

Snapshot Torah



GUIDE TO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

ISSUE 48

16th August 2014

EKEV

20th AV 5774

Kohen - First Aliya:

Chapter 7, verse 12 - Chapter 8, verse 10

- ✚ Moshe informs Bnai Yisrael that in exchange for observing the Torah, Hashem will shower them with an abundance of blessings including defeating their enemies and conquering the land of Israel.
- ✚ Moshe reminds his people about all the miracles that Hashem performed for them during their time in the midbar (desert): providing and sustaining them with mahn (manna), how the clothes they wore never wore out and that their feet never blistered or swelled, etc.
- ✚ Moses then describes many of the wonderful features of the Land of Israel, and teaches Bnai Yisrael the law of reciting Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meals) after they've eaten and become sated.

Levi - Second Aliya:

Chapter 8, verse 11 – Chapter 9, verse 3

- ✚ Moshe warns the people, once they conquer and start living in the Promised Land and things are going well, they should not forget it was Hashem who was behind their good fortune because by doing so would lead to their downfall.

Sh'lishi - Third Aliya:

Chapter 9, verses 4 - 29

- ✚ Moshe emphasizes the point that it was not due to their own virtues but rather, in the merit of their forefathers which enabled them entry into the land of Israel.
- ✚ Moshe relates how they kept provoking Hashem from the day they left Mitzraim until their arrival on Israel's borders.
- ✚ Moshe recounts how, after descending Mount Sinai and witnessing the Heter Eigel (Golden Calf) for himself, he had no choice but to smash the two Luchot (tablets of stone) in order to prevent Hashem from destroying everyone who was involved, (including Moshe's brother Aaron) completely.

R'VI' - Fourth Aliya:

Chapter 10, verses 1 - 11

- ✚ Moshe continues on how Hashem then commanded him to ascend the mountain once more to carve out for himself a new set of Luchot depicting the Ten Statements (Ten Commandments) and to build a wooden ark to store both the broken fragments of the first set together with the new tablets inside.
- ✚ Hashem also designated the Levites to be His holy servants, because of the devotion they demonstrated throughout the Heter Eigel incident.

Chamishi - Fifth Aliya:

Chapter 10, verse 12 - Chapter 11, verse 9

- ✚ Moshe informs Bnai Yisrael of what Hashem expects from each one of them: 'To fear, love and worship him with their hearts and souls, observing the Torah and following in Hashem's footsteps by performing Mitzvahs.

Shishi - Sixth Aliya:

Chapter 11, verses 10 – 21 and

Sh'vi'i - Seventh Aliya:

Chapter 11, verses 22 - 25

- ✚ The second Paragraph of the Shema is recited here. Its main focus is since the land of Israel is dependent on Hashem providing it with rain. It's important to heed to Hashem's word and serve him correctly in order that Hashem will send the right amount of rain required in its proper season.
- ✚ If, however, the people turn their backs on him and worship other gods then Hashem will become angry and the rain would desist.
- ✚ In order to bring the importance of Hashem's word home, the second paragraph re-emphasises the same points as the first; teaching the Torah to our children, and the commandment of putting up Mezuzahs on the door posts of our homes.

HafTorah – YISHAYAH (ISAIAH) Chapter 49 verse 14 to Chapter 51 verse 3

OVERVIEW:

- ✚ The Jewish nation expresses their concern that Hashem has abandoned them whilst they are all living in Galut (exile).
- ✚ Hashem reassures them that it is not so, comparing His love and mercy for His people to that of a mother who cares and cherishes her children, and even greater than that, too.
- ✚ Yishayah devotedly defines the ingathering of the exiles which will occur with the Messiah's arrival and just how Avraham and Sarah were blessed with a child when they had all but given up hope, so too, Hashem will send them the Moshiach.

LINK TO SEDRA READING:

- ✚ This is the second of the seven prophecies of comfort read between the ninth of Av and Rosh Hashanah.
- ✚ Just like Moshe reminds Bnai Yisrael in this week's sidra, the Haftarah, relates how Hashem reminds the people of their rebellious behavior that brought about their golus and suffering and how Yishayah guarantees that a new and improved Bnai Yisrael will emerge and will soon be reunited with the land of Israel, turning its devastation to paradise.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION: The meaning and purpose of reciting Birkat haMazon.

One of the most important prayers in Judaism is never recited during any of the synagogue services and as I mentioned last week, it is a prayer written in the Torah by Hashem, commanding us that when we eat and are satisfied, we must bless the lord our G-d for providing us with our meal. That prayer is Birkat HaMazon (Grace after Meals).

Reciting Birkat HaMazon is commonly referred to as bentsching, from the Yiddish word meaning "to bless." Although the word "bentsch" can refer to the recitation of any beracha. It is almost always used to refer to reciting Birkat HaMazon. Birkat HaMazon actually consists of four blessings, three of which were compiled together around the time of Ezra and the Great Assembly and a fourth which was added after the destruction of the Temple. These blessings are:

1/ Birkat Hazan (the blessing for providing food). This was composed by Moshe when the Mahn (Manna came down from Shamayim (heaven) in the desert in order to thank Hashem for providing food to the world,

2/ Birkat Ha-Aretz (the blessing for the land). Written by Yehoshua (Joshua) Joshua, when the Children of Israel ate from the first harvest after entering the Holy Land of Israel. This blessing thanks Hashem for bringing us forth from the land of Egypt, for making His covenant with us, and for giving us the land of Israel as an inheritance,

3/ Birkat Yerushalayim (the blessing for Jerusalem), authored by David and Shlomo (Solomon) Ha Melech, prays for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the coming of the Moshiach.

4/ Birkat Hatov v'Hamaytiv (the blessing for being good and doing well). This was added by our sages after the destruction of the Temple, although the beracha existed before that time. It emphasizes the goodness of Hashem work and that he is good and he will always do good!

Since we owe everything we have to Hashem's grace, it is appropriate to thank him and be grateful for everything he provides for us on a daily basis. I believe 'Meal times' provide a good time to pause and to do just that.

May Hashem provide the entire world with plenty of food and water to drink and continue nourishing us with his goodness, and compassion. Amen

