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Parsha and Haftara Eikev
by Julie Zhuk on 2023-08-05

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Parsha Eikev

In this week's Torah portion, Moses tells the Jewish people that He has a lot of expectations from them. G-d wants the Jews to follow through with the *mitzvos* of the Torah, and then they will prosper in the Land of Israel, which G-d has promised to give to them. Of course, the Jews are not yet living in the Land of Israel. They have first to conquer and settle there first. The Jews are keeping in with G-d's promise to their forefathers. This Parsha is not completely butterfly and roses, the Jews are loved by G-d, but they were not perfect human beings. Moses reprimanded them for their failings in their first generation as a people. He was reminding them of the time they had gotten together and created the Golden Calf.

Then there was the time of the rebellion that Korach had; he was the ring leader of that operation. Moses went on to remind the Jews of the sin of the spies when they angered G-d at what was known as "Graves of Lust." In this week's Parsha, Moses talked to the Jews about being rebellious toward G-d. Moses concludes his speech with the Jews, saying, even though his talk has come off harsh, he wants them to know that G-d loves the Jews. G-d forgives the Jews. G-d gives the Jews a second round of Tablets, and in it, He inscribes their repentance. Since they spent forty years in the desert, the Jews were going to enter the land of Israel now. It was going to flow with milk and honey. It was going to have wheat, barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oils, and dates).

It was also going to be the place that was going to be the focus of G-d's providence of His whole world. G-d commanded them to destroy the idols of the land's former masters, and to beware that G-d's power and His hand have gotten Him all of this wealth. G-d expected the Jewish people to fear Him. G-d wanted the Jews to follow His ways. Early on in the Parsha, it mentions the founder of the Zionist movement, a man named Valdimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky. He was a Zionist Revisionist and was Menachem Begin's ideological mentor, and he attended a cocktail party. There is a story where he complimented a woman on her appearance.

The woman did not feel that this man was so good-looking. She said she wished she could say the same thing about the way he looked. He told her to do what he did and tell her to do what he did and lie. We learn from this Parsha that whether it's about being honest or painfully honest, it is not always so easy and cut and dry. Doing the right thing is not as easy, or straightforward as we may think it is. The Torah portion uses an example: Moses reminds the Jewish people of the capabilities they are unaware of. In the Talmud, it asks us Jews if fearing G-d is a small thing. A man is of spiritual stature. Fearing G-d is a feared accomplishment; if a man can do that, they can achieve so much more. This means they have a relationship with G-d.

There is a teaching from this Parsha that there is Moshe inside of every Jew. Inside every Jew, Moses is directing his remarks, and when people scrape the surface of their inner selves, they

will discover layers upon layers of spirituality. Through that, they will find a connection that is there for the taking. While we are alive, the sky is the limit, and we should give as much as we can. Having that little spark of Moses with us, it's a reminder of Moses. He is reminding us to be as kind and generous to as many other Jews out there and helping them out in any way out. We will all live on this planet for as long as our bodies and mind can handle it, and we won't be here anymore. For the life we have lived, we will be judged for the good things we have done. It will be for our personal talents, and what we have given to others around us.

Haftara Eikev

The first part of the Haftara focuses on the Jews being driven out of their homeland 200 thousand years ago. It wasn't just that the Jews didn't have a good place to live or nowhere to live, but they didn't have a relationship with G-d. What is meant by this is that their relationship with G-d was damaged. The Temple was G-d's home on earth, and without it, there was a lack of spirituality and a lack of connection between the Jewish people and the people to G-d. The Jewish people are awaiting the time when the world is going to be redeemed, healed, and whole again. As we wait for this to happen, we don't always feel G-d's presence in our lives.

When we don't feel Him the most, that is when we call out to Him asking Him to embrace us. That is when we are asking Him to HUG us. In this Haftara, the Jews were expressing their concern about G-d leaving them. When they think about G-d leaving them, they forget about the times they went against Him and the times they worshiped idols and did the many things He did not want them to do. At first, G-d does not bring these things up; He does not want to make the Jewish people feel instantly bad about the many things they did wrong a long time ago. He knows that they made their lists of mistakes long ago.

Eventually, they will focus on those things and cross that bridge. Throughout history, we know that G-d is very loving. In this Haftara, G-d reassures them that this is not the case. He compares His love and mercy for the people. His love and mercy to the people is to that of a mother and her children. It is greater than anything anyone has ever known. The prophet Isaiah touchingly says to the Jewish people, reminding them of how they rebelled against G-d.

He brings up how they once suffered and were in exile not long ago. He concludes his talk to the Jewish people with encouraging words about how their ancestors, Abraham and Sara, waited a long time to be blessed with children. Before being blessed with children, they had also given up their share of hope. The prophet told the Jewish people that everyone was still waiting for the Messiah to come.