
THE TANACH STUDY CENTER www.tanach.org
In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag
Questions for self study - by Menachem Leibtag

PARSHAT EKEV

PART I - QUESTIONS FOR THE 'SHABBOS TABLE'

DIVINE CHOICE [OR DESTINY]

1. Let say someone asked you: Why did God choose Am Yisrael?
How would you answer this question?

To the best of your recollection, where (if anywhere) does Chumash discuss this question?

Next, review Devarim 7:1-11, noting especially 7:6-9. Relate these psukim to your answer to the above question.

In what manner do these psukim relate to the theme of Sefer Breishit? Be sure that you can explain the meaning of words "ha'shavuah" in 7:8, and "brit" 7:9.

2. Review once again 7:6, noting how this pasuk relates to the opening psukim of Matan Torah in Shmot 19:3-6, i.e. where God proposes a covenant to the people of Israel!

Based on that proposal, and your answer to the above question, attempt to explain the connection between "brit avot" [God's covenant with the forefathers] and "brit Sinai".

In your answer, relate to Breishit 12:1-3 AND its thematic connection with Breishit 18:17-19.

3. Next, review Devarim 4:5-8. In your opinion, do these psukim contradict the theme in chapter 7, modify them, or complement them?

4. Finally, compare 7:6-9 with Devarim 9:4-7. In what manner might these psukim cause you to modify your answer to the above questions?

Based on the context of chapter 9 (i.e. the story of chet ha'egel), can you explain why these psukim present a more 'negative' perspective of God's relationship with Am Yisrael?

How does it explain why Am Yisrael remains God's 'chosen nation', even though they may sin.

BETWEEN MISHPATIM & EKEV

5. Review Shmot 23:20-33, noting its content and how these commandments (and promises) were first given to Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai, immediately after the Ten Commandments (and before the events of "chet ha'egel"). Then, carefully review Devarim chapter seven, noting the numerous parallels (both textual & thematic).

Can you suggest a reason for these parallels? Relate to WHEN these mitzvot that Moshe teaches Bnei Yisrael were first given to him (see Devarim 5:20-28). Relate as well to when Bnei Yisrael were originally supposed to enter the land of Israel.

Based on this parallel, attempt to explain the logic behind the progression of topics in Devarim chapters seven and eight.

MIDOT HA'RACHAMIM (A FLASHBACK)

1. Carefully review 9:25-29. In your opinion, is this simply a review of Moshe's request that God invoke His "midot ha'rachamim" after the incident of "chet ha'egel" [the Golden Calf], or can you identify a theme from "chet ha'meraglim" as well? Support your answer by comparing these psukim with Shmot chapter 34:1-9 AND with Bamidbar 14:11-25.

Based on the context of chapter 9, can you explain why these psukim may relate to both of these incidents? In your answer, relate to how 9:6-7 introduces a topic that is 'closed' by 9:24, and only afterward we find the "midot ha'rachamim" in 9:25.

2. Did God invoke His "midot ha'rachamim" only after chet ha'egel or after other incidents in the Bible as well? Would it be safe to

assume that there may additional times when God may need to invoke His attributes of mercy once Bnei Yisrael enter the land? If so, can suggest when this would be necessary?

[Relate this to the main theme of the prayer that we add to "tachnun" on Mondays & Thurs. - i.e. the "v'hu rachum..." addition. As you review that lengthy "tefilla", note how often it relates to this theme of "midat ha'rachamim" - and the reason why God should grant it.]

A NEW GENERATION / OLD LAWS

1. As you read through chapter seven in Parshat Ekev, note how it seems as though Moshe is speaking to the first generation (that went out of Egypt), and not to the second generation. [Bring examples, note especially 7:15,18-19 & 11:10.]

Then, review chapter eight, noting that Moshe is clearly speaking here specifically to the second generation (in the fortieth year). [Note 8:1-2, and its context.]

Can you explain why?

Relate your answer to the topics discussed in our introductory shiur to Sefer Devarim; i.e. the structure of main speech (chapters 5->26) and the story in chapter 5 that describes when and how these mitzvot were first given to Moshe Rabeinu forty years earlier at Har Sinai.

Be sure that you can differentiate between the mitzvot that Moshe is teaching during his speech and his rebuke of the nation at this time.

PART II - QUESTIONS FOR PREPARATION (for weekly shiur)
[re: the theme of "matar" in Chumash]

1. Review Devarim 10:12 thru 11:21, noting that this unit contains three 'parshiot'. Even though 11:10-12 forms a distinct parshia, explain how (and why) it relates thematically to the 'parshia' that precedes it (i.e. 10:12 ->11:9).

[Note as well how 11:10-12 can also be considered a continuation for the end of chapter 7!]

As you study 11:10-12, note how it forms the background for the parshia that follows (i.e. 10:13-19)! Be sure that you can explain why. [Note how this explains what we say every day in the second parshia of Kriyat Shema!]

If indeed all of these parshiot are connected, what would be the general topic that is common to all of them? [Relate to the opening pasuk of this unit!]

How can this help us understand the importance of the climate in the Land of Israel (and its 'spiritual' nature)?

2. How do these three parshiot relate to the overall theme of the MITZVAH section of the main speech of Sefer Devarim?

How to they relate to the fact that the main speech (and especially the "mitzvah" section /chapters 6->11) presents a set of laws that apply to Bnei Yisrael's forthcoming conquest of the Land?

How to these parshiot explain how living in the land of Israel may create 'additional opportunities' for "yirat Hashem" - the fear of God?

3. Return now to 11:10-12. Based on these psukim, would you say that the Land of Israel is 'better' or 'worse' than the land of Egypt?

If you have time, see Rashi, Ramban, Rashbam, and Ibn Ezra in regard to this question.

Note how (and why) each "parshan" offers a different explanation. In your opinion, is it necessary to say that they argue with each other, or does each commentator relate to a different perspective of this topic?

4. Next, review Breishit 13:1-18, especially 13:8-13. Can you explain why Lot preferred the area (and climate) of the Jordan Valley to the hilly land (of Bet-el and Hebron) where Avraham Avinu dwelled? Where country had Lot been beforehand (i.e. at the end of chapter 12), and how might that relate to his choice.

Can you relate the natures of Lot's preference to our above discussion of Devarim 11:10-12?

5. Review once again Breishit 13:5-13. When Avraham offered Lot to go either to the 'right' or to the 'left', in your opinion was his intention east & west; or north & south?

[See tirgum Unkelos!]

What direction is the Jordan Valley in relation to where Avraham and Lot are standing (note from the beginning of chapter 13 that they are in Bet-el)?

Based on these considerations, does Lot choose one of the 'options' that Avraham gave him, or does he choose something else?

If so, where would have Avraham gone had Lot chosen the other option?

6. See Breishit 2:4-5, and Rashi on 2:5. How does the Midrash that Rashi quotes to explain this pasuk relate to your answers to the above questions? Relate also to Rashi on Breishit 13:11 ["va'yisa Lot m'KEDEM"]. What leads Rashi to this conclusion?

Relate as well to the Torah's use of the word "kedem" in Breishit 3:24 & 11:2.

7. Note the punishment that Sedom receives in Breishit 19:24. Why are they punished and how?

Attempt to explain the Torah's use of the verb "himtir..." in this regard.

In your answer, relate (once again) to a thematic connection based on Breishit 18:17-19.

[Note Yechezkel 16:48-49 and its thematic connection!]

8. Return to 11:12, noting the phrases "reishit ha'shana" and "acharit shana". What time [or season] of the year to these two phrases refer to? [What type of 'calendar' does this pasuk relate to?

How does this relate to the topic of "matar" in 11:10-11?

How would this relate to the name "rosh ha'shana" that is given to the holiday that begins on the first day of the 'seventh month'?

9. Return again to 11:12. How did you translate the phrase "einei Hashem"? Does God have 'eyes'? If not, why is this word being used to describe God's providence over the rain in Israel?

What is the Hebrew word for a 'spring'?

What is the Hebrew word for an 'eye'?

Are they word related?

What the relationship between the 'human eye' and a 'spring of water'?

Relate this to a deeper understanding of 11:12.

[How does the answer to this question relate to the controversy concerning WHEN the mitzvah to the build the Mishkan was first given, before or after chet ha'egel?]

2. First see Rashi on 10:1. How does he answer the above question? What other questions does Rashi answer in his commentary to this pasuk? Can you explain why?

3. Next see Ibn Ezra. Is the first "pirush" that he quotes identical to Rashi's?

In what manner does Ibn Ezra argue with Rashi? Can you explain why? [In what manner does he agree?]

[Note how he introduces this disagreement ("their opinion is WIDER than ours..."). Can you explain what Ibn Ezra is referring to?]

How does Ibn Ezra explain 10:3? Why?

Note how he concludes his commentary to 10:3.

What does "v'hakabblah tnazeach" imply?

[Why is this statement important towards appreciating Ibn Ezra's approach to "Parshanut"?]

4. What is problematic with the opinion that there were two ARONOT [holy arks]? What problems are solved if we insist that two indeed existed?

5. Next, see Ramban. Note how he clearly argues with Rashi. Note how he first present his own interpretation, then quotes Rashi, and then explains WHY he disagrees and bases his approach on a different opinion in Mesechet Shekalim.

What can we infer from this in regard to Ramban's overall approach to "parshanut" and his attitude in regard to interpretations suggested by Rashi?

6. Finally, note how Ramban raises the possibility that this may actually be the same ARON that Betzalel made. Make sure that you follow his reasoning, and how it relates to the centrality of the Mishkan in Ramban's famous commentary to Shmot 25:1.

7. For an amazing insight, see also Chizkuni to 10:2. Note his explanation for why God commanded Moshe to take an ARON with him specifically for the SECOND Luchot, based on what happened to the FIRST Luchot! [Ingenious?]

b'hatzlacha,
menachem

PART III - PARSHANUT

WHERE DID AHARON DIE?

1. Review Devarim 10:6-7. How do these psukim relate to the psukim beforehand (10:1-5) and afterward (10:8-11)?

Compare this 'travel account' with Bamidbar 33:30-38.

Can you explain the apparent contradictions?

Can you explain what these psukim are doing here?

First see Rashi, how does he solve this problem?

Then see Ramban. Does he argue with Rashi?

If so, on what point?

How is Ramban's commentary fundamentally different?

Next, see Rashbam. How does he solve the juxtaposition problem? Does he 'solve' the same problems that Rashi and Ramban deal with? If so, in the same way or a different manner?

Then, see Ibn Ezra, Chizkuni & Seforno. Answer the same question (above for Rashbam) for each of these parshanim.

ONE 'ARON' or TWO?

1. Read 10:1-5. In your opinion, is the ARON that is described in these psukim the same ARON of the Mishkan (that held the Luchot/ i.e. the ARON described in Shmot 25:10-22)?