

## 41 – Ki Tavo - Outline

**Generosity Story:** [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112275/jewish/The-Rothschild-Family.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112275/jewish/The-Rothschild-Family.htm)

### Ki Tavo Summary:

- Kehot Chumash: Ki Tavo both ends the second main section of Deuteronomy that is focused on specific laws, and it begins the third and final section of the book, which is focused on the covenant between God and Israel
- 2 main topics of the portion:
  - laws regarding bringing firstfruits (end of 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Deu)
  - description of covenant renewal once in the Land (beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> part of Deu)

### Placing Ki Tavo in the Portions: The Giving Foundation of Relationship

- why weren't these firstfruits commandments included with the last portion, Ki Teitzei? Instead, these last specific commandments are made to be the introduction to the third section of Deuteronomy focused on covenant relationship
  - answer: mutual giving is the root of all healthy relationship
    - we are joined together by mutual dependency and giving
    - firstfruits is the perfect way to introduce the chapters focused on covenantal relationship
  - R'Tatz: if we focus on our rights in a relationship, we're setting ourselves up for disaster; but if we focus on our responsibilities in a relationship, that's bliss
    - rather than waking up and saying, "what am I owed from my spouse today? what are my rights?" we say, "what are my obligations to my spouse? how can I lighten the load a bit on my spouse today?"
    - the Torah doesn't frame human interaction in terms of our rights; it frames them in terms of our responsibilities
      - responsibilities imply rights; they are two sides of one coin; the question is which side are we going to focus on? one leads to frustration and misery, the other to purpose and joy
    - our political dialogue is dominated by focusing on this person's rights and that person's rights, and we're being torn apart
      - our government has had a rights focus from the beginning (Bill of Rights); it's ok to have a Bill of Rights, but by not outlining our responsibilities also, we were set up for the moment we're in now, where so many have their hand out demanding their rights in a "just" society
      - President Kennedy: "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country."

### Placing Ki Tavo in the Calendar

- Why is God sending Israel to such a specific location, Mts. Gerizim and Ebal?
  - answers:

- the mountains, themselves, are the two required witnesses to the covenant; they do not pass away and so are “eternal” witnesses to what passes there between God and Israel
  - “Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS, and LET THE HILLS HEAR YOUR VOICE. Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against His people, and He will contend with Israel” (Micah 6:1-2)
- the mountains are also near to the middle of the originally allotted land, which includes the Lebanon, which was at least partly left unconquered
- Shechem is where Abram made his first altar in the Land (Gen 12)
  - amazing to think that these two mountains have witnessed the breadth of God’s interactions with the Chosen People, and all humanity
- a practical calendar connection: as we do teshuvah, set up witnesses
  - we are resolving to make changes now, but such resolutions fade, new habits erode
  - we can talk about our resolutions with others, when it’s appropriate, and we can purpose to hold each other accountable
  - at least we can write out and print out the changes we are making, and take out the document maybe on the mo’edim to review it
  - what God required Israel to do was practical, creative, and very memorable
    - who even today could travel along the main road that runs between the two mountains and not hear the distant echoes of the blessings and the curses?

### **Ki Tavo is About Marriage**

- the portion is really showing us a wedding, a marriage ceremony to come (under Joshua’s leadership)
  - the blessings and the curses are the vows that the Groom speaks out here in Deuteronomy and repeated by the Bride in the book of Joshua
  - in the calendar, we are getting ready for a wedding, our own wedding to God in Tishrei
    - the yearly marriage process:
      - He sets us aside for marriage at Passover
      - the engagement is at Shavuot (a binding contract)
      - the finalization and consummation happen in Tishrei
  - wedding language in the first line of the portion
    - “And it will be that when you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it...” and it goes on to talk about bringing firstfruits (Deuteronomy 26:1-2)

- some of the concepts here are critical for going deeper in the Scriptures and even for understanding men and women – very practical for our relationships
- some of the details I’m about to go through are coming from a teaching by R’Avraham Trugman: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nqCVfumaKs>, from beginning)
- this wedding happens between Israel and the Land, so this is a different wedding than the one happening at Mts. Ebal and Gerizim
  - 2 wedding portrayed in this portion:
    - “upper marriage” between God (Groom) and Israel (Bride)
    - “lower marriage” between Israel (groom) and the Land (bride)
  - why the two weddings together in this portion?
    - important idea: God’s marriage to Israel, the upper marriage, is reflected (literally) by Israel’s marriage to the Land, the lower marriage
      - the Land is a mirror to Israel, both reflecting Israel and reflecting the relationship Israel has to God
        - if a husband is looking at his wife and despising her, something is terribly off in his relationship with God
      - when things are going well between Israel and God, life will go well in the Land, which will be fruitful, productive; the opposite is also true
      - God makes this reflection clear in this portion by making the Land the center of a great many of the blessings and the curses
      - aside: we see in Scripture the similar idea that Israel is the groom to the nations, which are Israel’s bride – the more important “lower” marriage
- more about the Land as the bride and seeing the wedding language here
  - the language of joy: R’Trugman points out that the very first word is “v’haya,” “and it will be,” (“And it will be that when you come into the land...”)
  - the Sages: when a portion or section of a portion begins with “v’haya,” that’s “lashon simcha,” “the language of joy”
    - 98 curses are “joyous”? When we witness a wedding, the vows can be a bit heavy, but they are the most joyous part of the wedding because the two are, thereby, joining themselves together, committing to each other
  - the language of marital relations: “tavo” has “bo” at its root, the idea of coming into or going into, “when you come into the Land”

- R'Trugman: “bo” is also the root of one of the words for marital relations, “biyah,” so we have a language connection here to the relations of husband and wife
  - the Land is the body, the home, that surrounds the groom and becomes echad with him for fruitfulness and eternal life (birth of next generation)
- Hebrew words for “land” and “earth” are feminine
  - “eretz” (used here for “land”) and “adamah” (earth) are both feminine
  - Hebraically, that which receives is feminine, while that which gives is masculine
    - Israel sows the Land with seed, and the Land is gifted with the ability to bring forth the fruit, the female gift
    - women nurture FAITHFULLY (the idea of pregnancy)
      - women have a strong inherent pull toward faithfulness; males must learn this
      - R'Trugman: rabbinically, another name for Israel is “Eretz Tzvi,” land of the deer; “tzvi” = 102 = emunah (faith)
        - Israel is the “land of faith”
        - we walk out by faith the light of truth in the darkness of physicality, the physical Land, the human body, our marriages
  - we say “mother earth” for a reason
    - women have a special connection to the earth and their own bodies, which they can use as an overall organ of perception better than men – “intuition” or “empathy” or “gut feeling”
      - “gut” associated with lower body, and the woman has a special connection to the intelligence that is centered there and in the heart, but this gift comes with the challenge of mastering her emotions, which are also centered in the heart and gut
- an encouragement connected to the calendar:
  - as we are being prepared now for a marriage to come in Tishrei, we can take heart that the pathway to marital bliss and marital blessing is clearly laid out before us in the Torah: if we will love God and carefully follow His commandments, our upcoming marriage will be wonderfully fulfilling and fruitful

- a final idea on marriage: continual gratitude as a foundation stone
  - the portion opens with firstfruits – a kind of ongoing humbling and thanksgiving, the admission that God provided everything
  - if a husband or wife continually keeps in mind how much the other does for them, if they are continually grateful for the other, they will relate to each other in love and joy and peace
  - gratitude is vital for Israel’s ultimate success in the Land
  - “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to WALK HUMBLY with your God?” (Micah 6:8)
    - a big part of walking humbly: take every step with gratitude, thanking Him
  - for all of us: we have so much to be grateful for
    - we should pause for a second each day to be grateful that we are still breathing
    - we tend to fixate on the one bad thing and ignore the 50 good things
      - partly because the one bad thing could represent a danger
      - mostly because we doubt God
        - the enemy that stands opposite to gratitude: Amalek is the final topic in the preceding portion (remember, blot out the memory)
        - Amalek = 240 = sofek (“doubt”)
          - if we are filled with gratitude, there’s little room for doubt
        - doubt is the enemy that can be wiped out but pop back up – for ANY of us, no matter our apparent strength
          - when we take a severe blow, Amalek can pop up – a diagnosis, a death, the ending of a relationship, etc.: “This isn’t fair; this isn’t right; this shouldn’t be happening to me; I’m basically doing things right; it’s not supposed to work this way. How could a loving God allow me to go through this? Is God with me or not?”
      - we don’t reason with Amalek (he’s partly subconscious, anyway); we simply stomp him out
      - the bride is well-equipped for this battle:
        - because faithfulness is part of her DNA
        - God gives the commandment to be grateful through the firstfruits commands

- we can start the morning with “Modeh Ani:” “Oh, You put my soul back into my body one more time; what a gift I don’t deserve!” Add to this a moment of gratefulness for your spouse, and you’ve set a good foundation for the day before even getting out of bed!

### Last Thoughts on the Covenant Renewal

- it’s also about the New Covenant
  - mediated by Joshua, not Moses
  - more to come on this topic, maybe in one of the Tishrei moe’dim teachings
- entering the Land is not a one-time event
  - ongoing process: we enter the Land every time Yeshua leads us to take a bit more of the territory of the flesh allotted to us
    - Joshua leads Israel to take the Land bit by bit by bit, a battle at a time
    - we should enter more deeply every year and every month and every week, even, even every day somehow- “further up and further in” as CS Lewis put it

### Yeshua

- “If we are being married to *God*, what is Yeshua’s role?” How do we relate to Yeshua in this upcoming month of Tishrei? What role is He playing in this marriage process that is coming?
  - the kinds of questions that get sticky quickly
  - a foundation for answering such questions: “...there is one God, the Father, **from** Whom are all things and **for** Whom we exist, and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, **through** Whom are all things and **through** Whom we exist” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6)
    - the marriage is with God, but we stand at the altar with Yeshua, Who is the perfect reflection of God
      - when the Father speaks, Yeshua speaks; when Yeshua smiles, it is the Father smiling

## 41 – Ki Tavo – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and this series called “Spiritual Seasons.” With this group of teachings, we are delving into the weekly Torah portions through the lens of the overall calendar. This week, we are in parsha Ki Tavo, Deuteronomy 26 through the first verses of 29.

### Generosity Story: The Rothschilds

But before we get to the portion, I want to share one last story of generosity for the month of Elul, which is a month that we are encouraged to increase in our tzedakah. This story is a bit longer one, which I’ve shortened a bit; it comes from Chabad.org. It’s about the famous and rather mysterious Rothschild family. The Rothschilds weren’t always among the wealthiest people on the planet. In the 1700’s, the family was not wealthy at all. Modern Jews attribute

their vast affluence to God's blessing through the grandfather of the five brothers who would go on to found the international banking empire. Their grandfather was named Amschel Moses Rothschild. And here is the story that is told about him.

In the early 1700's, Amschel was the assistant to the local Rabbi in a town that is now in western Ukraine. His duties included running errands, handing the Rabbi sephorim when he was studying, and taking care of visitors who came to see the Rabbi, among other responsibilities. It wasn't a job that paid a lot, but Amschel was a young man at the time, and he was anxious to serve the great Rabbi. The Rabbi came to trust and rely on him, and Amschel became like part of the family. Eventually, though, Amschel got married and had to end his service to the Rabbi and move to a nearby town, where he opened a small store.

After some months, the Rabbi discovered that a purse with five hundred silver coins had been stolen from his personal desk. It was a sizable amount, and it was meant to go to orphans and widows and others whose savings had been left in trust with the Rabbi. The Rabbi thought of all those poor people, and he was filled with pain. The only person who he could think of that would have known about the money was Amschel. He thought to himself, "No doubt Amschel only wanted to borrow the money in connection with his marriage last winter, and he must have planned to repay it as soon as he could."

The Rabbi went to see Amschel in his little store. It was a humbling surprise for Amschel to see the Rabbi in his simple place of business. The Rabbi carefully told Amschel of the missing money but assured him that he did not suspect him of theft; he realized that he had merely borrowed the money. And though the borrowing wasn't kosher either, if he would make good the wrong, he would be forgiven, and the Rabbi wouldn't hold it against him either. He went on to tell him about the orphans and widows and other poor people who were depending on the money.

Amschel grew pale and frightened, and he started to cry. Without saying anything, he opened his cash register and emptied its contents, giving it to the Rabbi. He begged the Rabbi to stay while he went to find more, though he returned looking quite distressed, since he only had half the amount. He promised to faithfully make up the balance in installments. True to his word, Amschel regularly sent small amounts until the whole 500 guildens were fully paid, and the Rabbi dismissed the whole affair.

Until one day the Rabbi got a message that the Police Chief wanted to see him urgently. The Chief asked the Rabbi if anything had been stolen from him recently. He answered that if the Chief was referring to a large number of silver coins, the matter was resolved. The Chief looked surprised and asked the Rabbi to tell him what happened, which he did. The Chief shook his head and said, "You Jews are a wonderful people." He then opened a drawer and produced the very bag of coins that was missing. The money had been discovered in the possession of the woman who cleaned the Rabbi's house after the woman's husband started suddenly paying for bar tabs with silver coins, which aroused suspicion leading to the searching of their house.

The Rabbi wasted no time in returning to Amschel's store. "Amschel, please forgive me!" he said. "Why didn't you tell me that you had not taken the money?" Amschel told the Rabbi that the plight of the poor orphans and the Rabbi's own distress had touched his heart, and he determined that he could do something about it. But he knew that if he had denied the theft, the Rabbi would not have accepted his sacrifice.

The Rabbi embraced him and blessed him as follows: that he would have great riches that he might always help the poor and needy of his people. He gave him the money back and added, "May God be with you and with your children for generations to come."

Amschel had five children who lived to adulthood, one of whom was named Mayer Amschel Rothschild, who would go on to found such a successful banking enterprise that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Rothschild family possessed the largest private fortune in modern world history. And they have been very, very generous with the wealth. They even did much to establish the modern state of Israel. ([https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/112275/jewish/The-Rothschild-Family.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/112275/jewish/The-Rothschild-Family.htm)); ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rothschild\\_family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rothschild_family))

This story really touched my heart when I read it. More than the loss of the money, Amschel was willing to surrender his reputation in the eyes of the Rabbi who he respected so much. It's like in a tiny moment of time, he weighed the choices before him, putting on one side of the scale his reputation and the large sum of money, and on the other side of the scale, the great pain of the poor and the Rabbi, and he decided, "I'll take the hit to my reputation and my wallet. These people need help, and I can help." And so he despised his reputation to help others. And God said, "Ok, you suffered that death for Me. Now I will give you new life."

And another point about this story: with our earthly way of operating, we know that "you need money to make money." The little money we can scrounge together is what we supposedly use to put ourselves in a better position to make more money. And while this may be how the natural world works, the spiritual realm works differently. According to the higher law that supersedes the natural law, you give generously, and that giving becomes the open door for greater blessing.

Well, I hope you have enjoyed these few snapshot stories of generous people. We can be giving with any resources entrusted to us, including our time, our labor, and our knowledge. It's not only money. But the giving of wealth also seems to be very high on God's list of priorities for us. And this brings us to our portion, Ki Tavo, which begins with the bringing of firstfruits to God.

### **Ki Tavo Summary**

Let's turn to the portion now. According to the Kehot Chumash, Ki Tavo both ends the second main section of Deuteronomy that is focused on specific laws, and it begins the third and final section of the book, which it describes as being focused on the covenant between God and Israel. Second section – specific laws; third section – covenant, and Ki Tavo is split between the two. In finishing the legal matters, Ki Tavo begins with laws regarding firstfruits. In starting the



section relating to covenant with God, the second part of Ki Tavo covers how they are to renew the covenant once they get into the Land.

Regarding the firstfruits, the bikkurim, the commandment is that when they get into the Land, they are to bring firstfruits of their harvests to the place God chooses to establish His name, which is Jerusalem. An actual script is given to them to say as they present the firstfruits to the priests.

The portion then switches to a description of the covenant renewal they are to perform when they enter the Land. They are to go to a very specific place in the Land, the two mountains of Gerizim and Ebal. The town of Shechem sits in the valley between these two closely-set hills. Large stones are to be set up on Mt. Ebal. They are to be plastered and have the words of the Torah cut into them clearly. By the way, the tradition is that it was written in 70 languages, and R’Trugman says this is because, ultimately, the Torah is meant for everyone

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pu61mWFC08&list=PLYztuC2svll4DRkxkkK59PMXmkJ2dG7-N&index=47&t=1s> 1m). An altar is also to be built there on Mt. Ebal, and burnt offerings are to be offered. The tribes are to be divided, with six specifically named tribes on each mountain. The tribes on Mt. Gerizim are to pronounce blessings for obeying the Lord and carefully following the commandments, and the tribes on Mt. Ebal are to answer with the curses for failing to do so. All the people are to indicate their assent by repeating “Amen” as the Levites read out the curses. The bulk of the portion ends up being the 98 curses.

### **Placing Ki Tavo in the Portions: The Giving Foundation of Relationship**

Let’s do a little more thinking now about how the portions are flowing here. Why weren’t these final specific commandments about firstfruits included with the last portion, Ki Teitzei? They would seem to fit better there. Instead, the firstfruits commandments are sort of made to be the introduction to the whole final section of Deuteronomy focused on the covenantal relationship with God? What does bringing firstfruits have to do with relationship with God?

The answer is that MUTUAL GIVING is the root of all healthy relationship. With firstfruits, we admit that God gave to us, and now we thank Him and give back to Him. This third and final section of Devarim begins with firstfruits commandments because covenantal relationship is all about giving. We are joined together by our giving to each other, and to the degree we’re giving to others, to that degree we will be one body with them, and to that degree we have purpose. Two people can exist in the same house, even, but do everything independently and not interact with each other at all. Those people don’t really have a relationship. But if person A says, “I’ll get the groceries,” and person B says, “I’ll mow the lawn,” now they’re serving each other, they’re leaning on each other, they’re becoming one body, echad. Firstfruits, even though it’s the last of the listing of the commandments, is the perfect way to introduce the chapters focused on the covenant relationship between Israel and God.

On this topic of giving being the root of a successful relationship, let me repeat the following idea that I believe I first heard from R’Akiva Tatz: he says that if we focus on our rights in a relationship, we’re setting ourselves up for disaster. But if we focus on our responsibilities in a

relationship, that's bliss. If the husband and wife wake up each day saying, "What does my spouse OWE me today; what are my RIGHTS in this relationship?" they will quickly find themselves in relationship hell. But if the two wake up and say, "What are my OBLIGATIONS, what are my RESPONSIBILITIES to my spouse; how can I lighten the load a bit on my spouse today?" that's relationship heaven. R'Tatz points out that the Torah doesn't frame human interaction in terms of one's rights. It frames our lives in terms of our obligations. Of course obligations imply rights. If I'm obligated to you, that means you have some kind of right that I need to provide or protect. They're two sides of one coin. But it's a question of which side of the coin we're going to focus on. Living from the one perspective, the taking perspective, leads to misery, while living from the other side leads great purpose and joy. Do we focus on what we're owed or what our responsibilities are to those around us?

And just as an aside, how much of our political dialogue these days is focused on this person's rights and that person's rights! And where is it getting us? We're splitting apart as never before. In fact, we've had this focus on rights from our earliest days, with the Bill of Rights, for example. I'm not saying the Bill of Rights was a mistake. The problem, though, is that stating our rights and not really stating our responsibilities to the nation sets us up for the moment we're in now. It didn't happen right away because our founders had a keen sense of a person's responsibilities that are not written into the laws of the land. But that has faded over time. When a culture has a bunch of people sticking their hand out and demanding what is due them in a quote unquote "just" society, but they're unwilling to contribute to that society, that's poison. It's toxic. President Kennedy famously stated this idea when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country." That idea resonated so much with us as Americans because the idea of our obligations to our society was already slipping away by President Kennedy's time. And so it was a bit shocking to hear it from the president.

### **Placing Ki Tavo in the Calendar**

As we turn now to thinking about where Ki Tavo fits into the calendar, let's first think about why God is sending Israel to this very specific geographic place to do this covenant renewal, these two mountains. The mountains, themselves, seem important to the event, but why? In short, the mountains are the two required witnesses of the covenant. The Torah is written on the stones, on the Land, itself, and that's a kind of witness. But even if those stones fail one day, if they are knocked over or their plaster comes off, the two mountains have, themselves, seen and overheard everything that has passed between God and humanity at that place. The fact that the two mountains are so close to each other means that, first, the people can hear what is being spoken on both sides, and second, the mountains can hear what is being spoken on both sides. The site is also very near to the center of the territory God gave to Israel, which includes Lebanon, extending further north than Israel seems to have conquered under Joshua. In a way, these two mountains are close to the HEART of the territory originally allotted to Israel, and I mean that in a biological sense, the heart being near the middle of the human torso, and we'll talk more about this idea later. Shechem, by the way, is where Abram built his first altar in the Land before he became Abraham; we read about that in Genesis 12. It's amazing to think that these two mountains have witnessed the breadth of God's interactions with the Chosen People, and all humanity, really. There's something quite special and

fundamental at this place where the Land witnesses the relationship unfold between God and mankind.

If this idea of the mountains bearing witness sounds a bit romantic, listen to this short passage from Micah 6: the prophet says, “Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case BEFORE THE MOUNTAINS, and LET THE HILLS HEAR YOUR VOICE. Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against His people, and He will contend with Israel” (Micah 6:1-2).

Let me make one quick and practical calendar connection here. We are in the process of t’shuvah now, repentance. What often happens with the resolutions for change that we make at times like these is that they simply fade away. We forget. Our new habits erode. Here we’re seeing an example of one type of action we can take to help us stay on the path of change that we have decided upon: we establish a witness. Let me suggest that we talk about our resolutions to change with others, when it’s appropriate, and we purpose to hold each other accountable, or that we at least write out or print out the changes we are making. And what we can do with that printout is, maybe on the mo’edim, we take that out and review it. We are forgetful. Life comes at us, and Elul and Tishrei fade from our consciousness quickly as winter sets in. We need to be resourceful in remembering. In this example, God has Israel march for days to a specific location, write the Torah on stones, divide up the people, and have them speak out blessings and curses in the shadow of these mountains. It’s not a small thing He’s having them do here, and it’s creative and MEMORABLE for them. Who even today could travel along the main road that runs between the two mountains and not hear the distant echoes of the blessings and the curses?

### **Ki Tavo is About Marriage**

There are a lot of layers for what Ebal and Gerizim are picturing, and all of them apply to this moment in the calendar. Let’s go a step deeper now. This portion is really showing us a wedding, a marriage ceremony to come under Joshua’s leadership. The blessings and the curses are the vows that the Groom speaks out here and that the Bride repeats while standing at the base of these mountains. And what are we getting ready for that is about to happen in the calendar in Tishrei? A marriage, our own marriage, in fact. Every year we go through the whole marriage process with the Creator, from Him setting us aside as a future bride at Passover, to the engagement at Shavuot, which is a binding covenant at that time, and finally to the last formalities and the consummation of the marriage in the fall. Let’s look now at how this portion is looking ahead to that moment of marriage that is quickly approaching.

Believe it or not, the very first line of the portion is wedding language, but it’s a different level of marriage than the scene at Ebal and Gerizim. Listen to the first line now: “And it will be that when you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it...” and it goes on to talk about bringing firstfruits (Deuteronomy 26:1-2). Isn’t that romantic? Not hearing the wedding language there? Let’s talk about it. There are some concepts here that are all over the Scriptures, concepts that I’m still a bit new at seeing in the text, myself, but that I know are critical for going deeper in the Bible.

They are ideas that can not only open up the Bible in a new way, but they can speak very practically to us in our relationships. Let me mention that some of the details I'm about to go through are coming from a teaching by R'Avraham Trugman. I'll put a link to that teaching in the notes (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nqCVfumaKs>, from beginning).

The wedding that this first line is referring to is the wedding that happens between Israel and the Land. This is different but related to the wedding ceremony at Mts. Ebal and Gerizim. We're seeing reference to TWO marriages here in this portion: the beginning of a marriage relationship between Israel and the Land, which is the name of this portion ("when you go into the Land") and the finalization of a wedding between God and Israel that happens at Mts. Gerizim and Ebal. We can call these two marriages the upper marriage, between God and Israel, and the lower marriage, between Israel and the Land. In the upper marriage, Israel is obviously the BRIDE to God. In the lower marriage, Israel is the GROOM to the Land. The firstfruits topic that begins this portion concerns the lower marriage, and the blessings and curses are the vows of the upper marriage.

We're going to go into how it is that the Land is the bride of Israel, but before we do that, let's ask what these two weddings are doing here together? So, this is a really important idea in Scripture: God's marriage to Israel, the upper marriage, is reflected by Israel's marriage to the Land, the lower marriage. I'm using the word "reflect" in a literal sense, here. The Land is a kind of mirror for Israel in the same way that a bride is a mirror for a husband, and the husband sees in the bride not only a reflection of himself but also a reflection of his relationship with God. If the husband is looking at his wife and despising her, something is terribly off in his relationship with God. When things are going well between Israel and God, life will go well for Israel in the Land, which will be bountifully productive, fruitful; and the reverse is also true, and this portion has much about how the Land will reflect this higher relationship. God is being very clear here about how the Land is meant to reflect His relationship with Israel. A huge number of the blessings and curses in this chapter are actually centered on the Land and the productivity of the Land and the Land welcoming the people or spitting them out.

As an aside here, we see in Scripture a similar idea to Israel's marriage to the Land in the idea that the nations are to be a bride to Israel. The same rules that apply to the Land apply to the nations. In truth, I think Israel's marriage to the nations is more important of these two.

Ok, so we have two weddings here, and the first one is talking about Israel's marriage to the Land. We'll explore why we're calling the Land a bride as we keep exploring in this verse. To start with, R'Trugman points out that the very first word is "v'haya," "and it will be," in the phrase, "And it will be that when you come into the land..." Remember that the Sages say that when a portion or section of a portion begins with "v'haya," that's "lashon simcha," "the language of joy." So this portion starts with the language of joy. Hmm. To be honest, the 98 curses don't seem so joyful. Well, we should think of this portion as the putting forth of the vows that will be said when they get into the Land. The reciting of vows can be heavy at times, but overall, the reciting of the vows is the highlight of the wedding because the two are, thereby, joining themselves together, committing to each other.

Next in our marriage connections here, R'Trugman points out that the word "tavo" has "bo" at its root, the idea of coming into or going into, "when you come into the Land." The marriage connection here, says R'Trugman, is that "bo" is also the root for one of the words for marital relations, the word "biyah," bet-yud-aleph-heh. In other words, Israel entering the Land has language connections to the idea of marital relations between a husband and wife. The Land is the body, the home, that surrounds the groom and becomes echad with him for fruitfulness and eternal life, the formation of new generations.

Moving forward, let's also note here that the Hebrew words for "land" and "earth" are feminine. These are the words "eretz" and "adamah," both of which are feminine in Hebrew; the word in our verse is "eretz." Remember that Hebraically, that which receives is feminine, and that which gives is masculine. Israel sows the Land with seed, and the Land is gifted with the ability to bring forth the fruit, which is the feminine gift, the ability to receive the seed of light and truth from the male, nurture it FAITHFULLY, and bring it out in a practical way in space and time.

The word "faithful" is an important concept that is connected to femininity and women. Faithfulness is the essence of the test of pregnancy. Women are specially given a strong inherent pull toward faithfulness. This is not as strong in the male but must be learned. R'Trugman points out that, interestingly, one of the ways the Land is referred to rabbinically is "eretz tzvi," "the Land of the Deer" (29m), and the connection here to the idea of faithfulness is that "tzvi" has the same gematria as "emunah." They both equal 102. The Land of Israel is the place for emunah, faith and faithfulness. Walking out the light of truth in the darkness of physicality is the walk of emunah, the walk of faith. The physical Land, this human body we are given, this physical earth we are given, the marriages we are given, these are the spaces God designs for walking out our faith in Him. So these are also places of great testing.

There is a reason we portray the earth as feminine, as "mother earth;" women have a special connection to the earth and to their own bodies in that they are gifted with being able to use their bodies as an organ of perception in a stronger way than men; we might sometimes call this idea "intuition," or "empathy" or, most tellingly, "gut feeling." The gut is associated with the lower body, and the woman has a special connection there to the intelligence that is centered there in the gut and the intelligence centered in the heart, but with this strong connection comes a particularly feminine challenge: the emotions are also centered in both the gut and the heart, so along with the woman's intuitive gift comes the vast challenge to master her emotions so that they don't master her.

Ok, so we've seen a number of connections between the Land and the bride, and we've seen that this verse and portion are talking about a beginning of relationship between Israel and the bride of the Land as well as a marriage to God at the two mountains, and we've seen that women in general are gifted with a deep connection to their bodies and to the earth. Let's bring the topic back around to the calendar now. We are being prepared now for a marriage to come, our own marriage to God in Tishrei. And as we read this portion, which is meant to be a joyful

one, we can take heart that the pathway to marital bliss and marital blessing is clearly laid out before us in the Torah: if we will love God and carefully follow His commandments, our upcoming marriage will be wonderfully fulfilling and fruitful.

And one last idea here on marriage: the opening of this portion is emphasizing one of the most important foundation stones for a solid marriage: constant gratitude. Now, I'm no expert in marriage, but I can see what's written here in the Word. This portion focused on two weddings has as its first and guiding topic the commandment to bring firstfruits, which is all about continually humbling ourselves in gratitude, thankfulness. If a husband does the work of maintaining constant gratefulness for his wife, if he constantly humbles himself by admitting to the great contribution she makes to his life, the fact that he couldn't be where he is without her constant support, he's going to relate to her with love and joy and peace. And the same is true for the wife concerning her husband. Constant humility in gratitude is vital for our ultimate success in in all of our relationships really, and its vital for Israel's success in the Land. Recall this famous verse from Micah 6: "He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to WALK HUMBLY with your God?" (Micah 6:8). The adverb connected to walking with God is "humbly," "walk humbly." A big part of that constant walk of humility is that we take every step with gratitude, thanking Him. God isn't just giving Israel busywork by requiring them to bring firstfruits to Jerusalem. He's focusing them on a cornerstone of the flourishing of their relationship with Him and a cornerstone of their thriving in the Land.

And for all of us, married or single, we have so much to be grateful for. If you are breathing, you should be grateful. If your eyes are working, you should be grateful. Let's purpose in this time of t'shuvah to do better at cultivating a continual attitude of gratitude. We tend to fixate on the one bad thing and ignore the 50 good things, and that's partly for self-protection, so there are some good reasons to pay close attention to what looks like danger. But there's another very worldly reason we fixate on the one bad thing: a misplaced fear, a corrosive lack of trust in God.

There is an enemy that stands opposite to gratitude, and it is doubt. If we are constantly aware of the great goodness that God is pouring out on us continuously, there is no room for doubt. But if we let doubt fester and grow like a cancer in us, we will fixate on the possible dangers in our lives.

Do you remember how the last portion ended, Ki Teitzei? The final commands in that portion are to remember what Amalek did on the way out of Egypt and to blot out the name of Amalek continually. At first it seems confusing that Amalek is to be wiped out, yet we are to make CONTINUAL warfare against them. If Amalek gets wiped out, how is it that he is cropping back up again and needs to be defeated continually?

Well, the amazing answer, if you remember, is that Amalek is equivalent to the enemy called "doubt." "Amalek" has the same gematria as "sofek," the Hebrew word for "doubt." Both equal 240. No matter how strong we think we are, no matter how long we've walked with the Lord, we are still vulnerable to this enemy, so God emphasizes that we show Amalek no mercy. We

don't entertain doubt. We simply smash it. The truth is that for any of us, Amalek will try to pop up any time we suffer a severe blow - a diagnosis, a death, the collapse of a relationship – and our sense of justice rises up to say, “This isn't fair; this isn't right; this shouldn't be happening to me; I'm basically doing things right; it's not supposed to work this way. How could a loving God allow me to go through this? Is God with me or not?” And boom, Amalek suddenly seems to appear out of nowhere and attacks. We show Amalek no mercy. We don't reason with Amalek because he doesn't really live fully in the head; he's partly subconscious and partly tickling the negative emotions. The Rabbis say Amalek lives in the neck. When we become aware of him, we simply deny him breath, we breathe no life into him, we give him no space to occupy.

And the Bride is well-equipped for this battle because faithfulness is part of her DNA. But God also gives her through the Torah other tools, like the commandment that follows Amalek in the text, firstfruits, continual gratefulness. We fight Amalek with the continual humbling in thankfulness to God for the many, many blessings He bestows upon us daily. We can even start the morning with “Modei Ani,” thanking God for returning our soul to us and giving us one more day that we don't deserve. If we start our day saying, “Oh, You put my soul back in my body one more time; what a gift; thank You!” then the rest of the day is icing on the cake, and there is no foothold for Amalek in our lives. And next we turn to our spouse, and we thank God for all the good our spouse brings to us, and we've already set a solid foundation for the day before we've even gotten out of bed.

### **Final Thoughts on the Covenant Renewal**

There's a lot more to say here about what is happening at Mts. Gerizim and Ebal. The next layer down is to explore how what happens there represents the New Covenant that is mediated by Yeshua rather than Moses. It's Joshua that leads the people to renew the covenant at these mountains. But I think we'll come back to Ebal and Gerizim in one of the Tishrei mo'edim teachings because there's a lot to explore there.

The last point I'll make here today, though, before we move to a focus on Yeshua, is that entering the Land is not a one-time event. It's a constantly ongoing process. We enter the Land every time Yeshua leads us to take a bit more of the territory of the flesh allotted to us. Let me say that again: we enter the Land every time our leader, Yeshua the Messiah Who is pictured by Joshua, leads us to take a bit more of the territory of the flesh allotted to us. Notice that under Joshua, Israel takes a bit more of the Land, and a bit more, and a bit more. Every time He leads us to do that, it means that our relationship with God has deepened, and our marriage has deepened. It's something that should be happening every year and every month and every week, even, even every day somehow. And it's an adventure! Every day is our wedding day if we are carefully walking with God. We're always going further up and further in, as C.S. Lewis put it.

### **Yeshua**

Well, let's turn now to one more brief point about Yeshua in the light of today's discussion. Let me ask this question, “If we are being married to *God*, what is Yeshua's role?” How do we relate

to Yeshua in this upcoming month of Tishrei? What role is He playing in this marriage process that is coming?

I know this kind of question gets a bit sticky quickly. But there's a foundation for answering such questions that we need to keep coming back to. I can't say that I completely understand it. But I think it points us in the right direction. It's the idea that we exist FOR God but THROUGH Yeshua. Again, we exist FOR God, but we come to God THROUGH Yeshua.

Listen again to this important verse from 1 Corinthians 8: "...there is one God, the Father, **from** Whom are all things and **for** Whom we exist, and one Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, **through** Whom are all things and **through** Whom we exist" (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). The focus of this marriage conversation is God, and the Vessel for that marriage is Yeshua. And so yes, we welcome Yeshua in a new way each Tishrei. And when we stand at the altar, it's Yeshua Who stands with us as we are married again to God. He is a perfect reflection of the Father. When Yeshua speaks, it is the Father speaking through Him. When He smiles, it is the Father smiling.

Well, that's all for today. Thanks again for listening. I have included an outline of this teaching below the video. May God make us a people who worry less about our reputation than we do about caring for people. May He bless us to be a people who think first of our obligations rather than our rights. May we be a constantly grateful people who understand that each day is a gift we don't deserve and who have always in mind that we are just stewards of the great blessings He has given us. May we be a faithful people who give no place to Amalek in our lives. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.



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