

Parashat Ki Tavo

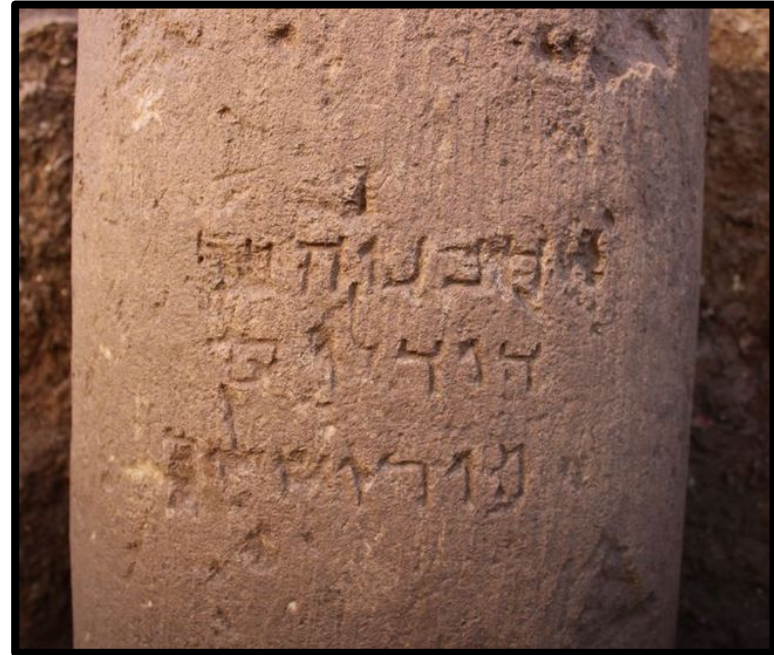
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Taught By:

Parker & Abigail

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.



1st / 2nd century inscription reading "Jerusalem" found on a column near the entrance of the city.

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.

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 all of the words of Torah on these stones. Why do you think G*d tells them to do this?

ABIGAIL: When they stand these big stones up it will be easier for the Israelites to see them and read the words. Also, maybe standing them up is a way to show respect for the words of Torah--including G*d's name--written on these stones.

PARKER: I noticed is that the verse doesn't say just to write the laws in the Torah. It says that the Israelites are responsible for writing all of the words of Torah on these plastered stones--including all of the stories. This might be because stories can help you connect ideas and make you think and help you see things in new ways. The Israelites will be starting a new community together in the Promised Land and knowing these stories might help them think creatively about how to do it.

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?

ABIGAIL: Maybe G*d wanted them to plaster over the stones before carving them so that the surface would be more smooth and the words of Torah would be easier to read.

PARKER: Maybe G*d also thinks it will be easier for them to write the words into plaster than into stone.

Why do you think that G*d would tell the Israelites to write all the words of Torah on these large stones *at the top of a 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 is easier to get to?

ABIGAIL: Maybe G*d told the Israelites to write the words of Torah on these large stones on a mountain so that when they go up to read the words it reminds them of receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai and the awesomeness of that moment.

PARKER: Often people go to Torah when they need an answer to a challenging problem. I find that when I take a walk it helps me think or to see a challenge in a new way. Maybe G*d wants the Israelites to put the Torah at the top of a mountain so that Israelites looking for answers will have to take a walk to get to the Torah.