

Parsha Paths

Reeh: The Place

Blessings and Curses

וְהָיָה כִּי יָבִיאוּךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה בָּא-שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ וְנָתַתִּי אֶת-הַבְּרָכָה עַל-הָרִי
גְּרִזִּים וְאֶת-הַקְּלָלָה עַל-הָרִי עֵיבָל:

Devarim 11: 29 And it shall come to pass, when the LORD your God shall bring you into the land whither you go to possess it, **that you shall set the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. 30** Are they not beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites that dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the terebinths of Moreh?

Joshua 8:30 At that time Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, on Mount Ebal, as Moses, the servant of the LORD, had commanded the Israelites—as is written in the Book of the Teaching of Moses.—an altar of unhewn stone upon which no iron had been wielded. They offered on it burnt offerings to the LORD, and brought sacrifices of well-being. And there, on the stones, he inscribed a copy of the Teaching that Moses had written for the Israelites. All Israel—stranger and citizen alike—with their elders, officials, and magistrates, stood on either side of the Ark, facing the levitical priests who carried the Ark of the LORD's Covenant. Half of them faced Mount Gerizim and half of them faced Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded them of old, in order to bless the people of Israel. After that, he read all the words of the Teaching, the blessing and the curse, just as is written in the Book of the Teaching. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua failed to read in the presence of the entire assembly of Israel, including the women and children and the strangers who accompanied them.

Where is It?

“Opposite Gilgal” It seems to mean a place from where you can see Gilgal. . .the Yerushalmi says according to Rabbi Elazar there were two hills called Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eival [near Gilgal], according to Rabbi Yehudah they walked 120 mil in one day, according to Rabbi Elazar they did not leave their place. The Yerushalmi also adds that Rabbi Yishmael says that all times when it says “they came” in the Torah, it means after fourteen years: seven of conquest and seven of settlement. The blessings and curses were only said after those fourteen years. Rabbi Hanina asked Rabbi Mana, but it says when you cross the Jordan you will put up these stones [i.e., on that day]? He answered that the stones were put up immediately but the blessings and curses were only said after fourteen years. (Tosafot Sotah 33b:)

A Natural Amphitheater

Our route took us back through the valley, and we resolved that while passing between the two mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, in the still morning air, **we would try the experiment of reading the blessings and curses.** . . . But it is interesting to know that the spot chosen by God for this reading is **a vast natural amphitheatre**, in which the human voice can be heard to a surprising distance. About half-way between Shechem and the mouth of the valley in which it stands there is a deep, semicircular recess in the face of Mount Ebal, and a corresponding one precisely opposite to it in Mount Gerizim. **No man with his eyes open can ride along the valley without being struck with this singular formation.** As soon as I saw it I recognized it as the place of Joshua's reading. It has been asserted repeatedly by travelers that, although two men stationed on the opposite slopes of these two mountains are a mile apart, they can read so as to be heard by each other. We preferred to try the experiment in stricter accordance with Joshua's example; so I took a position, Bible in hand, in the middle of the valley, while Brother Taylor and Frank, to represent six tribes, climbed halfway up the slope of Mount Gerizim; and Brother Earl, to represent the other six tribes, took a similar position on Mount Ebal. I read, and they were to pronounce the amen after each curse or blessing. **Brother Taylor heard me distinctly, and I could hear his response.** But Brother Earl, though he could hear my voice, could not distinguish the words. This was owing to the fact that some terrace-walls on the side of the mountain prevented him from ascending high enough, and the trees between me and him interrupted the passage of the sound. The experiment makes it perfectly obvious that if Joshua had a strong voice,—which I have not,—he could have been heard by his audience without the assistance of the Levites. As to the space included in the two amphitheatres, I think it ample to accommodate the six hundred thousand men with their families, though of this I cannot be certain. If more space was required, the aid of the Levites was indispensable." (J.W. McGarvey 1879)

Rampant Idolatry?

אִבֹּד וְתִאבְדּוּן אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּקְדָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עָבְדוּ-שָׁם הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם יֹרְשִׁים אֹתָם אֶת-אֱלֹהֵיהֶם עַל-
הַהָרִים הָרְמִיִם וְעַל-הַגְּבְעוֹת וְתַחַת כָּל-עֵץ רַעֲנָן:

You must destroy all the sites at which the nations you are to dispossess worshiped their gods, whether on lofty mountains and on hills or under any luxuriant tree. (Devarim 12:2)

Where is "The Place?"

כִּי אִם-אֶל-הַמִּקְדָּשׁ אֲשֶׁר-יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מִכָּל-שְׁבֻטֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם אֶת-שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לִשְׁכֵנוֹ תִּדְרָשׁוּ
וּבָאתָ שָׁמָּה:

but look only to the site that the ETERNAL your God will choose amidst all your tribes as God's habitation, to establish the divine name there. There you are to go, (Devarim 12:5)

Abram passed through the land as far as the site of **Shechem**, at the terebinth of Moreh. . . GOD appeared to Abram and said, "I will assign this land to your offspring." And he built an altar there to GOD who had appeared to him. (Bereshit 12:6-7)

Shaken, he said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven." . . . He named that site **Beth El**; but previously the name of the city had been Luz. (Bereshit 28:17, 19)

And then Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave of the field of Machpelah, facing Mamre—now Hebron—in the land of Canaan (Bereshit 23:19)

Jerusalem and Shilo

כִּי לֹא-בִאתֶם עַד-עֵתָה אֶל-הַמְנוּחָה וְאֶל-הַנִּחְלָה אֲשֶׁר-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ:

because you have not yet come to the allotted haven that the ETERNAL your God is giving you. (Devarim 12:5)

"To the rest"; this is a reference to Shiloh. "The inheritance"; this is a reference to Jerusalem. (Zevachim 119a)

How Much Meat?

כִּי-יִרְחִיב יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֶת-גְּבֻלְךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-לָךְ וְאַמְרַתְּ אֲכִלָּה בָּשָׂר כִּי-תֵאָמֵר נֹפֶשֶׁךָ לֶאֱכֹל
בָּשָׂר בְּכָל-אַוֶּת נֹפֶשֶׁךָ תֹאכַל בָּשָׂר:

When GOD enlarges your territory, as promised, and you say, "I shall eat some meat," for you have the urge to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you wish. (Devarim 12:20)

MISHNA: "On four occasions during the year one who sells an animal to another is required to inform him: I sold the mother to slaughter or: I sold the daughter to slaughter. And those are: The eve of the last day of the festival of Sukkot, the eve of the first day of the festival of Passover, and the eve of Shavuot, and the eve of Rosh HaShana. And according to the statement of Rabbi Yosei HaGelili, the eve of Yom Kippur in the Galilee is included as well." (Chullin 83a)

Rabbi Akiva said: I asked Rabban Gamliel and Rabbi Yehoshua in the meat market in Emmaus, where they went to purchase an animal for the wedding feast of the son of Rabban Gamliel . . . (Mishnah Keritot 3:7)

From here, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria said: One who has one hundred dinars should purchase a litra of vegetables for his stewpot, one thousand dinars should purchase a litra of fish for his stewpot, five thousand dinars should purchase a

litra of meat for his stewpot; and if one has ten thousand dinars, his servants should place a pot of meat on the stove for him every day. And with regard to these [other individuals mentioned by Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria], when, should they consume meat? Every Shabbat eve. (Chullin 84a)

What is a Non-Kosher Bird?

וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תֹאכְלוּ מֵהֶם הַנֶּשֶׁךְ וְהַפֶּרֶס וְהָעֶזְנִיָּה:

The following you may not eat: the nesher, the vulture, and the black vulture; (Devarim 14:12)

If a small bird is clawed by a netz [it is a treifa], if a large bird is clawed by a gos [it is treifa] (Hullin 42a)

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I carried you on nesher's wings to bring you to me (Shmot 19:4)

Dukhifat

וְהַחֲסִידָה וְהָאֲנָפָה לְמִינָהּ וְהַדּוּכִיפָת וְהָעֵטְלָף:

the stork, any variety of heron, the hoopoe, and the bat. (Devarim 14:18)

Onkelos: וְחִירִיתָא וְאָבוּ לְזִנָּה וְנִגְרָא טוּרָא וְעֵטְלָפָא:

The dukhifat is the bird whose comb seems bent כְּפוּת, and this is the bird that brought the shamir to the Temple. (Chullin 63a)

Ashmedai said to him: The shamir was not given to me, but it was given to the minister of the sea. And he gives it only to the wild rooster, [also known as the dukhifat], whom he trusts by the force of his oath to return it. And what does the wild rooster do with it? He brings it to mountains that are not fit for habitation, and he places the shamir on the craggy rock and the mountain splits. And he takes and brings seeds of trees, throws them there, and it becomes fit for habitation. And this is why we interpret the word dukhifat as a cutter of mountains [naggar tura] (Gittin 68b)

Maaser Sheni in Jerusalem

וְכִי-יִרְבֶּה מִמֶּךָ הַדֶּרֶךְ כִּי לֹא תוּכַל שְׂאֵתוֹ כִּי-יִרְחֹק מִמֶּךָ הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשׁוֹם שְׁמִי שָׁם כִּי יִבְרַכְךָ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: וְנִתְּנָה בְכֶסֶף וְצִרְתָּ הַכֶּסֶף בְּיָדְךָ וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בּוֹ: וְנִתְּנָה הַכֶּסֶף בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-תֵּאֱמָר נִפְשִׁי בְּבָקָר וּבְצֹאן וּבְיֵין וּבַשֶּׂכֶר וּבְכָל אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁאַלְךָ נַפְשְׁךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ שָׁם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וְשִׂמַּחְתָּ אֵתָּה וּבֵיתְךָ:

Should the distance be too great for you, should you be unable to transport them, because the place where the Eternal your God has chosen to establish the divine name is far from you and because the Eternal your God has blessed you, you may convert them into money. Wrap up the money and take it with you to the

place that the Eternal your God has chosen, and spend the money on anything you want—cattle, sheep, wine, or other intoxicant, or anything you may desire. And you shall feast there, in the presence of the Eternal your God, and rejoice with your household. (Devarim 14:24-26)

Keeping Shmitta Today

מִקֵּץ שְׁבַע־שָׁנִים תַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁמִטָּה:

Every seventh year you shall practice remission of debts. (Devarim 15:1)

As the shmitta year is approaching . . . And if we forbid working the land the colonies will be destroyed and hundreds will die of starvation, in order to save these souls and to save the settlement project, to save body and money, we have found a way to permit [work] for this year 5649 (1888-9) by selling the land and the vineyards to non Jews , with the condition that they are returned after the sabbatical year when we return the deposit money. . . Obviously those colonists who can hire non Jewish workers to farm the land should do so but the poor may work the land themselves, based on the rulings of the rabbinical court in Jerusalem. All this is said only about the upcoming sabbatical year, not for others that will follow it. (Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Spektor 1888)

The Land of Israel is still holy today and the spirit of the Torah is why it survives, just like the existence of Israel among the nations is because of keeping the Torah. . . A piece of land is not the reason for our survival but Judaism is our land and our existence .

And we must understand that we are not here to settle the land of the Philistines but to settle souls in a land holy to God and to Israel His people. (Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, the Netziv)