

Drash on Eikev (Deuteronomy 7:12–11:25)

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David L. Craig

This week's parashat is Eikev, the third in the book of D'varim, named for its opening words, "*these are the words*". The meaning of eikev is somewhat complicated although in this verse the BibleHub interlinear translates it simply: *because*. The root refers to the back of the lowest part of the body, the *heel*; and by extension, signifies the *end* of something that is often being followed by something else (from which is derived the expression *following on the heels of* something). Thus, it can separate an *if* from its *then*; as is the case of this parashat's first verse [all Tenach verses cited are from the Complete Jewish Bible]:

^{7:12} Because you are listening to these rulings, *keeping* and obeying them, *ADONAI* your God will *keep* with you the covenant and mercy that he swore to your ancestors.

According to [Wikipedia's summary](#),

The parashah tells of the blessings of obedience to [God](#), the dangers of forgetting God, and directions for taking the [Land of Israel](#). Moses recalls the making and re-making of the [Tablets of Stone](#), the incident of the [Golden Calf](#), [Aaron's](#) death, the [Levites'](#) duties, and exhortations to serve God.

Tah-a-mod, Elaine bat Benyamin Moshe. Elaine will read for us Deuteronomy chapter 10, verses 6 through 9.

⁶ The Israelites traveled from Beeroth Bene-jaakan^b to Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar his son succeeded him as priest. ⁷ From there they traveled to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water.

⁸ At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him, and to pronounce blessings in His name, as they do to this day. ⁹ That is why Levi has no portion or inheritance among his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God promised him.

Thank you, my bride.

The Traditional view of Deuteronomy holds the book was written by Moses and proclaimed to the Israelites before he transferred his leadership to Joshua, climbed Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land from afar, and died. Some believe the proclamation and his death occurred in a single daylight period. However, there has been much scholarly work using the tools of *literary criticism* that argues for authorship by a group of writers many centuries after the events in book occurred.

Note these four verses do not fit with the verses that precede and follow them. These verses are voiced as a third party narration but the bracketing verses are clearly Moses speaking in first person. In

addition, they are seamless when verses 6-9 are skipped over, flowing from telling of the second set of tablets into staying on the mountain another 40 days interceding for the Israelites to be spared destruction for the sin of the golden calf. The literary critics see one or two unexplained editorial insertions by one or more of the writers of the book long after Moses lived.

These verses beg a question of the Traditionalists: Why did Moses break the flow of his speech in this way? One popular suggestion is the verses constitute a footnote or an aside, so the changes of voicing aid the listeners in recognizing that construction. Also there is a relationship between this footnote and the main flow. Some traditionalists see that relationship as the extraordinary forgiveness of a failure of faith so grievous as necessitating ministry disqualification. Most emphatically Aaron *made* the golden calf and *proclaimed* to all it was the God that had brought them out of Egypt. However, God had made a way for him to be subsequently sanctified as the first high priest.

Many have taken note of the inclusion of the fact Eleazar ben Aharon became the second high priest in his father's stead. In just one example, within volume 4 of *Harmony of the Law*, John Calvin wrote:

In the death of Aaron they might discern the punishment of their rebellion. But the fact that Eleazar was appointed in his place, was a sign of the paternal grace of God, who did not suffer them to be forsaken on that account.

We Traditionalists can wonder what Moses was thinking as he delivered these words, words he was either receiving and repeating in real time, or had been inspired to compose beforehand. Was he thinking of the brother that came to find him after he had been in exile for four decades or so, and later served as high priest for another four decades or so? Was he thinking of his own imminent departure as he was handing the keys over to Joshua, just as Aaron had recently handed the keys over to Eleazar?

Another thread can be discerned here: continuity of office was immediately demonstrated. Eleazar became the second high priest when the first died. The LORD had provided the means for the earthly priesthood to survive death. Right where Moses is recounting Israel's major league failure that influenced the destruction of the original covenant tablets, the account pauses to note that the mediating ministry of the high priest outlived both the astonishing failure as well as the mortality of the original high priest. A succession of high priests points to the need for the perfect high priest who cannot be conquered by death.

Now I need to shift gears.

Last week from Wednesday evening to Thursday evening was this cycle's ninth day of the Biblical month of Av—[Tisha B'Av](#), the most somber fast day of Judaism, which had not been corporately noted at Ahavat Yeshua this cycle until now. As part of a remedy for all the not happy emotion congregants incur during those 24 hours, the rabbis established the seven haftarot of consolation which are considered weekly from the first Shabbat following Tisha B'Av to the seventh which is then followed by Yom Terruah and the beginning of the not so consoling Days of Awe which culminate in Yom Kippur. Last week's Haftarah, Isaiah chapter 40 verses 1 through 26, sets the stage:

¹ "Comfort and keep comforting my people," says your God.

² "Tell Yerushalayim to take heart; proclaim to her that she has completed her time of service, that her guilt has been paid off, that she has received at the hand of *ADONAI* double for all her sins."

³ A voice cries out:

"Clear a road through the desert for *ADONAI*!
Level a highway in the 'Aravah for our God!

⁴ Let every valley be filled in,
every mountain and hill lowered,
the bumpy places made level
and the crags become a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of *ADONAI* will be revealed;
all humankind together will see it,
for the mouth of *ADONAI* has spoken."

⁶ A voice says, "Proclaim!"
And I answer, "What should I proclaim?"

"All humanity is merely grass,
all its kindness like wildflowers:

⁷ the grass dries up, the flower fades,
when a wind from *ADONAI* blows on it.
Surely the people are grass!

⁸ The grass dries up, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever."

⁹ You who bring good news to Tziyon,
get yourself up on a high mountain;
you who bring good news to Yerushalayim,
cry out at the top of your voice!
Don't be afraid to shout out loud!
Say to the cities of Y'hudah,
"Here is your God!

¹⁰ Here comes *Adonai ELOHIM* with power,
and his arm will rule for him.
Look! His reward is with him,
and his recompense is before him.

¹¹ He is like a shepherd feeding his flock,
gathering his lambs with his arm,
carrying them against his chest,
gently leading the mother sheep."

I have not time for more, unfortunately, as I felt a stirring to retell something Paul Wilbur shared with me in the early 1980s. He had just returned from going out with others from Beth Messiah to evangelize Orthodox Jewish people. He had received a rebuke from one who pointedly asked if he even knew what day it was. His answer, "Tuesday?" drew scorn that I could tell had convicted him. I am confident if Paul had been a Gentile, the question would never have been asked, as Tisha B'Av is not mentioned in The Scriptures (save that Zechariah chapter 7 may describe its forerunner). Thus the *Sola Scriptura* crowd have likely never heard of it. But if you congregate in a Messianic Jewish synagogue, you really need to maintain awareness of concepts unmentioned in Scripture that are highly meaningful to many Jewish people. If a *Gentile* had been asked and answered, "It's Tisha B'Av, of course," the response would likely have been strong respect, opening a door to further discussion.

To be fair to Paul, Beth Messiah was not formally recognizing Tisha B'Av at that time. I humbly submit every Messianic Jewish synagogue should prayerfully determine the way it should go regarding Tisha B'Av observance.

The next parashat is *Re'eh*, which spans Deuteronomy chapter 11 verse 26 through chapter 16 verse 17.