

37 – Ekev – Outline

Ekev Summary

- great blessings God will shower upon the people if they keep the commandments
- when they get into the Land, they will need to be careful that they don't forget God and walk away from the covenant and, themselves, suffer destruction
 - they should remember that what God has done that they've seen with their own eyes
 - they should remember their big missteps
- second paragraph of the Shema: "If you will indeed obey my commandments..."

Placing Ekev: The Shift

- Devarim began with a review of Israel's history; it carries some rebuke
- 9th of Av
- Va'Etchanan – a shift begins
 - the title, "And I pleaded," seems rooted in the striving of the 3 Weeks
 - but the content is moving toward the normal life in the Land
 - includes the 10 commandments and the Shema
- Ekev – the shift becomes obvious
 - first word "v'haya," "And it will be..."
 - the Sages say that when a parsha or section of text begins with "v'haya," it's the language of joy, and when a parsha or section begins with "vayehi," "And it was," it's the language of trouble
 - both the parsha and the 2nd paragraph of the Shema begin with "v'haya"
 - R'Trugman: Ki Tavo, coming soon, also begins with "v'haya," and what connects them all together is an emphasis on the Land of Israel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyLtyLOAKXc> 1m)
(https://www.chabadwestside.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/4501122/jewish/Ki-Tavo-2019.htm)
 - a focus on the Land is a focus on the second half of the salvation pattern, the half of maturity, including the goal stages of salvation
 - "Ekev" = "because," "if," "heel"
 - "And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:12)
 - root idea seems to be: "in the end," "when it's all said and done"
 - the title, then, can also be seen as alluding to the end stages
 - the Torah is telling us that it's time now to begin preparing for the 7th month, the month that marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood

The Shift and Tu B'Av

- the energy of Av switches quickly from the heaviness of strict discipline – the heavy hand of the Father, the Lion that destroys His own Temples on the 9th of Av – to the lightness of Tu B'Av on the 15th
 - even on the 9th of Av, the ruins of the Temple push us toward looking toward the Messiah
- Tu B'Av is particularly rich with associations that speak to the “turn”
 - almost considered the ending compliment to the 9th of Av, opposite energy
 - Tu B'Av, largely forgotten for centuries, connects to both the 9th and the 7th month, especially Yom Kippur
 - to keep in mind the actual complement in the calendar, six months opposite, Tu B'Sh'vat, the 15 of Shevat, the “New Year for Trees”
 - it is said the sap begins to rise in the trees on this day
 - invisible inward movement as life begins to rise again
 - Tu B'Av is the “official” day to start looking toward the new year
 - R'Raskin (https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1916449/jewish/What-Does-G-d-Demand-of-Us.htm 10:40m)
 - the verse in this week's portion that says God's eyes are on the Land from THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR to the end of the year is a marker for us to start looking to Rosh Hashanah
 - in two weeks, as Elul starts, the synagogues will begin blowing the shofar every day, again looking ahead to Rosh Hashanah
 - starting on the 15th of Av, we can start using new year's greetings
 - historical basics of Tu B'Av
 - anciently called one of the two most joyous days in the whole year, along with Yom Kippur
 - these were anciently the two greatest days in the calendar for matchmaking, when the girls would go out in borrowed white dresses to dance in the vineyards and streets and invite the young men to choose a bride
 - evidence of the energy of unity vs. the energy of separation at Tisha B'Av
 - other historical associations
 - Dr. Hollisa Alewine: Tu B'Av is a day for rectification and reconciliation (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kpE7QBDzs> 1h15m)
 - the ban on intermarrying with the tribe of Benjamin was lifted (story in Judges of a civil war in which it was forbidden to intermarry with the tribe of Benjamin)
 - the king of the Northern Kingdom lifted the ban on making pilgrimage to Jerusalem
 - the final day for cutting the firewood for the Temple for the upcoming year

- the start of the grape harvest – a time when many come together in a unified way to accomplish the harvest quickly
- King Solomon associated with Tu B’Av
 - the Mishnah sites a verse in Song of Songs in regards to what the young maidens are told: “Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon,” and it mentions the crown Solomon’s mother gave him on his wedding day (Song of Solomon 3:11)
 - remember that the 7th month is all about a wedding to a King
 - Rosh Hashanah: the coming of the King is announced
 - Yom Kippur: the King covers His bride
 - Sukkot: the King comes to finalize the marriage in the intimacy of the sukkah
 - the kings we associate especially with this part of the calendar are King David and King Solomon
 - “Shlomo” from the same root as “shalom,” peace, wholeness, complementary halves coming together in echad
 - the maidens are being told to go out and look for their shalom
 - King Solomon known for his many marriages
 - many of them for political purposes to bring surrounding nations into a working relationship under Israel’s control
 - Israel becomes the groom to these surrounding nations that are supporting Israel
 - King Solomon is the builder of the Temple
 - the counter to the 9th of Av destruction of the Temples
 - King Solomon finished the Temple in the 8th month but waited until the 7th month of the next year to dedicate it
 - King Solomon’s reign was marked by peace
 - Dr. Alewine: the Rabbis say that shalom among brothers is a prerequisite to the rebuilding of the Temple (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kpE7QBDzs> 1h15m)
 - he had peace during his rule (the peace that followed the reign of the warrior king, King David), the peace environment God required for the building of His Temple
- Tu B’Av is the “little turn”
 - the “big turn” in the year is Rosh Hashanah, when the night begins to dominate the day for 6 months (fall equinox)
 - Exodus 34:22, the season of the year that includes Sukkot is called “tekufat hashanah,” THE turn of the year
 - Tu B’Av does, however, mark a climactic turn, the peak of heat in the year; we are now on the cooling side of the year
 - the “little turn” telling us to prepare for the big turn

Ekev's Emphasis: Staying Humble When We are Blessed

- one connection to “the turn toward the healing to come” here in Eikev is the emphasis on the Land
- the main connection: “When God prospers you and gives you rest in the Good Land, DON'T BECOME PROUD, or you will fall.”
 - getting to the goal is the REAL place of danger
 - we forget how we got there; we start to think we got there on our own strength
 - falling only hurts when you start from a high place
 - in Ekev, God is TAKING THEM DOWN A NOTCH, and Moses, the most humble of all men, is TEACHING THEM HOW TO TAKE *THEMSELVES* DOWN A NOTCH: “Remember this! Don't forget that!”
 - humbling ourselves is a learned skill, the skill of seeing ourselves in the fullness of truth
 - we must be humbled before God does a work of grace through His Son
 - we can either work with Him and receive few lashes or work against Him and receive many lashes
 - this humbling is built into every step of growth in the calendar
- texts where Moses is humbling Israel in Ekev
 - “And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might HUMBLE you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He HUMBLED you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deuteronomy 8:2-3)
 - “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’” (Deuteronomy 8:17)
 - “Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ Know therefore today that He Who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the LORD your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you. Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you. Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that He may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 9:1-5)
 - you truly are puny compared to these people

- it is God Who goes over before you to undermine them
- you will succeed not because of your righteousness but because:
 - the Canaanites are so wicked
 - God made promises to your forefathers
- Moses goes on to remind them of their failings, including:
 - the golden calf
 - their provocations at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah
 - the rebellion of the evil report of the spies
 - the rebellion of Korah
 - “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer” (Deu 10:16)
- “[The LORD] is your praise. He is your God, Who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.” (Deuteronomy 10:21-22)
 - you have very humble origins

Parsha Ekev: Toward Humbling Ourselves

- Lessons from Ekev in humbling ourselves
 - seek out and listen carefully to the words and advice of our spiritual authorities
 - Moses is the spiritual authority here, and the people are listening
 - remember that any goodness and blessing in your life comes from God and is not the work of your own hands
 - He wants to give us everything good, when we are ready for it
 - remember that it is God Who reached down to us first, not the other way around
 - God took Abram and Sarai out of Ur
 - remember that we stand on the shoulders of the generations that have come before us
 - understand that if we are giving fear a footing in our lives, that fear is rooted in pride
 - a fearful person thinks they have control; fear is the emotional response to the idea that they will lose control
 - R’Alon Anava story about fear and a mezuzah (mentioned in this Torah portion – writing the commandments on the doorposts):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1WRjOrdobl> 18:45m
 - accept that no matter who you are or how strong you think you are in the Lord, your faith IS going to be tested in that place of plenty
 - the Land is a place that requires walking IN FAITH, for EVERYONE, if they want to eat
 - “For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are

always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year” (Deuteronomy 11:10-12)

- remember your failings
 - this generation’s vivid memories of God’s punishments in the wilderness are a great gift to them – they stay faithful to the covenant
- be careful to rid your life of arrogant people because pride is infectious
 - Moses: take no mercy on the inhabitants of Canaan
 - idolaters are prideful to think that they can manipulate the universe- really a form of self-worship
- by keeping God’s instructions always on our minds and lips, we will be humbled
 - putting ourselves in the position of the student who will fail if he or she is not always be learning, the reviewer who must always be reviewing, the hungry soul who daily needs spiritual food:
 - “impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be tefillin between your yes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down, and when you rise up...” (11:18-21)
- when God blesses us, we thank Him
 - “hodaah” means “to thank” but also “to admit” or “to submit”
 - when we thank someone, we are admitting that we were in the lower position to receive, the one who did not have
 - “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you” (8:10)

Yeshua

- we need to always keep in mind that the Groom and the King are the same Person, the Messiah Yeshua; further, the King has two sides: the warrior king followed by the king who rules in peace (King David followed by King Solomon)
 - Yeshua the Groom:
 - “Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (Revelation 19:7-8)
 - in the gospels: His disciples don’t fast like the Pharisees because one does not fast when the GROOM is with them
 - Yeshua the Warrior King
 - “They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings...” (Revelation 17:14)
 - the Rider on the white horse who makes war, and on His head are many crowns (Revelation 19)
 - Yeshua the King of Peace
 - He calls Himself the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8)
 - He is called the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)

37 – Ekev – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and the Spiritual Seasons series. In these teachings, we are studying the weekly Torah portions through the lens of the overall spiritual seasons of the year and God’s pattern of salvation. This week we are in parsha Ekev, from the middle of Deuteronomy chapter 7 to near the end of chapter 11.

Ekev Summary

The portion begins with the great blessings God will shower upon the people if they keep the commandments. And Moses says here that with God crossing over ahead of them to undermine their enemies, they will successfully take down the giants in the Land and destroy the Canaanites there. In these chapters, Moses also says that when they get into the Land, they will need to be careful that they don’t forget God and walk away from the covenant and, themselves, suffer destruction. They should remember what God has done for them that they saw with their own eyes, from Egypt all through the wilderness. And they should remember some of their big missteps, like the golden calf and the evil report of the 10 spies and Korah’s rebellion. He tells them that God is going to bring them in and help them to conquer not because of their righteousness but because of the great evil of the Canaanites and because of the promises He gave to the patriarchs. A notable section at the end of the portion is the second paragraph of the Shema, which begins, “If you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God...” and it goes on to describe the great blessings of harvests in their seasons.

Placing Ekev: The Shift

Let’s turn our attentions to placing Ekev in the flow of the portions and the calendar. Parsha Devarim began with a review of Israel’s history. It’s a portion that carries some rebuke with it as Moses recounts certain events in the wilderness journey. After reading Devarim, we came to the low point in the calendar, Tisha B’Av. Just after that day, we read parsha Va’Etchanan, which started with the description of Moses’ pleading to the Lord to enter the Land, but he was rejected.

With these couple of parshas, Va’Etchanan and Ekev, we are beginning to sense a shift happening, a shift away from the heaviness of the 3 Weeks toward looking to repair and reunion. The title of Va’Etchanan still seems rooted in the striving of the 3 Weeks, “And I pleaded,” but much of the content in that portion starts to turn us to the Land and entering the Land and the life they will live in the Land. For one thing, the haftarah of Va’Etchanan begins the 7 haftarot of consolation, all taken from the latter chapters of Isaiah. And the 10 Commandments and the Shema in that portion are foundational to the normal life in the Land. So Va’Etchanan is a bit mixed, with the title leaning one way and the content beginning to move another way.

With Ekev, the shift becomes obvious. For one thing, the very first word of the portion is “v’haya,” “and it will be.” The Sages say that when a parsha or a section of a parsha begins with “v’haya,” it’s the language of joy, simcha, but if a portion or section begins with vayehi, “and it

was,” it’s the language of trouble. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyLtyLOAKXc> 1m) (https://www.chabadwestside.org/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/4501122/jewish/Ki-Tavo-2019.htm). Ekev not only starts with “v’haya” but also contains another prominent section that begins with v’haya, the second paragraph of the Shema, which we find in chapter 11: “And it will be,” “V’haya,” “if you diligently obey My commandments...” So, here we have two prominent uses of the language of joy in this portion.

And R’Trugman points out that before long we will come to the portion of Ki Tavo, which also begins with “v’haya.” And R’Trugman makes an important connection for us. He says that what these several “v’haya” sections have in common is an emphasis on the Land, praising the land of Israel and its fruits and minerals and abundance. These sections here that begin with the language of joy, in other words, are all pointing us to the Land and dwelling in the Land. This means they are all turning our attention to the second half of the salvation pattern, the half of maturity, including the goal stages of salvation. So we find that as our portions are making this shift away from the Three Weeks, they do that partly by emphasizing the Land.

The name “Ekev,” itself, is also showing us this shift toward the joy of rectification and reunification and repair. “Ekev” often gets translated “because” or “if” in the first verse of the portion, which reads, “And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers” (Deuteronomy 7:12). The rabbis note that the word “Ekev” is a bit strange here, though. It most literally means “heel,” that part of the foot that is lowest, the very last and lowest part of the human body. The root idea of “Ekev” seems to be “at the END,” or “when it’s all said and done.” In the end, Israel, if you will shema, if you will listen and do these commandments, the Lord will keep the covenant with you and the steadfast love He swore to your fathers.” The title “Ekev,” then, could be literally understood to be saying “in the end,” AT THE END OF SALVATION, in the end times, when you go into and dwell in the Land. In calendar terms, the latter times are the dark half of the year that is marked by the embodiment process of bringing the spiritual down into the physical. The word “Ekev,” then, is carrying with it these overtones of healing and maturity. Since this is the title of the portion, this means that the entire portion has this end-goal emphasis in mind, so our attentions are turning in earnest now. The Torah is telling us that it’s time now to begin preparing for the 7th month, the month that marks the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The Shift and Tu B’Av

I want to make some calendar connections now to this current week that help to clearly establish that this shift is happening right now. I have mentioned before in the parsha Devarim teaching when we were introducing the month of Av that the energy of this month switches quickly. It’s very heavy at the beginning of the month, dominated by the strong disciplinary hand of the Av, the Father, the Lion Who destroys His own Temples on the 9th of Av. But from the ashes of the Temple comes the first glimmers of the Messiah, the tradition that the idea of the Messiah is born from the ruins of Tisha B’Av. On the 9th of Av, as we stare into the smoking carcass of the Temple, we are pushed toward the Messiah as we cry out for salvation. The smoldering Temple really stands for all the ruin brought on by sin and death in the world and the severing of the

intimate connection between God and the entire world. So, even on Tisha B'Av, itself, we are being shifted toward salvation in the Messiah.

And this rapid change is quickly evident in the calendar. While reading this portion, we have come through another minor holiday starting last Tuesday night, the 15th of Av, which is also called "Tu B'Av." We want to camp out here for a bit because the 15th of Av very richly shows us how we are now to turn away from the destruction and focus on the healing to come. It's a beautiful set of images helping us to see here with Tu B'Av, which is a very different day than the 9th of Av. Tu B'Av is almost considered the CONCLUSION of the 9th of Av because of its almost opposite or complimentary qualities to the 9th of Av. Tu B'Av was largely forgotten as a special day for some centuries but is being returned to us in our day, and it's a day that is not only connected to the 9th of Av but also to the 7th month, especially Yom Kippur.

As we begin to unpack some of the connections here, put in the back of your mind the mirror reflection on the other side of the calendar, the minor holiday in the 11th month that is exactly 6 months opposite to Tu B'Av. It's called "Tu B'Sh'vat," the 15th of Shevat, also known as the New Year for Trees. One of the ways we learn about a particular season or day in the calendar is by looking at its complement on the other side of the calendar, which will have similarities. What I want you to remember about Tu B'Sh'vat, and this is something that R'Trugman points out, is that it is said that on Tu B'Sh'vat, the sap begins to rise in the trees. The trees begin to awaken from their winter slumber, but this stirring of life is not visible yet. It's an internal change that begins to happen. And we're going to see those same invisible stirrings here on this side of the calendar, beginning to happen as the new life of the 7th month begins to well up in us now.

Tu B'Av is the full moon of Av. It is six weeks before Rosh Hashanah, and it marks the day when Israel officially starts looking ahead to Rosh Hashanah and preparing for the new year of the 7th month. R'Raskin points out that we read in this very portion the verse that says God's eyes are on the Land from THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR to the end of the year, and this phrase in this portion is one of the markers that moves us to start looking toward Rosh Hashanah. ("For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:10-12). R'Raskin also notes that soon, at the beginning of Elul, the shofar will begin to be blown every day in the synagogues, again looking ahead to the blowing of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. And he notes that already at the 15th of Av, it is customary to start using new year greetings (https://www.chabad.org/multimedia/video_cdo/aid/1916449/jewish/What-Does-G-d-Demand-of-Us.htm 10:40m). One of these greetings is "ketiva ve-chatima tova, "a good writing and sealing," which is a reference to being enscribed in the Book of Life during the 10 Days of Awe that begin the 7th month. And R'Raskin points out that "ketiva ve-chatima tova" has the same gematria as "chamisha asar b'av," which means "the 15th of Av," both equal to 928.

In terms of the historical basics of the day, Tu B'Av is anciently called one of the two most joyous days in the whole year. Somewhat strangely, the Mishnah says that the two most joyous days anciently were Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur. I say that's a bit strange because we basically forgot Tu B'Av, and we don't think of Yom Kippur as being especially joyful. But if you really believe that your sins are covered on Yom Kippur, then when that High Priest emerges alive from the belly of the Temple, you know that the sins of the nation have been successfully atoned for, and there must have been a great cry of joy that went up from the onlookers.

But there's more. The Jews have their romantic side, and it seems to me that their greatest joy is seeing a young couple find the other half God intended for them, the moment of matchmaking. And according to Tractate Ta'anit in the Mishnah, the two greatest days in the year for matchmaking were...Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur, the two days in the year when the young women would borrow white dresses and go out and dance in the vineyards and the streets, inviting the young men to come and choose. So Tu B'Av is a time to look ahead to what? We start looking ahead to and preparing for A COMING MARRIAGE. These are days for matchmaking.

So you can see immediately that whereas the 9th of Av was a day of destruction and separation, Tu B'Av is revealing that we move now to a time of shalom, a time of bringing two opposites together. Dr. Hollisa Alewine talks about how Tu B'Av is a day for rectification and the reconciliation of brothers who were fighting (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kpE7QBDzs> 1h15m). And we can see this idea that Dr. Alewine is describing when we look at a couple of the historical events traditionally associated with Tu B'Av. These include the day we read about in Judges when the ban on intermarrying with the tribe of Benjamin was lifted. Remember there was a civil war in which Benjamin was almost wiped out and there was a ban on marrying into Benjamin. Eventually that decree was lifted, and tradition says that lifting happened on Tu B'Av – again, brothers coming together. It's also said to be the day that the king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel began to allow his people to make pilgrimage again to Jerusalem. Apparently when the Northern and Southern kingdoms split, the northern king eventually decreed that the northern tribes could no longer go to Jerusalem at the mo'edim according to the Torah because this was seen as a threat to the legitimacy of the northern kingdom as an independent state. On Tu B'Av, this evil decree against the pilgrimage to Jerusalem was lifted. Again, it's brothers and sisters coming back together.

Interestingly, Tu B'Av is also the day that the cutting of firewood for the Temple for the upcoming year concluded. In a way, you could say the harvest of wood for the year is finished on this day, which is perhaps a connection to Tu B'Sh'vat on the other side of the calendar when the sap begins to run in the trees. Along with marking the end of the wood harvest, if we can call it that, Tu B'Av also marks the official beginning of another harvest, the grape harvest in Israel, which is a very joyous time that includes a lot of people coming together to speedily accomplish all the work that must be done relatively quickly at that time.

Now, adding one more idea to this brilliant web of connections for Tu B'Av, the Mishnah goes on to cite a verse for the young women who go forth to dance on Tu B'Av. The verse is from Song of Solomon chapter 3, and it starts out, "Go out, O daughters of Zion, and look upon King Solomon,"

and it mentions the crown Solomon's mother gave him on his wedding day (Song of Solomon 3:11).

King Solomon is a particularly rich symbol for Tu B'Av. Let's think about what he's adding for a minute as we continue to explore how it is that Tu B'Av is taking our attentions from the 9th of Av and focusing them on the 7th month. First, though, remember that the 7th month is all about a wedding to the King. During the mo'edim of the 7th month, the King Messiah's coming is announced on Rosh Hashanah; He provides a covering for the bride on Yom Kippur; and He arrives to consummate the marriage at Sukkot. When you think of the 7th month, think "marriage to the King." And the kings that come to mind for this time in particular are first King David and second King Solomon.

Solomon's name in Hebrew is "Shlomo," from the same root as "shalom," meaning "peace" and "wholeness." Shalom is especially the idea of two complementary halves coming together to make a oneness, an echad. And here at Tu B'Av, the maidens are told to go out and look for their shalom. But there's more with King Solomon. He is known for his many marriages, right? And many of these were political marriages that brought kingdoms together into a working relationship under Israel's control. In that sense, under Solomon, Israel becomes the groom to the surrounding nations, which are the bride that support Israel as helpmates. But there's more. The 9th of Av is the day of the destruction of the Temple, and King Solomon is the builder of the Temple. In fact, he waits to dedicate the Temple until which month? The 7th month. So here again, the 7th month is a kind of repair of the 9th of Av, and we're seeing these strong allusions to the 7th month here at Tu B'Av. Dr. Alewine further points out that the Rabbis say that shalom among brothers is a prerequisite to rebuilding the Temple (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6kpE7QBDzs> 1h15m), and shalom was what ruled in Israel during King Solomon's reign. As far as we can tell, King Solomon never had to go to war. That kind of peace was the context God wanted and even required for the building of His Temple.

There's just so much happening here on Tu B'Av, so many clues, so many connections. All of them are pointing us toward Yom Kippur and the other mo'edim of the 7th month. We're talking about a turn here, with Tu B'Av, but it's really the little turn that looks ahead to the big turn in the year that is about to come and says, "Start to get ready because that big turn is coming!" And that big turn is Rosh Hashanah and the onset of the second half of the calendar. In Exodus 34:22, the season of the year that includes Sukkot is called "tekufat hashanah," THE turn of the year. Rosh Hashanah is the fall equinox that marks the moment the night starts to dominate the day. Day and night are exactly balanced on Rosh Hashanah, and afterward, night will dominate for the next six months. And so it would seem the Torah regards the time of this fall equinox as THE turn of the year.

But here at Tu B'Av we do have a smaller climate-related threshold we're just passing through, a smaller threshold. The beginning of August marks the peak of the heat in the year for Israel, right around Tu B'Av. So we are now on the cooling side of the year. This is the little turn before the big turn.

Ekev's Emphasis: Staying Humble When We are Blessed

Let's do just a little more connecting now of the actual content of Ekev to this idea of turning our attentions to the relationship repair and deepening that is coming soon. First though, let's remember again that we're building on the last portion, Va'Etchanan. The content there contains the 10 Commandments and the Shema, which emphasizes love for God. The 10 Commandments are like the basics of the Torah, and the Shema is the Torah's beating heart, which is love. So as this ship begins turning in the calendar, we see Moses laying this foundation stone of the Torah through this mini-repetition of the Torah.

Moving forward now to Ekev, we've already mentioned that one way we can see this change of perspective toward shalom is in this portion's emphasis on the Land of Israel that they are about to go into. Ekev includes some of the most lyrical descriptions in the whole of the Torah of the Land and the abundant life in the Land. Throughout the winter, we saw that entering the Land, cleansing it, ruling over it, and settling into homes there are all steps associated with MATURITY. Maturity is reaching down to grab hold of the flesh and the whole physical world and putting those to use for spiritual purposes. This is what happens at the end. So connection number one in the content here in Ekev: as we look to the goal, we look to the Land and life in the Land.

Going deeper now in Ekev, if I had to summarize the gist of this portion in one thought, it might be this: "When God prospers you and gives you rest in the Good Land, DON'T BECOME PROUD, or you will fall." Moses says here that the Land is going to be amazing, and that Israel will, indeed, prosper there and lay down and rest. And that's the real danger point. Being at the goal is a perilous place because we are so prone to become PRIDEFUL in that place, and we are apt to forget. You get to the goal and you somehow get amnesia for how you got there, all the praying you did along the way, the coincidences and little graces God gave you to strengthen you to put one foot in front of the next. Being at the goal is an elevated position, and it is from elevated positions that one is able to fall. If you're already down low and you fall, you haven't fallen very far. It's when you're high up that falling is a real danger. If they start to think that they conquered the Land and built it up again in their own strength, they will be tempted to forget God and forsake the Torah and suffer through a painful correction.

And so here's the point we've been leading to for Ekev in terms of how Ekev speaks to the goal of entering the Land: much of what we see Moses doing here in Ekev is TAKING THEM DOWN A NOTCH. He's humbling them, and he's also TEACHING THEM HOW TO TAKE *THEMSELVES* DOWN A NOTCH. Moses is called the most humble of men, and here he is teaching Israel how to humble themselves. He's saying, "Remember this!" and "Don't forget this!" HUMBLING OURSELVES IS A LEARNED SKILLED. Let me say that again: humbling ourselves is a learned skill. It's a training in seeing ourselves through the full light of truth. Pride led to the first fall. And pride is probably at the root of all falling. So we have to develop these muscles for being humble. One way or other, being humbled must precede a new work of God's grace. Let me repeat that because it's important: being humbled must precede a new work of God's grace. Humility is like the oil in the wheel as it turns. And make no mistake, God will get us to grow. He a good gardener. But we can either be humbled with many lashes, or we can help to lower ourselves down and require few lashes. We can either work with Him or fight Him every step of the way. In one way of looking at

it, the entire book of Deuteronomy is a humbling for the people. And by the end of it, the doorway grace and a higher work through the Messiah stands open. At the end of the humbling of Deuteronomy, Moses will be taken away, and Joshua will ascend, Yehoshua, the image of the Messiah for this generation. And in terms of the calendar, the humbling is built into every step. We should expect this. It is God's design. Staying attached to the Torah is one thing, and it's important. But the Torah is not the deepest root of our relationship with God. Deeper than the Torah are the truths that He exists, He made us, and He loves us. Pride interferes with those truths.

Let's look at a couple of these points in Ekev where Moses is obviously lowering the people down, humbling them. In fact, the language Moses uses here with the people is new in the Torah, as far as I can tell. It can even seem harsh. But it's really a great blessing in disguise for them because, at least in part, it helps them to accept that though they are imperfect, and though they mess up sometimes, God still works with them and draws near to them and wants to co-create with them.

As the portion begins, we find a lot of positive words and wonderful promises regarding God fighting for Israel as they enter the Land. Before long, though, Moses starts talking about how God, Himself, humbled Israel in the wilderness. Starting in 8:2, Moses says, "And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might HUMBLE you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He HUMBLed you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). So here we have Moses reminding the people that God, Himself, wanted them to see how weak they were. He put them in a dangerous place, a place of scarcity, so that they could see their inability to care for themselves there, and then He provided for them when they couldn't provide for themselves. Moses goes on in chapter 8 to warn them to not forget God when He blesses them, and he says in 8:17: "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth'" (Deuteronomy 8:17).

In chapter 9, Moses emphasizes that they are, indeed, a weaker people than the sons of the Anakim in the Land, who are truly a mighty race. But he says that God will cross over before them as a consuming fire, and it is HE Who will drive out and destroy the inhabitants of the Land. And he adds, "Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that He may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob" (Deuteronomy 9:5). And so Moses says God is going to do this because He made promises to the patriarchs and because of how wicked the Canaanites are; at this point, mercy for these utterly lost groups of Canaanites is death, and God will use Israel to bring that death. Now, we should mention that on the other side of their success in the Land, including as they are going into the Land, is the refrain that their success also

depends on their adherence to the commandments. Their success in Canaan, both at first and later on, is a complex calculation that only God can do.

Moses then goes on to remind the Israelites how unrighteous they have been in the past. He reminds them of the incident of the golden calf and how he had to intercede for them. And he reminds them of how they again provoked God at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah, including the rebellion of the evil report of the spies. And he says, "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer." And he reminds them of their humble BEGINNINGS when he says, "[The LORD] is your praise. He is your God, Who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven" (Deuteronomy 10:21-22).

Parsha Ekev: Toward Humbling Ourselves

After setting out some of the actual words Moses uses to lower the people down, for our final topic here let's see if we can draw out from Ekev some general pointers for how we humble ourselves, this learned skill of seeing ourselves in the fullness of truth.

First, we seek out and listen carefully to the words and advice of our spiritual authorities. Moses is Israel's spiritual authority at this point, and Deuteronomy is his advice for them. And Israel's listens to what Moses has to say.

Second, remember that any goodness and blessing in your life comes from God and is not the work of your own hands. God prepared the Land for Israel, and He gave it to them. Our God loves to give good gifts, and He will give us every good gift as we become ready for it.

Third, remember that it is God Who reached down to us first, not the other way around. Moses says to the people here that God is bringing them in partly because He reached out first TO THE PATRIARCHS with promises, promises that He will, indeed, fulfill. God reached down to Abram when Abram was trapped in the sinful land of Ur, and the people standing in front of Moses now are the result of that grace extended to that man and his wife when they didn't know God. It is the same with us. If God had not reached a hand down to each of us, we would be like every other lost soul with no clarity regarding even what is light and what is darkness.

Connected to this third point about God first reaching down to us, we must remember that we stand on the shoulders of the generations that have come before us. We are humbled when we think of all that we inherit, physical and spiritual, from those who broke the path for us.

Fourth, understand that if we are giving fear a footing in our lives, that fear is rooted in pride. So fight the fear. Moses tells the people, "You shall not be afraid of the nations in Canaan." A fearful person thinks that they have control to begin with and that they are in danger of losing that control. Their emotional response to the idea that they will lose control is fear. Well guess what: you don't have control to begin with. It is God and God alone Who runs the universe. Show me an arrogant person and I'll show you a fearful one.

R'Alon Anava tells a story that he heard firsthand that has to do with fear and with the mezuzah, which we read about at the end of this portion, the commandment to write the commandments on the doorposts of our homes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h1WRjOrdobl> 18:45m). It's a story about a Jewish woman in Paris who wasn't raised religious but who experiences an awakening later in life. At one point, someone teaches her about the commandment of the mezuzah, so she puts a mezuzah on the front door of her apartment. Eventually, though, someone says to her, "What are you doing? The building is full of Jew-haters. You could get hurt. This is not a place to be so Jewish!" And there are places like this in Paris and elsewhere where Jews don't show any outward signs of being Jewish. So she was afraid, and she took it down. One day she hears a knock on the door, and an old man is standing there. He says he's a neighbor from the building. And he says, "Can I ask a question? Why did you take down the mezuzah?" So she explains to him. He answers, "Let me tell you a story. I am a Holocaust survivor. Baruch HaShem, I survived, but I had an issue with God. I was very angry. For many years I didn't observe any of the mitzvot, just living like a non-Jew. A few months ago, the elevator wasn't working, and I had to take the stairs. And at each floor, I had to stop and take a rest. When I came to your floor, I saw the mezuzah. And it just hit me. And I started remembering when I was a kid how we had a mezuzah on our house, and how I used to go with my father to the synagogue, and the synagogue had a mezuzah too. And all these emotions and memories began to well up in me about where I came from. And I thought, 'What am I doing? So many years away from HaShem! And you know, I started following the mitzvot again. And I put my own mezuzah on the my own door, too.'" R'Anava couldn't remember if the woman put her mezuzah back on. But you know, the mezuzah seems like a little thing. But it's not so little. In the end, we can't be controlled by fear. And we can't hide who we are. The mezuzah is a commandment, and it's one way that we witness to the world that we are in covenant with the God of the Universe.

Moving forward again in thinking about how we humble ourselves, accept that no matter who you are or how strong you think you are in the Lord, your faith IS going to be tested in that place of plenty, that place of physical darkness that is the context for the deepest faith walk and for spiritual maturity. Whoever you are, God WILL require you to walk in faith through that darkness. You WILL be pushed there if your faith is to be proven to have any value. The Land is a place for walking by faith, not by sight. In Ekev, Moses tells the people in chapter 11: "For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables. But the land that you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the LORD your God cares for. The eyes of the LORD your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:10-12). In other words, Moses is telling them that when you live in the Land of Israel and you plant your seeds, there is no Nile to provide irrigated water for those seeds. Everyone in the Land from great to small has to equally look up to the heavens and ask God to send the rain so that they can eat. Walking in the Land requires faith, no matter who you are.

Sixth, remember your failings. We don't want to get bogged down in the past. But remembering our failings helps us to stay humble by reminding us that in the same way that we slipped and fell

at that time, we could easily do the same again. Moses spends a large portion of these chapters reminding the people of their past failures. And these failures had to be vivid memories for this generation, which is probably one reason that generation stayed faithful. God's very vivid acts of discipline in the wilderness were a great gift to this generation, the gift of memory. Some of those listening to Moses would have had to move away from Korah and Dathan and Abiram's tents, and they would have stood there watching and listening as the earth opened up beneath those families; maybe some of those lost were their childhood friends. They had helped to dig mass graves to put to rest thousands who died in plagues. They'd searched nervously in the shadows of their tents for the snakes that God let loose in the camp. Why such dramatic discipline? It's a gift to this generation that will go into the Land but will still remember. Our own mess-ups will likely not be so dramatic, but it's important that we call them to mind now and then. They help to humble us.

Seventh, be careful to rid your life of arrogant people because pride is infectious. It spreads like a disease. Moses tells the people here to take no mercy on the inhabitants of the Land. Such people WILL become a thorn in our side. The Canaanites were idolaters, and all idolaters are prideful. An idolatrous nation thinks it can manipulate the universe through its own devices. In fact, they worship themselves.

Next, number eight, by keeping God's instructions always on our minds and lips, we will be humbled. Putting ourselves in the position of the student who must always be studying is a position of humility. Putting ourselves in the position of the reviewer who must continually review or else he will forget is a place of humility. Putting ourselves in the position of one who goes to God continually and asks for a portion in the Word puts ourselves in the position of one who must ask for his daily food. And so we read in this portion: "impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be tefillin between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road and when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens upon the earth" (11:18-21).

I'm sure we could come up with many, many more suggestions from this Torah portion for humbling ourselves. The last I'll mention here today is that when God blesses us, we thank Him. Moses says here to the people, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you" (8:10). By thanking God, we admit that the blessing we have received is ultimately from Him. We lower ourselves down to do that. In Hebrew, the word "hodaah" means "to thank" but also "to admit" or "to submit" (https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361885/jewish/The-Sefirot.htm). When we thank someone for something, we ADMIT that we were in the lower position as the receiver of the blessing. Thanking is a form of SUBMITTING to the authority that blesses us.

Yeshua

Lastly today, let's turn now to a brief focus on Yeshua in this discussion. We've been talking about casting our vision ahead now to a time of marriage, a marriage to the King, and we've been talking about entering the Land and ruling over it and setting up a kingdom there. We need to always keep in mind that the Groom and the King are the same Person, the Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua is both the Groom Who takes the kahal as His Bride and the Warrior King Who not only leads us into the Land but Who also rules in peace after the battle like King Solomon rules after King David.

Let me just bring out a few verses and thoughts now that speak to each of these aspects of Yeshua. The book of Revelation says much about the Messiah as the Groom. In Revelation 19, for example, it says, "Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints" (Revelation 19:7-8). And even in the gospels, Yeshua explains that His disciples don't fast like the Pharisees because one does not fast when the GROOM is with them.

Revelation also has a number of verses that bring out Yeshua as the King. In chapter 17, for example, He is described as not just the King but the Warrior King. It says, "They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings..." (Revelation 17:14). And again in Revelation 19, we see Yeshua as the Rider on the white horse who makes war, and on His head are many CROWNS. Indeed, when Yeshua was questioned by Pilate as to whether or not He is a king, He affirms that He is a king, but that His kingdom is a spiritual one, at least at that time, but we look forward to the physical kingdom as well. And written above His head at His death is the proclamation: "King of the Jews."

But the battle is simply the first step in reigning. The second is to reign in peace. And we know that Yeshua calls Himself the Lord of the Sabbath, the Lord of rest and shalom. And in Isaiah 9, He is called the Prince of Peace.

Well, that's all for today. Thank you for listening. There is a link below the video to an outline of this teaching. May God make us a people who know when and how to prepare for the next step He has for us. May we be a people who walk humbly with our God. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.