 'truth'. They calmly decline to rush to moral, ethical, or legal judgments on matters over which they have been given no authority by the Holy One to make binding, enforceable rulings. They do not grovel before people who insist on being either addressed by titles or considered as 'experts'. They do not bow before bullies. They do not worship at the altar of false gods like political correctness, patriotism, activism, or racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, or sexual preference-based 'pride'. They do not idolize abstract ideas, much less bow before athletes, entertainers, politicians, social-crusaders, or technocrats. They choose to draw their inspiration solely from the All-Wise, All-Good Creator of the Universe, and to take direction solely from His Torah, His prophets, and His sages. As they cling to the Holy One of Israel, they draw strength, energy, passion, and wisdom from His Words. As they walk in His Torah-defined Pathways day-in and day-out over the course of a lifetime, *DEVARIM-PEOPLE* cannot help but leave an unmistakable "footprint" – *i.e.* a very *noticeable* and *undeniable* evidence of impact - wherever they go.

Alas, there is always an enemy who wants to 'strike' the footprint of such a people. *Why*, you ask? It is because the "footprint" cast by such a people is the footprint of

a people *made in the image of Messiah* – the seed of woman. When the Holy One’s people – when you and I – passionately and joyfully walk out the details of Torah in the way the *Kryat Sh’ma* contemplates, our “footprint” becomes indistinguishable from the footprint of the Messiah. So the enemies of the Holy One – those who hate His Messiah – ‘strike’ at that footprint, seeking to obliterate it. The Holy One told us it would be this way – from the beginning, in Genesis 3:15. Every aspect of Torah submissiveness or observance is not only offensive to, but is very much a threat to, all those who have accepted the mindset of the Serpent. A short foray into this week’s parsha will reveal why this is so.

*It will happen, if/when/as/to the extent you
pay attention to/listen to/hear and respond to [Hebrew *sh'ma*] *these judgments,*
and cherish/treasure/guard and safe-keep [Hebrew *sh'mar*]
and in real ways and real time make/build/do/implement [Hebrew *asah*] *them,*
that the Holy One your God will
cherish/treasure/guard and safe-keep [Hebrew *sh'mar*] *with you*
the covenant [Hebrew *brit*]
and the Covenant-furthering favor and lovingkindness [Hebrew *chesed*]
*that he swore to your fathers.**

In this connection, as, when, and to the extent we at least attempt to fulfill our part of the Covenant bargain, Moshe says the Holy One will love you [i.e. have quality interactions with you, constantly pursue deeper and deeper relationship with you, and do you good and not harm]; and will bless you [i.e. release from limitations and restrictions]; and will multiply you [i.e. make much – and many – of you]. As, when, and to the extent we at least attempt to fulfill our part of the Covenant bargain, Moshe says, the Holy One will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, as well as your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land that He swore to your fathers to give you. That ‘be fruitful and multiply’ thing⁵, it seems, is still the Holy One’s plan for mankind as well as Creation.

Moshe goes on to say that as, when, and to the extent we at least attempt to fulfill our part of the Covenant bargain, we will be blessed above all peoples. He says *there will not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle*. Health wise, Moshe says that as, when, and to the extent we at least attempt to fulfill our part of the Covenant bargain, the Holy One will take away from us all sickness; and none of the evil diseases of Mitzrayim, which we have known, will He put on us. He will instead lay them on all those who hate and persecute us.

It is clear from these verses that no good thing is withheld by the Holy One from a certain kind of people. What kind of people, you ask? *Those who bear Messiah’s*

⁵ See Genesis 1:28, Genesis 9:1, 7, Genesis 28:3, and Genesis 35:11.

footprint – i.e. those whose lives prioritize walking out the Torah joyfully and enthusiastically, out of passionate love for, and in partnership with, the Holy One their God. People like Avraham Avinu; people who have proven, over a course of years, to be trusted friends of and loyal servants to the Most High; people who could care less about being rich – or accumulating personal fortunes or power – but who do everything they do for the love of their Covenant Partner in Heaven, and therefore joyfully use everything that comes into their possession to advance His Kingdom’s agenda; people who care for, and follow the Holy One’s instructions regarding all areas of life – and especially regarding caring about and providing for the physical needs of all the widows, for fatherless, the poor, the foreigners, and the Levites that He brings into their spheres of influence. All the goodness of the earth, in this world and in the World to Come, is made available to people like that. To those influenced by the lies of the Serpent, working through the flesh and the pseudo-intellect, the Holy One’s distribution of wealth presents a problem. Those who have adopted the mindset of the Serpent, and who have therefore yielded control of their thoughts and desires to the narcissistic bent of fallen human flesh and pseudo-intellect, *want the good things of this earth very, very badly*. They want the good things of earth so badly, in fact, that they simply *cannot stand for someone else to possess – much less enjoy - them*. Moreover, they find it incredulous that people actually exist who are not swayed by, and who therefore dare remain aloof from, the cultural *gods* they worship. For the Kena’ani of Moshe’s day, the ‘gods’ were primarily forces of nature. They had gods of fertility, gods of erotic sexual attraction, gods of wind and rain, gods of lightning, gods of the sea, and gods of hilltops and groves. With a little subliminal encouragement from the Serpent, the flesh, and the pseudo-intellect – and maybe a little too much of the preferred intoxicant of the day - they began to [a] *attribute superhuman personalities to these powerful forces*, [b] *form graven images patterned after whatever their human imaginations envisioned these superhuman personalities look like*, and [c] *and make up romantic legends about them and their interactions with humankind*. Once such legends got established as culturally-shared superstitions, they could be – and were – used by warlords to stoke fear, stir up hate, or generate fervor (whichever would most advance the warlord’s agenda). The warlords could then use these emotions and planted ideas to manipulate the unsuspecting people, take advantage of them, get rich off of their suggested ‘gifts and offerings’, pry their impressionable young children away from their families, and make them do whatever they wanted.

Whew – *what a mess*, huh? But wait ... we in the Western world today often find ourselves being manipulated by warlords as well. Who are the ‘warlords’ of our time and culture? The warlords of our time and culture are politicians, media personalities, celebrity ‘commentators’, Madison Avenue marketers, actors,

entertainers, athletes, cinematographers, and technology manipulators. What are the false gods that drive these ‘warlords’? they include:

1. The god of ‘success’, sometimes called ‘money, or ‘power’, or ‘influence’, or ‘self-worth’;
2. The god[s] of pleasure-seeking and thrill-seeking;
3. The god[s] of sexual experience, sexual preference, gender choice;
4. The god[s] of leisure, entertainment, ‘fun’, and sentimentality;
5. The gods of beauty, body art, and athleticism;
6. The god[s] of ethno-centricity and ethnic pride and/or prejudice;
7. The god[s] of ‘moral cause’, ‘morality shaming’, and ‘social justice’;
8. The god[s] of ‘nature’ – including, but not limited to, animalism, humanism, self-actualization, evolution theory, climate change theory, and radical environmentalism;
9. The god[s] of political theory – a few of the more prominent examples include socialism, capitalism, communism, democracy, republicanism, globalism and nationalism; and
10. The god[s] of pseudo-intellectualism, including but not limited to ‘knowledge’ for the sake of ‘knowledge’, education, sarcasm, cynicism, ideology, philosophy, and external forms of religion.

These and other false ‘gods’ are first created, then promoted zealously, by the diseased minds of fallen men. Alas, once such gods, and the legends men make up about them, get a foothold in a society, they are employed by demagogues as justification for declaring war upon the Holy One and His Covenant People, and to justify their radical, perverse departures from His Ways. Eventually the media and the body politic will conspire to rise up against the remnant of “footprint people” – because every pharaoh and *Fluhrer and president and sheik* who accepts the mindset of the Serpent rightly fears that the “heel” which cast the “footprint” will ultimately crush his/its head. Sooner or later, they *strike*. Anti-Semitism is not actually racism, you see – it is really just “footprint envy”. It is the mindset of the Serpent. It is the poison that cripples mankind and toxifies Creation.

Kilroy Was Here!

Almost everyone is familiar with the World War II slogan “*Kilroy was here.*” This slogan was painted by anonymous Americans on the walls of virtually every city in Europe through which General Patton’s army traveled on its way to Berlin. It was a declaration that the ‘*Yanks*’ [the American liberators] had been in the city and had set that city’s inhabitants free from Nazi oppression. No individual person named Kilroy was at all those places, of course. A bunch of average Joes from Sheboygan and Staten Island, Nashville and Norman, Santa Fe and Seattle and Sacramento and San Antonio, however, were. And wherever they went they *left a mark*. It was not *their* mark that they left. It was *Kilroy’s*. It was the mark of a *liberator*. It was

the mark of a *deliverer*.

Wherever we go, we should, like the American liberators of the WW II era, *leave a mark*. The mark we leave should not be “our” mark. It should be *the mark of our Deliverer*. The mark that we leave in the places we live, work, play, and travel should not, of course, be in the form of graffiti, painted on a wall. It should be, instead, in the form of a “*footprint*”, *left in the sand*. A footprint *the size and the shape of the Torah*, that is.

***Caution: The Next Phase of Your Journey is Through a Strait Gate,
Down a Narrow Road, Over a Very Narrow Bridge***

Torah’s instructions regarding memory are not *commandments* – they are *prophetic empowerments*. They are an essential part of having a ‘renewed mind’. They are *invitations* to structure our perception of the world, and view all events that occur in our lives, in the light of what the Holy One our God has done for us. These instructions from Moshe are thus open invitations to constantly look at life through *the lens of praise*, to constantly rejoice in our covenant relationship with the Almighty, and to constantly declare His wondrous works to the world!

It is, you see, essential to our identity as the people of the Holy One that we remember, and commemorate, the things/events that made us who we are.

Rabbi Yeshua of Natzret taught us that we must ***‘enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. But narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads to life, and there are few who find it’***. Matthew 7:13-14. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught that: a person’s life while in this world is like a journey across *‘a very narrow bridge – and the important thing is to never give in to fear*.

Gate. Journey. Road. Bridge. Our job is just to keep moving forward, in the footsteps of the Messiah – as He leads us in the beautiful choreography of the *mitzvot, mishpatim, and chukot* of Torah. The key to success in this venture we call ‘life on earth’ is simply to fear no one - and nothing - more than we love the Holy One and His Ways.

A Parsha Ekev Travelogue

In *Ekev* Moshe will call us to ascend to new and greater levels of both revelation and responsibility. He will call us to be people of the Footprint of the Messiah.

- I. **The Blessedness of a Nation Whose Promised to a People Who Will *Sh’ma* the Voice of, Because They Passionately Love, the Bridegroom of Heaven** [Deuteronomy 7:12-15]

V'hayah ekev tishmei'un et ha-mishpatim ha-eleh

And it will come to pass, on the heels of you sh'ma-ing these decrees of right living...

Moshe will kick off this week's revelation by describing in detail the amazing and transformative blessings that await us if, when, as, and to the extent we truly embrace the *sh'ma* lifestyle. Such a people will change the atmosphere and leave a distinctive mark of blessing in every place where the Holy One causes the sole of their feet to tread. As our steps are ordained by our Bridegroom-King, so is the depth and height and width of the footprint we are called to leave behind as we take those steps.

II. Our First Mission in the Land [Deuteronomy 7:16-24]

V'achalta et-kol-ha-amim asher Adonai Eloheicha noten lach ...

And displace all the peoples whom the Holy One our God delivers over to you ...

Moshe will then instruct us on the first mission we are to perform on behalf of our Bridegroom-King once we cross the Jordan and enter the Land of the Patriarchs. We are to join with the Holy One to purge the land of the people who are presently polluting it. He will be the Main Actor. Our job is to stay out of His way ... and to *hold the Light* while He does His Work.

The Holy One knows exactly what He is doing. If we let Him He will drive the toxic forces out of the land with *the bare minimum amount of bloodshed and loss of life possible*. He has it all perfectly planned, strategized, and mapped out you see - the way He planned to the last detail every step it would take to get us out of Egypt, to get us through the Sea of Reeds, to get us past the Amaleki to Mount Sinai, and to get us through the Wilderness to the Plains of Moav where we now stand. He knows – and will accomplish with stunning surgical precision – exactly what is necessary for the advancement of His Grand Plan of Redemption for mankind and Restoration for Creation. We have to remember, all we have to do is scrub up, get over our squeamishness, and assume the role of surgical assistants.

III. Purging Yisrael of Kena'ani Abominations [Deuteronomy 7:24-26]

Psilei eloheihem tisreifun ba'esh

Burn the images of their gods in fire ...

Moshe will then introduce us to a spiritual reality that will take us generations to fully grasp and appreciate – namely, the occult lure of ‘*idols*’ – *i.e. carved or formed images/objects of stone and metal* that men make with their own hands. He calls such things not ‘*silly idols*’ but *toebat* – *infectiously corrupting abominations*.

Why does the Holy One disapprove of symbols, icons, and graven, formed, and painted images so much? He knows that they are products of ‘*dark art*’. He knows how easily men are drawn to – and polluted by - them. He knows exactly how

craftily the Serpent uses these ‘graven image’ devices to convince people that God is a ‘thing’ or an ‘idea’ – instead of a pulsing, always moving, working, and Creating Life-Force with a vibrant, awe-inspiring Persona. He knows the Serpent loves to substitute the product of men’s fallen minds for the Holy One’s glory, and He knows how susceptible fallen man is to seduction by erotic images and shiny objects covered in precious metals or sculpted out of wood and stone. He knows that any and every reduction of Him to inanimate shape and form and physical substance will distract the minds and hearts of people from His Majesty, His Life-Force, and His Glorious Purposes for Mankind and Creation.

IV. Two Essential Lifestyle Elements: *Sh’mar-ing* and *Asah-ing*

[Deuteronomy 8:1]

Kol-ha-mitzvah asher anochi metzaveicha

Every instruction with which I instruct you ...

Next Moshe will reiterate two of the most essential lifestyle elements of those who wish to participate in the Divine Bridegroom’s Grand Redemptive Plan for Planet Earth. If we are to fulfill our purpose and destiny and mission we must not only implement the foundational lifestyle change of *sh’ma-ing* His Voice – we must also learn to passionately *sh’mar* [cherish, treasure, keep diligent watch over, and carefully guard] each one of the instructions for living He gives us.

Even *sh’ma-ing* His Voice and *sh’mar-ing* His life-instructions are, however, merely foundational steps. We are called to participate in a much larger process of Kingdom operations, following up our *sh’ma-ing* of His Voice and *sh’mar-ing* of His life-instructions by actually beginning to *asah* those instructions – *i.e.* to *actively implement those instructions for living in real time in obvious and concrete ways, so as to make the Wisdom of Heaven visible and manifest for all to see* - in the real world, in the course of dealing with real people, and in the face of real challenges.

V. The Purpose of the Wilderness Years Explained [Deuteronomy 8:2-5]

V’zacharta et-kol-ha-derech asher holicheicha Adonai Eloheicha

Remember/Commemorate every way in which the Holy One your God led you

Why did the Holy One lead us around the Wilderness? Why did He not save us all the heat, thirst, fear, drama, and dying of the last 40 years and just translate us directly from the land of Goshen into the land of the Patriarchs in the twinkling of an eye? Moshe tells us the Holy One had four very good reasons for taking us through the hot, dry Wilderness:

1. to humble us, lest we forget where we would be without Him;
2. to test us;
3. to let us prove what was in our heart, whether we will *sh’mar* His life-

- instructions or will despise and reject them; and
4. to teach us that man cannot truly live by eating bread alone, but must draw life from the Words that proceed from the Bridegroom-King's Mouth.

VI. A Further Lifestyle Exhortation: *Yalech & Yare* [Deuteronomy 8:6]

lalechet bidrachav uleyir'ah oto

Walk in his paths and revere Him

Moshe then expounds further upon the depth and breadth and height of the Holy One's calling upon our lives. In addition to *sh'ma*-ing the Bridegroom's Voice and *sh'mar*-ing and *asah*-ing His Life-Instructions, we are called both to consistently *walk in His Ways* and to *respect and reverence Him appropriately as the real and worthy Covenant Partner, Ever-Watchful Shepherd, Loving Bridegroom, Wise and Benevolent King, Gracious Master and Faithful Friend that He is.*

VII. How We Are to View the Land Of Israel [Deuteronomy 8:7-10]

Ki Adonai Eloheicha mevi'acha el-eretz tovah

For the Holy One your God is taking you to a land of goodness

The sin of the spies resulted in a negative report about the Land of Promise. Moshe does not want any residue of that negativity to remain in our hearts or minds. He therefore prophesies over us the attributes of the Land that will bind us to it forever. What does the prophet tell us about the Land of Avraham, of Yitzchak and of Ya'akov? He tells us that the land the Bridegroom-King has chosen as a Bridal Chamber for us and as the beachhead for establishing the Kingdom of Heaven upon the Earth is:

- [a] *eretz tovah* [a good land];
- [b] a land of plentiful water, full of brooks and fountains and springs;
- [c] a land that will produce seven abundant harvests each year, in sequence: harvests of *barley* and of *wheat*, of *figs* and *pomegranates* and of *vines*, of *olive oil* and of *honey* [from dates];
- [d] a land in which we will eat bread without scarcity, and lack nothing;
- [e] a land whose stones contain iron; and
- [f] a land out of whose hills we can dig copper.

Then Moshe goes even further and enjoins us that each time we eat of the fruit of this good land we pause after the last bite to bless the Holy One our God – and not merely for the food we have eaten, but *for the eretz tovah [good land] which He has given us.*

VIII. Yet Another Lifestyle Exhortation: *Lo Sh'kach/Zakor*

[Deuteronomy 8:10-21]

Hishamer lecha pen-tishkach – *Be diligent not to forget*

Moshe will then prophetically commission and empower us to be a people of excellent and accurate memory. We are to keep the Holy One, and the great things He has done for us, ever in the forefront of our minds. We will need this gift of enhanced memory if we are to handle blessing and prosperity better than we handled the rigors and harshness of Wilderness life.

Moshe warns us against allowing ourselves get comfortable or satisfied or complacent once we leave our Wilderness tents, move into paneled houses, and start taking a more active role in supporting ourselves in the land – as opposed to harvesting manna and drinking water from a rock.

One aspect of the prophetic gift of enhanced memory will have to do *with things we are to never supposed to forget*; another part of that gift will have to do with *things we are supposed to actively call to mind, celebrate, and commemorate*. And then Moshe tells us of the dire consequences that will flow into our lives and communities if we refuse to accept, nurture and flow in the gift of enhanced memory he has prophetically bestowed upon us. If we forget the Holy One our God, start to follow other gods, and serve and worship them, you see, Moshe makes it clear that we will be driven from the Land just like the Kena'ani and Emori are being driven off the Land.

IX. The Conquest of the Land Prophesied and Described

[Deuteronomy 9:1-6]

Sh'ma Yisra'el atah over hayom et-ha-Yarden

Sh'ma O Israel – today you are going to cross over the Jordan

Moshe will then prophesy exactly how it is that we will be able to dispossess nations larger and stronger and better armed than us. We will not suddenly become great military tacticians and mighty warriors. Instead what is going to happen is that the Holy One our God will go before us as a consuming fire. It is He, not us that will root out the Kena'ani, the Emori, and the others He is dispossessing of the Land. We are merely along for the ride - to serve as witnesses of His Mighty Work, and then to do double duty as His cleanup crew.

X. Past Sin-Scenarios Revisited One More Time [Deuteronomy 9:7 – 10:11]

Zechor al-tishkach et asher-hiktzafta et-Adonai Eloheicha

Remember, and do not forget, how you provoked Adonai your God

Moshe makes certain that neither we nor any generation think too highly of ourselves, see ourselves as better than other nations, or get the least bit haughty.

He first reminds us *from the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Holy One!* And then he ‘goes there’ in the worst way, reminding us the two absolute worst moments of our brief national history. I am, of course, talking about the ill-fated ‘golden calf’ experiment from the early days of Sinai and the sickening episode of the spies that took place at Kadesh-Barnea.

XI. The Prophetic Declaration of What It is The Bridegroom Wants From Us [Deuteronomy 10:12 – 11:9]

Mah Adonai Eloheicha sho'el me'imach

What does the Holy One your God require of you?

Moshe then tells us exactly what our Divine Bridegroom desires and expects - and of course deserves – from His Beloved Bride-People. He desires, expects, and deserves for us to:

1. reverence Him as our God;
2. walk in all His ways;
3. love Him,
4. serve the Him with all our heart and with all our soul,
5. *sh'mar* the commandments and ordinances He gives us;
6. circumcise the foreskin of our hearts,
7. be stiff-necked no longer;

Why does the Holy One deserve this from us as His Bride-People? Because He is none other than God of all gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe, who administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, providing him food and clothing. And most of all, He deserves this kind of Bride-People because He has consented to be *our God*, and has done great and awesome things for us which our eyes have seen. We *have* seen Him do great and awesome things, haven't we Beloved?

XII. The Relationship Between Our Level of Bridal-Responsiveness and the Amount of Rain He Sends from Heaven [Deuteronomy 11:10 –12]

Eretz harim uveka'ot limtar ha-shamayim tishteh-mayim

a land of hills and valleys, that drinks its water from that which falls from the heavens

Moshe then prophesies to us how we – and everyone else – will know if we begin to forget what we are told to remember, if we let our love grow for the Holy One grow lukewarm; if we cease to walk in our Bridegroom's ways; if we cease to *sh'mar* and *asah* His life-instructions, start going through the motions instead of serving Him with passion and energy; if we will not circumcise the foreskin of our hearts; and if we start getting stiff-necked again. We will know one or more of

these things has happened because *the rain will cease to fall*.

Any continuing deficiency in Bridal passion will bring a corresponding deficiency in rain – it is as simple as that. So if we look around and see no rain falling on the Land ... well, think of it as being sort of like the ‘check engine’ light coming on in an automobile. If that happens, it is a sure sign something has gone badly wrong in our love life.

XIII. The Summary Exhortation: *Sh'ma, Ahav & Sh'mar*

[Deuteronomy 11:13-25]

Vehayah im-shamoa tishme'u

And it will come to pass if you sh'ma very carefully ...

Moshe will then conclude the parsha of the footprint much as he began it. He will tell us once again how absolutely amazing our future will be if we will but [a] *sh'mar* the life instructions he is giving us, [b] teach them faithfully to our children, [c] build our lives upon those instructions; [d] talk about those instructions everywhere we go and whatever we are doing, [e] love the Holy One our God, [f] walk in all the Holy One's ways, and [g] hold fast to the Holy One.

If we will only do those things, Moshe prophesies, every place on which the sole of our feet tread will come under our influence, and no man or nation will be able to stand against us. That, Dear Reader, is quite a *footprint!*

The Bookend Passage At the End of the Parsha

The promise with which parsha *Ekev* opens is offset perfectly by the passages with which it closes. Here is the “bookend” passage:

If/when/as/to the extent you carefully safeguard and keep [Hebrew *sh'mar*]

this entire Mandate that I prescribe to you today,

[and if/when/as/to the extent you] ***love the Holy One,***

walk in all His ways, and cling to Him,

then the Holy One will drive out all these nations before you.

You will expel nations that are greater and stronger than you are.

Every area upon which your feet tread shall belong to you.

The Holy One Elohim will place the fear and dread of you
upon the entire area you tread, just as He promised you.

[Deuteronomy 11:24-25]

A Quick Look at Haftarah Ekev

Isaiah: 49:14 – 51:3

Ha-tishkach ishah ulah merachem ben-bitnah – can a woman forget her nursing child
... ***gam-eleh tishkachnah v'anochi lo eshkachech*** – even if she could forget him, I will

not forget you ... ***Hen al-kapayim chakotich*** – Behold, I have inscribed you on My Palms!
Isaiah 49:15-16a.

This week is the second of seven ‘*Sabbaths of Consolation*’ that follow on the heels of *Tisha B’Av*. During these 7 weeks the *haftarot* all focus on the redemption and restoration of Israel. Haftarah Ekev runs from the fourteenth verse of chapter 49 of Yeshayahu through the third verse of chapter 51. Yeshayahu, identified in Scripture only as the ‘*son of Amoz*’, is believed to have been of royal blood, a nephew of King Amaziah of Y’hudah. Yeshayahu began to receive visions from the Holy One “*concerning Y’hudah and Y’rushalayim*” in approximately 760 BCE, when Uzziah was king of the Southern Kingdom [Y’hudah], about the time the Northern Kingdom was destroyed and its people taken into captivity by Assyria. He continued to be utilized by the Holy One to speak His words for 50 years, through the reigns of Uzziah, *Yotam* [Jotham], Ahaz, and Hezekiah.

The Holy One continued sending messages through Yeshayahu until he was, according to legend, martyred by being sawn in half. The well-rehearsed legend is that Yeshayahu hid in a hollow tree to escape one of Y’hudah’s most depraved and idolatrous monarchs, Manasseh⁶. Knowing he was hiding in the tree the king’s soldiers sawed the tree down, sawing Yeshayahu asunder with it. But Manasseh’s saw blade could not still Yeshayahu’s prophetic voice. His powerful prophecies of redemptive judgment followed by glorious restoration are recorded, and live on. They are as powerful as ever, perhaps more than ever, as the time of their fulfillment draws nigh.

The prophecies we will study this week begin with Tziyon’s plaintive cry in the days after the devastation of Y’rushalayim at the hands of the nations:

Vatomer Tziyon azavani Adonai

But Zion said: 'the Holy One has forsaken me;

v'Adonai sh'chechani

the Holy One has forgotten me.'

Yeshayahu gives the Holy One’s poignant and beautiful response to this cry. In this response we begin to see the depth of the covenant commitment the Holy One has made to the people the world calls “Jews”. Here is how the Holy One opens His response:

Ha-tish’kach ishah ulah m’rachem ben-bitnah

Can a woman forget⁷ her nursing child, or not love the son of her womb?

⁶ Manasseh reigned from 698 to 642 BCE.

⁷ The Hebrew verb employed is *shakach*, *shin*, *kaf*, *chet*, Strong’s Hebrew word #7911, meaning more than just to put out of mind. It really means to *cease to care about or even consider important*. The first Biblical usage is in Genesis 27:45.

gam-eleh tish'kachnah

perhaps she could forget;

v'anochi lo eshkachech

but I will not forget you.

Hen al-kapayim chakotich

Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands;

chomotayich negedi tamid

your walls⁸ are continually before Me.

The Holy One has not forgotten His Betrothal. He has not ceased to care what happens to Tziyon or Israel. He has engraved us on the palm of His Hand. Our prophetic destiny is ever before Him, and is His constant focus. *All things, all events, work toward that destiny.*

Our Bridegroom-King is, above all else, a *covenant-keeping* God. And His covenant with us is for *good*, and not for *harm*.

Corresponding Messages from the Apostolic Scriptures

Romans 8:31-39

We will complement our study of *Ekev* and the second haftarah of consolation with some of the most eloquent and passionate declarations of the apostolic writings. From the eighth chapter of Shaul of Tarsus' letter to Messiah's talmidim in Rome, Shaul will ask – and will answer for us in fiery prophetic prose - a series of *six rhetorical questions* designed to drive home to us the same point made by Yeshayahu. Here are six questions Shaul addresses to each of us:

Question No. 1:

If the Holy One is for us who can be against us?

Question No. 2:

He who didn't spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how would he not also with him freely give us all things?

Question No. 3:

Who could bring a charge against the Holy One's elect?

Question No. 4:

Who is he who condemns?

⁸ The Hebrew word English Bibles translate as 'walls' is the plural form of *chowmah, chet, vav, mem, hey*, Strong's Hebrew word #2346, pronounced *kho-maw'*. The first usage of this noun is to describe the miraculous gathering of the waters of the Sea of Reeds, which formed a 'wall' of water to our right and left. **Exodus 14:22**. The verb root is never used in Scripture, but apparently means *morticed, mortared*, or joined together [as stones are joined together in a wall by being sorted, fitted and morticed or mortared]. What is ever before the Holy One is more than just walls of stone therefore – it is the regathering, reunification, and rebuilding of Tziyon. Every atrocity permitted against *Tziyon* is permitted with an eye toward the future regathering, reunification and rebuilding the Holy One has planned from the beginning.

Question No. 5:

Who shall separate us from the love of Messiah?

Question No. 6:

*Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution, or famine,
or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

Shaul's answer to these six questions is a message of consolation for us who experience these things:

*I am persuaded, that neither **death**, nor **life**,
nor **angels**, nor **principalities**,
nor **things present**, nor **things to come**,
nor **powers**, nor **height**, nor **depth**, nor **any other created thing**,
will be able to separate us from the love of the Holy One,
which is in Messiah Yeshua our Lord.*

Take confidence. When those who have the mindset of the Serpent strike – as they surely will – they run headlong into an *unstoppable force*. Oh, I do not mean *us*. *We* are most definitely not an unstoppable force. In fact, our physical bodies – or even our armies - have seldom been able to withstand the force of the Serpent's blow. But when they strike at our footprint what they run into headlong is not us – it is *the power of the covenant love of the God of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov*. His love is *a terrifying love*. His love is *a jealous love*. His love is *a head-crushing love*.

*May your foot tread far and wide, this week and all of your life.
And may you live to see Israel regathered, Tziyon rebuilt, Y'rushalayim re-established,
and Shaul's prophetic declaration proven true in your life
and in the lives of all Avraham's descendants.*

The Rabbi's son

Amidah Prayer Focus for the Week

K'dosh - The Prayer of His Holiness

Atah K'dosh

You are Holy

v'shemeicha k'dosh

and Your Name is Holy

u'k'doshim b'chol yom y'hal'leicha selah

Seekers and holy ones join in the worship of You this day and every day

Baruch Atah Adonai, ha-El ha-k'dosh

Blessed are You, O Holy One, for You are a holy God