

Parashat Ki Tavo

Deuteronomy 26:1–29:8

SEPTEMBER 20, 2019



SUMMARY

Moshe and the Israelites are still in the desert preparing to enter the Promised Land. This week Moshe continues his very long speech to the Israelites before they enter the Promised Land, focusing on many more of the rules that they should observe when they enter and live there. One of the rules in this *parasha* is that they should present the first fruits they have harvested from each of the seven species of the land of Israel (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates) to the Kohen, or priest, as a way of giving thanks. The farmer presenting these first fruits then was told to recount a story familiar to us from the Passover Haggadah--beginning by talking about living as an enslaved person and finishing by giving thanks for the harvest of these first fruits from their land.

Later in the *parasha* the Israelites are taught that once they cross the Jordan River to enter the land, they are responsible for standing stones up, coating them with plaster then inscribing them with all the words of the Torah. The Israelites are reminded, once again, to be faithful to G*d's *mitzvot* so that the nation will experience blessing and not curse.

From Our Commentators:

RABBEINU BAHYA:

“You are to inscribe on them all the words of this Torah.” This teaches that the entire Torah was written on these stones. This is also the view of Nachmanides who writes: “for we have found in the book of Tagai that the entire Torah was inscribed upon them starting with Genesis and concluding with the words: ‘before the eyes of the whole of Israel’ (Deut. 34,12), complete with all the decorations of the letters which we are familiar with.” These stones were the model from which the script of the Torah nowadays was copied. Thus far Nachmanides.

According to Rabbi Saadyah Gaon, quoted by Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, these stones only contained a list of the 613 commandments as they are recorded in the Book Halachot Gedolot in the form of warnings.

For Discussion:

- 1) In this week’s *parasha* we learn that after the Israelites cross the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land, they are to stand large stones up on Mt. Ayval, plaster these stones, and write on these stones all of the words of Torah. Why do you think G*d makes them responsible for writing all of the words of Torah on these stones?
- 2) G*d tells the Israelites to plaster these stones before carving the words of Torah into them. Why might G*d ask them to plaster the stones before writing the words of the Torah on them?
- 3) Mt. Ayval is a mountain that the Israelites will reach several miles after they cross into the Promised Land. Why do you think that G*d told the Israelites to write all the words of Torah on large stones at the top of this mountain. Wouldn’t they be more likely to see them if these words were written on big stones in a city or in another place that was easier to get to?