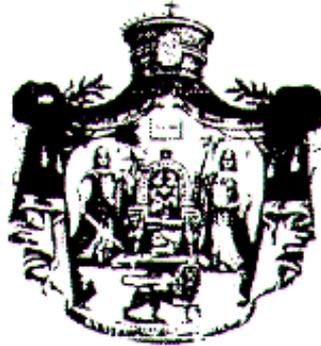
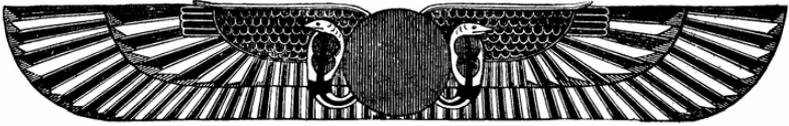


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እናቀርባለን።**

We present our many thanks to Our God-Father
and to Our King of Kings, to His Imperial
Majesty, HAILE SELASSIE I's Kingdome in the
Glorious name of *Iyesus Kristos*, Our Saviour –
Our Lord of Lords.

AMEN AND AMEN.



**THE BIBLE SOCIETY OF
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Our mission is to bring good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that saith to Zion, Thy God reigneth. – Isaiah 52:7

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NAM ET IPSA SCIENTIA POTESTAS EST¹

«አውቀትም ደግሞ በራሱ ሥልጣን ሆኖ»²

¹ Often, translated as “Knowledge is power,” an aphorism borrowed and much repeated, based upon Francis Bacon’s original, “*for Knowledge too is itself power.*”

² Ras Iadonis Tafari’s accurate rendering, and translation into the AMHARIC, of the LATIN phrase favoured and quoted above by Sir Bacon.

דברים

DEVARIM

HEBREW BOOK OF THE
DEUTERONOMY:
TORAH PORTION VOL.5,

Introduction & compilation

by

Ras Iadonis Tafari



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INTRODUCTORY NOTES

WE, THE BLACK JEWS of the world, along with the progressive Rastafari and collectively, the “Ethiopian-Hebrews,” i.e. *the Beta-Israel (or, Falashas³) of the West*, for more than a two to three millennia prior to the other “Jews”, the other ‘Israel⁴’; also have a written testimony to our Divine Heritage, possessing our own ancient religious, metaphysical and spiritual literature that endeavours to explain, clarify and explicate the revealed word of scripture, the Holy Bible. Amongst the other “Israel,” or European coverts called ‘Jews,’ these writings have been expanded upon and preserved in voluminous commentaries to the Torah, the Hebrew Bible, and thus further divided into various categories according to content. Overall, these traditional oral interpretations, scriptural ordinances, were compiled by certain Rabbis about A.D. 200; according to Orthodox Judaism, Judaic Studies and Yeshiva Schooling , i.e. **TALMUD, MISHNA, GEMARA, HAGGADAH, HALACHA,** and **THE KABBALAH,** inclusive of so-called **THE ZOHAR** and other like and similar ‘Extra-biblical’ and interlinear writings by distinguished (European) Jewish Rabbis.

THE FOLLOWING COMPILATIONS of each Book of the Hebrew Bible’s Weekly Torah Portions are intended as a basic and preliminary introduction to modern “JUDAISM”, as it presently, that is to say, the current form based predominantly upon the prevailing European-Jewish, i.e. Germanic-Polish tradition, commentaries, interpretations and related studies, that

³ *Falashas*, from the Ge’ez/Ethiopic root **ፈለሰ** *fellese* – meaning “to separate, go away, depart, emigrate, to secede, split off (from)”; **ፍልሰተ ባቢሎን** *filsete babilon*, the Babylonian exile; **ፈለሰ** *felasi* – “an exile, alien, pilgrim.” The implication here, is that, namely the “lost sheep” in the Americas and the Caribbean are also “Falashas of the West,” or Exilist in the Trans-Ethiopic, falsely called “TransAtlantic,” Ocean Slave Trade of the 16th and 17th centuries.

⁴ Particularly, the Israelis, i.e. those who also call themselves ‘Jews,’ the ‘wild olive grafted in,’ (Romans 11:17, 24) namely the so-called Gypsies, Khazars or better known, ‘European Jews’ (Ashkenaz), et al, who history documents converted to a form of Judaism after 70 A.D. and the global dispersion and later captivity of the ethnically African, or ‘Black’ Hebrews; see Rudolph R. Winsor’s, *From Babylon to Timbuctu*.

collectively are derived from what is called the Babylonian Talmud. Also inclusive in these Wikipedia free encyclopedia references are certain Sephardic, or Spanish-Jewish alternative points-of-view to the Torah studies that are highly instructive, especially in our exploration of the wide diversity of possible interpretation that have, and greatly continues to define modern Judaism.

We, the BLACK JEWS, are very conscious and aware of the fact that certain Black Hebrews and Ethiopian Jews may rightly object to the preponderance of whitewashed art and images in this volume, the majority created by the “wild olive tree” (Romans 11:17, 24), European-Jews, Anglo-Europeans and Romanist/Catholic pseudonymous Christians, all that were grafted, over nearly 16 centuries, since the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., into our natural vine tree, i.e. the True and Ancient Judaism that was Black, Egyptian/Kamite or Ethiopic in its primary origination, racial ethnicity, linguistic composition and biblical revelation. This we hope to, and intend to, by the Almighty’s help, sufficiently prove in our related volumes containing our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries (Amos 9:7) and exegesis, mainly based upon the various writings and research, by authors such as Mr. Gerald Massey, and others, both past and present, Black and White, who wrote (or, whose works and documents were subsequently translated) in English. We, for our part, have also studied, translated and interpreted from many of the original documents and manuscripts in order to compose our own extensive research and reconstruction of the Ethiopic Torah (Orit) from several of the ancient Black Race’s biblical languages (i.e., Kamo-Semitic) of the antiquity: namely, Ancient Egyptian (Hieroglyphs), Ethiopic (Western Semitic), Ge’ez, Tigre, biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Assyrian (Eastern Semitic), Sabaeen, Oromo (or, Galla) dialects and even archaic Amharic.

HOWEVER, we must be greater in spirit and broader in outlook and approach this sensitive subject matter by dealing with the facts on the ground and what is believed, or thought to be the case by the other Jews, and then present our case and the other side of this suppressed, neglected and avoided controversial story, our Black “Jewish” or African-based, and Ethiopian-

Hebrew story. **The views presented in this volume are not our own** and do not necessarily reflect the Ethiopian-Hebraic interpretation to the Old Testament, or Ethiopic Orit (Torah) in particular, but is being compiled into these five volumes: Bereishit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) and printed separately, largely due to side per volume. Nevertheless, this study, and these volumes have been compiled by THE LION OF JUDAH SOCIETY, and are designed for the Brotherhood of the Rastafari disciples and Ethiopian-Hebrew faithful to get better acquainted with the primary and prevailing opinions on Judaism and the interpretations of the Hebrew Bible.

THE TORAH PORTIONS IN THE FIFTH BOOK, CALLED DEVARIM (Hebrew Deuteronomy) are composed of 11 portions, including the first portion, or self-named parsha of **Devarim · Va'etchanan · Eikev · Re'eh · Shoftim · Ki Teitzei · Ki Tavo · Nitzavim · Vayelech · Haazinu · V'Zot HaBerachah.**

As ethnic, or “Black” Hebrews, and Afro-Israelities, we have several well-attested to, thoroughly researched and duly documented ancient Ethiopian books and manuscripts (MSS), that thankfully help serve as resource and reference materials, comprising what the present author and compiler has suitably named, the Ethiopic Talmud, many of these written in the Ge'ez language. These manuscripts assist us in forming our own Ethiopian-Hebrew and Black Jewish commentaries and exegeses, from a non-Eurocentric perspective. A few of the main Ethiopic Talmudic commentary source materials and titles are namely, but not strictly limited to, the following volumes:

The Queen of Sheba and Her only son Menyelek (Kebra Nagast), The Book of Jubilees, or Little Genesis (Kufale), the Book of Enoch (Ethiopic Henok), Gadla Adam (Conflict of Adam), Ancient Egyptian Wisdom & Kamite Mysteries (Gerald Massey's A Book of the Beginnings, Natural Genesis, Ancient Egypt: Light of the World, and Lectures), Lefafa Sedeq: Bandlet of Righteousness, to only name a few of the many texts, that we, by the Grace of the Almighty, soon expect to compose our Ethiopian-Hebrew commentaries and

exegesis based upon both the “Wisdom of the Egyptians (or, Egypt)” (Acts 7:22) coupled with our Judeo-Christian Ethiopian “Divine Heritage”. Yet, this is still to come, and we hope and pray to the Most High for guidance, perseverance and life eternal. Amen.

ONE FINAL NOTE is in order here, namely: There are several smaller volumes, some books, many fragments and a host of rare manuscripts written in Ethiopic, some of them original compositions, and others allegedly based on, what foreign scholars consider to be, translations from *Coptic* (or, Sabaeen?), *Hebrew*, *Syretic* (i.e. Arabic) and early *Greek* (κοινε); thus, these are not listed and enumerated in detail here because of the numerous and contradictory names, codices and other cataloging systems used by various museums and libraries, namely in England, France, Germany and elsewhere that have arbitrarily assigned to these Ethiopic writings, dubiously misappropriated from Ethiopia (sometime referred to by Orientalists as ‘Abyssinia’) over the past four to five centuries, by conservative estimations. Due to the anonymity of these Ethiopic ancient, cultural, historical and biblical documents, coupled the lack of access, and therefore the availability, presently to verify and thus corroborate these records, we cannot confirm all of the details without further study, but will reference, and quote, where possible, from any and all available sources and resources in circulation.

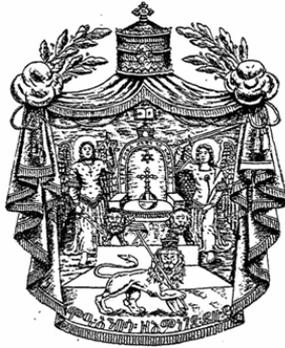
RAS IADONIS TAFARI⁵

Chairman, LOJS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & FINE-ARTS

c. 28th October, 2011

⁵ *Alius dictus, Debtera: Rasiadonis Tafari, A Sometime Scholar of LOJS' Black Christ College; H.I.M. HAILE SELASSIE I University in Exile [USA], An Ethiopian-Hebrew Scholar; and Keeper of the Department of Ethiopic & Amharic Antiquities in the Black Lion Museum, USA-ET.*



የሐገሰ ራእይ ምዕራፍ ፮ ቁጥር ፮
«ከሽማግሌዎቹም አንዱ።»

አታልቅሰኝ እነሆ፣ ከይሁዳ ነገድ የሆነው አገበሳ አርሱም
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አለኝ። »

REVELATION CHAPTER 5, VERSE 5

“*And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”*

Devarim (parsha)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Jump to: [navigation](#), [search](#)

Devarim, **D’varim**, or **Debarim** (דְּבָרִים — [Hebrew](#) for “words,” the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 44th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the first in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in July or August. It is always read on [Shabbat Chazon](#), the Sabbath immediately before [Tisha B’Av](#).



Moses Speaks to Israel (19th century engraving by [Henri Félix Emmanuel Philippoteaux](#))

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[[edit](#)] Summary

In the 40th year after [the Exodus](#) from [Egypt](#), [Moses](#) addressed the [Israelites](#) on the east side of the [Jordan River](#), recounting the instructions that [God](#) had given them. ([Deuteronomy 1:1–3](#).)

When the Israelites were at [Horeb](#) — [Mount Sinai](#) — God told them that they had stayed long enough at that mountain, and it was time for them to make their way to the hill country of [Canaan](#) and take possession of the [land](#) that God swore to assign to their fathers, [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#), and their heirs after them. ([Deuteronomy 1:6–8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Moses appointed the chiefs

Then Moses told the Israelites that he could not bear the burden of their bickering alone, and thus directed them to pick leaders from each tribe who were wise, discerning, and experienced. ([Deuteronomy 1:9–13.](#)) They did, and Moses appointed the leaders as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens. ([Deuteronomy 1:14–15.](#)) Moses charged the magistrates to hear and decide disputes justly, treating alike Israelite and stranger, low and high. ([Deuteronomy 1:16–17.](#)) Moses directed them to bring him any matter that was too difficult to decide. ([Deuteronomy 1:17.](#))



The Two Reports of the Spies (illustration from Bible card published 1907 by Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) The scouts

The Israelites set out from Horeb to [Kadesh-barnea](#), and Moses told them that God had placed the land at their disposal and that they should not fear, but take the land. ([Deuteronomy 1:19–21.](#)) The Israelites asked Moses to send men ahead to reconnoiter the land, and he approved the plan, selecting 12 men, one from each tribe. ([Deuteronomy 1:22–24.](#)) The scouts came to the wadi Eshcol, retrieved some of the [fruit](#) of the land, and reported that it was a good land. ([Deuteronomy 1:24–25.](#)) But the Israelites flouted God’s command and refused to go into the land, instead sulking in their [tents](#) about reports of people stronger and taller than they and large cities with sky-high [walls](#). ([Deuteronomy 1:26–28.](#)) Moses told them not to fear, as God would go before them and would fight for them, just as God did for them in Egypt and the [wilderness](#). ([Deuteronomy 1:29–31.](#)) When God heard the Israelites’ loud complaint, God became angry and vowed that not one of the men of that evil generation would see the good land that God swore to their fathers, except [Caleb](#), whom God would give the land on which he set foot, because he remained loyal to God. ([Deuteronomy 1:34–36.](#)) Moses complained that because of the people, God was incensed with Moses too, and told him that he would not enter the land either. ([Deuteronomy 1:37.](#)) God directed that Moses’s attendant [Joshua](#) would enter the land and allot it to Israel. ([Deuteronomy 1:38.](#)) And the little ones — whom the Israelites said would be carried off — would also enter and possess the land. ([Deuteronomy 1:39.](#)) The Israelites replied that now they would go up and fight,

just as God commanded them, but God told Moses to warn them not to, as God would not travel in their midst and they would be routed by their enemies. ([Deuteronomy 1:41–42](#).) Moses told them, but they would not listen, but flouted God’s command and willfully marched into the hill country. ([Deuteronomy 1:43](#).) Then the [Amorites](#) who lived in those hills came out like so many [bees](#) and crushed the Israelites at [Hormah](#) in [Seir](#). ([Deuteronomy 1:44](#).)



[satellite](#) image of the land east of the Jordan River — ancient [Edom](#), [Moab](#), [Ammon](#), and [Gilead](#) — present-day [Jordan](#) and vicinity

[edit] Encounters with the Edomites and Ammonites

The Israelites remained at Kadesh a long time, marched back into the wilderness by the way of the [Sea of Reeds](#), and then skirted the hill country of Seir a long time. ([Deuteronomy 1:46–2:1.](#))

Then God told Moses that they had been skirting that hill country long enough and should now turn north. ([Deuteronomy 2:2–3.](#)) God instructed that the people would be passing through the territory of their kinsmen, the descendants of [Esau](#) in Seir, and that the Israelites should be very careful not to provoke them and should purchase what [food](#) and [water](#) they ate and drank, for God would not give the Israelites any of their land.

([Deuteronomy 2:4–6.](#)) So the Israelites moved on, away from their kinsmen the descendants of Esau, and marched on in the direction of the wilderness of Moab. ([Deuteronomy 2:8.](#))

God told Moses not to harass or provoke the Moabites, for God would not give the Israelites any of their land, having assigned it as a possession to the descendants of [Lot](#). ([Deuteronomy 2:9.](#))

The Israelites spent 38 years traveling from Kadesh-barnea until they crossed the [wadi Zered](#), and the whole generation of warriors perished from the camp, as God had sworn.

([Deuteronomy 2:14–15.](#)) Then God told Moses that the Israelites would be passing close to the Ammonites, but the Israelites should not harass or start a fight with them, for God would not give the Israelites any part of the Ammonites' land, having assigned it as a possession to the descendants of Lot.

([Deuteronomy 2:17–19.](#))



Og's bed (engraving circa 1770 by Johann Balthasar Probst)

[\[edit\]](#) Conquest of Sihon

God instructed the Israelites to set out across the wadi [Arnon](#), to attack [Sihon](#) the Amorite, king of [Heshbon](#), and begin to occupy his land. ([Deuteronomy 2:24](#).) Moses sent messengers to King Sihon with an offer of peace, asking for passage through his country, promising to keep strictly to the highway, turning neither to the right nor the left, and offering to purchase what food and water they would eat and drink. ([Deuteronomy 2:26–29](#).) But King Sihon refused to let the Israelites pass through, because

God had stiffened his will and hardened his [heart](#) in order to deliver him to the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 2:30.](#)) Sihon and his men took the field against the Israelites at Jahaz, but God delivered him to the Israelites, and the Israelites defeated him, captured all his towns, and doomed every town, leaving no survivor, retaining as booty only the [cattle](#) and the spoil. ([Deuteronomy 2:32–35.](#)) From [Aroer](#) on the edge of the Arnon valley to Gilead, not a city was too mighty for the Israelites; God delivered everything to them. ([Deuteronomy 2:36.](#))



apportionments to the tribes of Israel, with those for Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh to the east of the River Jordan

[[edit](#)] Conquest of Og

The Israelites made their way up the road to [Bashan](#), and King [Og](#) of Bashan and his men took the field against them at Edrei, but God told Moses not to fear, as God would deliver Og, his men, and his country to the Israelites to conquer as they had conquered Sihon. ([Deuteronomy 3:1–2.](#)) So God delivered King Og of Bashan, his men, and his 60 towns into the Israelites' hands, and they left no survivor. ([Deuteronomy 3:3–7.](#)) Og was so big that his iron [bedstead](#) was nine [cubits](#) long and four cubits wide. ([Deuteronomy 3:11.](#))

[[edit](#)] Land for the Tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh

Moses assigned land to the [Reubenites](#), the [Gadites](#), and the half-[tribe of Manasseh](#). ([Deuteronomy 3:12–17.](#)) And Moses charged them that even though they had already received their land, they needed to serve as shock-troops at the head of their Israelite kinsmen, leaving only their wives, children, and livestock in the towns that Moses had assigned to them, until God had granted the Israelites their land west of the Jordan. ([Deuteronomy 3:18–20.](#)) And Moses charged Joshua not to fear the kingdoms west of the Jordan, for God would battle for him and would do to all those kingdoms just as God had done to Sihon and Og. ([Deuteronomy 3:21–22.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation



Jethro and Moses (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 1

[Exodus 18:13–26](#) and [Deuteronomy 1:9–18](#) both tell the story of appointment of judges. Whereas in [Deuteronomy 1:9–18](#), Moses creates the impression that he decided to distribute his duties, [Exodus 18:13–24](#) makes clear that [Jethro](#) suggested the idea to Moses and persuaded him of its merit.

[Numbers 13:1–14:45](#) and [Deuteronomy 1:19–45](#) both tell the story of the spies. Whereas [Numbers 13:1–2](#) says that God told Moses to send men to spy out the land of Canaan, in [Deuteronomy 1:22–23](#), Moses recounted that all the Israelites asked him to send men to search the land, and the idea pleased him. Whereas [Numbers 13:31–33](#) reports that the spies spread an evil report that the Israelites were not able to go up against the people of the land for they were stronger and taller than the Israelites, in [Deuteronomy 1:25](#), Moses recalled that the spies brought back word that the land that God gave them was good.

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 2

Both [Deuteronomy 2:4–11](#) and [Judges 11:17](#) report the Israelites' interaction with Edom and Moab. [Judges 11:17](#) reports that the Israelites sent messengers to the kings of both countries asking for passage through their lands, but both kings declined to let the Israelites pass.

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 3

The blessing of Moses for Gad in [Deuteronomy 33:20–21](#) relates to the role of Gad in taking land east of the Jordan in [Numbers 32:1–36](#) and [Deuteronomy 3:16–20](#). In [Deuteronomy 33:20](#), Moses commended Gad's fierceness, saying that Gad dwelt as a lioness and tore the arm and the head. Immediately thereafter, in [Deuteronomy 33:21](#), Moses noted that Gad chose a first part of the land for himself.

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 1

Interpreting [Deuteronomy 1:15](#), the Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that since the nation numbered about 600,000 men, the chiefs of thousands amounted to 600; those of hundreds, 6,000; those of fifties, 12,000; and those of tens, 60,000. Hence they taught that the number of officers in Israel totaled 78,600. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 18a.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) interpreted the words “And I charged your judges at that time” in [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) to teach that judges were to

resort to the rod and the lash with caution. Rabbi [Haninah](#) interpreted the words “hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously” in [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) to warn judges not to listen to the claims of litigants in the absence of their opponents, and to warn litigants not to argue their cases to the judge before their opponents have appeared. [Resh Lakish](#) interpreted the words “judge righteously” in [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) to teach judges to consider all the aspects of the case before deciding. [Rabbi Judah](#) interpreted the words “between your brethren” in [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) to teach judges to make a scrupulous division of liability between the lower and the upper parts of a house, and Rabbi Judah interpreted the words “and the stranger that is with him” in [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) to teach judges to make a scrupulous division of liability even between a stove and an oven. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 7b.](#))

Rabbi Judah interpreted the words “you shall not respect persons in judgment” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) to teach judges not to favor their friends, and Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words to teach judges not to treat a litigant as a stranger, even if the litigant was the judge’s enemy. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 7b.](#))

Resh Lakish interpreted the words “you shall hear the small and the great alike” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) to teach that a judge must treat a lawsuit involving the smallest coin in circulation (“a mere *perutah*”) as of the same importance as one involving 2 million times the value (“a hundred *mina*”). And the Gemara deduced from this rule that a judge must hear cases in the order that they

were brought, even if a case involving a lesser value was brought first. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))

Resh Lakish (or others say Rabbi Judah ben Lakish or Rabbi Joshua ben Lakish) read the words “you shall not be afraid of the face of any man” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) to teach that once a judge has heard a case and knows in whose favor judgment inclines, the judge cannot withdraw from the case, even if the judge must rule against the more powerful litigant. But before a judge has heard a case, or even after so long as the judge does not yet know in whose favor judgment inclines, the judge may withdraw from the case to avoid having to rule against the more powerful litigant and suffer harassment from that litigant. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 6b.](#)) And Rabbi Hanan read the words “you shall not be afraid of . . . any man” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) to teach judges not to withhold any arguments out of deference to the powerful. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))

[Rabbi Eliezer](#) the son of Rabbi [Jose the Galilean](#) deduced from the words “the judgment is God's” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) that once litigants have brought a case to court, a judge must not arbitrate a settlement, for a judge who arbitrates sins by deviating from the requirements of God's Torah; rather, the judge must “let the law cut through the mountain” (and thus even the most difficult case). ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 6b.](#))

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Haninah read the words “the judgment is God's” in [Deuteronomy 1:17](#) to teach that God views the action of wicked judges unjustly taking money away from one and giving it to another as an imposition upon God,

putting God to the trouble of returning the value to the rightful owner. ([Rashi](#) interpreted that it was though the judge had taken the money from God.) ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))

Rabbi Haninah (or some say [Rabbi Josiah](#)) taught that Moses was punished for his arrogance when he told the judges in

[Deuteronomy 1:17](#): “the cause that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.” Rabbi Haninah said that [Numbers 27:5](#) reports Moses’s punishment, when Moses found himself unable to decide the case of the [daughters of Zelophehad](#). [Rav Nahman](#) objected to Rabbi Haninah’s interpretation, noting that Moses did not say that he would always have the answers, but merely that he would rule if he knew the answer or seek instruction if he did not. Rav Nahman cited a Baraita to explain the case of the daughters of Zelophehad: God had intended that Moses write the laws of inheritance, but found the daughters of Zelophehad worthy to have the section recorded on their account. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))





Moses and the Messengers from Canaan (painting circa 1621–1624 by [Giovanni Lanfranco](#))

[Rabbi Eleazar](#), on the authority of Rabbi [Simlai](#), noted that [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) says, “And I charged your judges at that time,” while [Deuteronomy 1:18](#) similarly says, “I charged you [the Israelites] at that time.” Rabbi Eleazar deduced that [Deuteronomy 1:18](#) meant to warn the Congregation to revere their judges, and [Deuteronomy 1:16](#) meant to warn the judges to be patient with the Congregation. Rabbi Hanan (or some say Rabbi Shabatai) said that this meant that judges must be as patient as Moses, who [Numbers 11:12](#) reports acted “as the nursing father carries the sucking child.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 8a.](#))

Resh Lakish interpreted the words “Send you” in [Numbers 13:2](#) to indicate that God gave Moses discretion whether or not to send the spies. Resh Lakish read Moses’ recollection of the matter in [Deuteronomy 1:23](#) that “the thing pleased me well” to mean that sending the spies pleased Moses well but not God. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 34b.](#))

[Rabbi Ammi](#) cited the spies’ statement in [Deuteronomy 1:28](#) that the Canaanite cities were “great and fortified up to heaven” to show that the Torah sometimes exaggerated. ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 90b, Tamid 29a.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) taught that it was on Tisha B'Av (just before which Jews read parshah Devarim) that God issued the decree reported in [Deuteronomy 1:35–36](#) that the generation of the spies would not enter the Promised Land. (Mishnah Taanit 4:6; [Babylonian Talmud Taanit 26b, 29a.](#))

Noting that in the incident of the spies, God did not punish those below the age of 20 (see [Numbers 14:29](#)), whom [Deuteronomy 1:39](#) described as “children that . . . have no knowledge of good or evil,” Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani taught in [Rabbi Jonathan’s](#) name that God does not punish people for the actions that they take in their first 20 years. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 89b.](#))



The Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau (1624 painting by [Peter Paul Rubens](#))

[edit] Deuteronomy chapter 2

Interpreting the words “You have circled this mountain (גָּרַד, *bar*) long enough” in [Deuteronomy 2:3](#), Rabbi Haninah taught that Esau paid great attention to his parent (*boro*), his father, whom he supplied with meals, as [Genesis 25:28](#) reports, “Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his venison.” Rabbi Samuel the son of Rabbi Gedaliah concluded that God decided to reward Esau for this. When Jacob offered Esau gifts, Esau answered Jacob in [Genesis 33:9](#), “I have enough (רָוִי, *rav*); do not trouble yourself.” So God declared that with the same expression that Esau thus paid respect to Jacob, God would command Jacob’s descendants not to trouble Esau’s descendants, and thus God told the Israelites, “You have circled . . . long enough (רָוִי, *rav*).” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:17.)

Rav Hiyya bar Abin said in Rabbi Johanan's name that the words, “I have given Mount Seir to Esau for an inheritance,” in [Deuteronomy 2:5](#) establish that even idolaters inherit from their parents under Biblical law. The Gemara reported a challenge that perhaps Esau inherited because he was an apostate Jew. Rav Hiyya bar Abin thus argued that the words, “I have given Ar to the children of Lot as a heritage,” in [Deuteronomy 2:9](#) establish gentiles’ right to inherit. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 18a.](#))

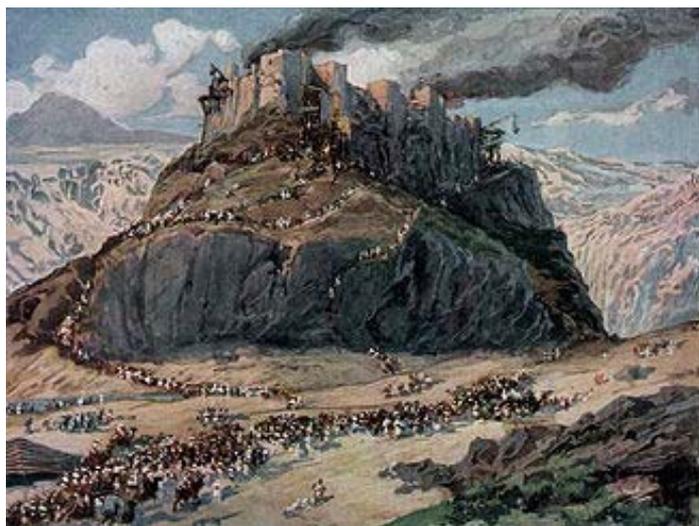
[Rabbi Hiyya](#) bar Abba, citing Rabbi Johanan, taught that God rewards even polite speech. In [Genesis 19:37](#), Lot’s older daughter named her son Moab (“of my father”), and so in [Deuteronomy 2:9](#), God told Moses, “Be not at enmity with Moab, neither contend with them in battle”; God forbade only

war with the Moabites, but the Israelites might harass them. In [Genesis 19:38](#), in contrast, Lot's younger daughter named her son Ben-Ammi (the less shameful "son of my people"), and so in [Deuteronomy 2:19](#), God told Moses, "Harass them not, nor contend with them"; the Israelites were not to harass the Ammonites at all. ([Babylonian Talmud Nazir 23b.](#))

Even though in [Deuteronomy 2:9](#) and [2:19](#), God forbade the Israelites from occupying the territory of Ammon and Moab, [Rav Papa](#) taught that the land of Ammon and Moab that Sihon conquered (as reported in [Numbers 21:26](#)) became purified for acquisition by the Israelites through Sihon's occupation of it (as discussed in [Judges 11:13–23](#)). ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 38a.](#))

Explaining why Rabban [Simeon ben Gamaliel](#) said (in Mishnah Taanit 4:8; [Babylonian Talmud Taanit 26b](#)) that there never were in Israel more joyous days than [Tu B'Av](#) (the fifteenth of [Av](#)) and [Yom Kippur](#), [Rabbah bar bar Hanah](#) said in the name of Rabbi Johanan (or others say Rav Dimi bar Joseph said in the name of Rav Nahman) that Tu B'Av was the day on which the generation of the wilderness stopped dying out. For a Master deduced from the words, "So it came to pass, when all the men of war were consumed and dead . . . that the Lord spoke to me," in [Deuteronomy 2:16–17](#) that as long as the generation of the wilderness continued to die out, God did not communicate with Moses, and only thereafter — on Tu B'Av — did God resume that communication. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 30b](#), [Bava Batra 121a–b.](#))

A Baraita deduced from [Deuteronomy 2:25](#) that just as the sun stood still for Joshua in [Joshua 10:13](#), so the sun stood still for Moses, as well. The [Gemara](#) (some say Rabbi Eleazar) explained that the identical circumstances could be derived from the use of the identical expression “I will begin” in [Deuteronomy 2:25](#) and in [Joshua 3:7](#). Rabbi Johanan (or some say Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani) taught that this conclusion could be derived from the use of the identical word “put” (*tet*) in [Deuteronomy 2:25](#) and [Joshua 10:11](#). And Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani (or some say Rabbi Johanan) taught that this conclusion could be deduced from the words “the peoples that are under the whole heaven, who, when they hear the report of you, shall tremble, and be in anguish because of you” in [Deuteronomy 2:25](#). Rabbi Samuel (or some say Rabbi Johanan) taught that the peoples trembled and were in anguish because of Moses when the sun stood still for him. ([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 25a](#), [Taanit 20a](#).)



The Conquest of the Amorites (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A [midrash](#) interpreted the Israelites' encounter with Sihon in [Numbers 21:21–31](#) and [Deuteronomy 2:24–3:10](#). Noting the report of [Numbers 21:21–22](#) that “Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying: ‘Let me pass through your land,’” the midrash taught that the Israelites sent messengers to Sihon just as they had to Edom to inform the Edomites that the Israelites would not cause Edom any damage. Noting the report of [Deuteronomy 2:28](#) that the Israelites offered Sihon, “You shall sell me food for money . . . and give me water for money,” the midrash noted that water is generally given away for free, but the Israelites offered to pay for it. The midrash noted that in [Numbers 21:21](#), the Israelites offered, “We will go by the king's highway,” but in [Deuteronomy 2:29](#), the Israelites admitted that they would go “until [they] shall pass over the Jordan,” thus admitting that they were going to conquer Canaan. The midrash compared the matter to a watchman who received wages to watch a vineyard, and to whom a visitor came and asked the watchman to go away so that the visitor could cut off the grapes from the vineyard. The watchman replied that the sole reason that the watchman stood guard was because of the visitor. The midrash explained that the same was true of Sihon, as all the kings of Canaan paid Sihon money from their taxes, since Sihon appointed them as kings. The midrash interpreted [Psalm 135:11](#), which says, “Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan,” to teach that Sihon and Og

were the equal of all the other kings of Canaan. So the Israelites asked Sihon to let them pass through Sihon's land to conquer the kings of Canaan, and Sihon replied that the sole reason that he was there was to protect the kings of Canaan from the Israelites. Interpreting the words of [Numbers 21:23](#), "and Sihon would not suffer Israel to pass through his border; but Sihon gathered all his people together," the midrash taught that God brought this about designedly so as to deliver Sihon into the Israelites' hands without trouble. The midrash interpreted the words of [Deuteronomy 3:2](#), "Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon," to say that if Heshbon had been full of mosquitoes, no person could have conquered it, and if Sihon had been living in a plain, no person could have prevailed over him. The midrash taught that Sihon thus would have been invincible, as he was powerful and dwelt in a fortified city. Interpreting the words, "Who dwelt at Heshbon," the midrash taught that had Sihon and his armies remained in different towns, the Israelites would have worn themselves out conquering them all. But God assembled them in one place to deliver them into the Israelites' hands without trouble. In the same vein, in [Deuteronomy 2:31](#) God said, "Behold, I have begun to deliver up Sihon . . . before you," and [Numbers 21:23](#) says, "Sihon gathered all his people together," and [Numbers 21:23](#) reports, "And Israel took all these cities." ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:29.)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 3

A midrash taught that according to some authorities, Israel fought Sihon in the month of [Elul](#), celebrated the Festival in [Tishri](#), and after the Festival fought Og. The midrash inferred this from the similarity of the expression in [Deuteronomy 16:7](#), “And you shall turn in the morning, and go to your tents,” which speaks of an act that was to follow the celebration of a Festival, and the expression in [Numbers 21:3](#), “and Og the king of Bashan went out against them, he and all his people.” The midrash inferred that God assembled the Amorites to deliver them into the Israelites’ hands, as [Numbers 21:34](#) says, “and the Lord said to Moses: ‘Fear him not; for I have delivered him into your hand.’” The midrash taught that Moses was afraid, as he thought that perhaps the Israelites had committed a trespass in the war against Sihon, or had soiled themselves by the commission of some transgression. God reassured Moses that he need not fear, for the Israelites had shown themselves perfectly righteous. The midrash taught that there was not a mighty man in the world more difficult to overcome than Og, as [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) says, “only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim.” The midrash told that Og had been the only survivor of the strong men whom [Amraphel](#) and his colleagues had slain, as may be inferred from [Genesis 15:5](#), which reports that Amraphel “smote the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim,” and one may read [Deuteronomy 3:1](#) to indicate that Og lived near Ashteroth. The midrash taught that Og was the refuse among the Rephaim, like a hard olive that escapes being mashed in the olive

press. The midrash inferred this from [Genesis 15:13](#), which reports that “there came one who had escaped, and told [Abram](#) the Hebrew,” and the midrash indentified the man who had escaped as Og, as [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) describes him as a remnant, saying, “only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim.” The midrash taught that Og intended that Abram should go out and be killed. God rewarded Og for delivering the message by allowing him to live all the years from Abraham to Moses, but God collected Og’s debt to God for his evil intention toward Abraham by causing Og to fall by the hand of Abraham’s descendants. On coming to make war with Og, Moses was afraid, thinking that he was only 120 years old, while Og was more than 500 years old, and if Og had not possessed some merit, he would not have lived all those years. So God told Moses (in the words of [Numbers 21:34](#)), “fear him not; for I have delivered him into your land,” implying that Moses should slay Og with his own hand. The midrash noted that in [Deuteronomy 3:2](#), God told Moses to “do to him as you did to Sihon,” and [Deuteronomy 3:6](#) reports that the Israelites “utterly destroyed them,” but [Deuteronomy 3:7](#) reports, “All the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves.” The midrash concluded that the Israelites utterly destroyed the people so as not to derive any benefit from them. (Numbers Rabbah 19:32.)



Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Rabbi [Phinehas ben Yair](#) taught that the 60 rams, 60 goats, and 60 lambs that [Numbers 7:88](#) reports that the Israelites sacrificed as a dedication-offering of the altar symbolized (among other things) the 60 cities of the region of Argob that [Deuteronomy 3:4](#) reports that the Israelites conquered. (Numbers Rabbah 16:18.)

[Abba Saul](#) (or some say Rabbi Johanan) told that once when pursuing a deer, he entered a giant thighbone of a corpse and pursued the deer for three [parasangs](#) but reached neither the deer nor the end of the thighbone. When he returned, he was told that it was the thighbone of Og, King of Bashan, of whose extraordinary height [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) reports. ([Babylonian Talmud Nidah 24b.](#))



Moses Views the Promised Land (engraving by [Gerard Jollain](#) from the 1670 *La Sainte Bible*)

A midrash deduced from the words in [Deuteronomy 3:11](#), “only Og king of Bashan remained . . . behold, his bedstead . . . is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon?” that Og had taken all the land of the children of Ammon. Thus there was no injustice when Israel came and took the land away from Og. (Numbers Rabbah 20:3.)

Noting that [Deuteronomy 3:21](#) and [3:23](#) both use the same expression “at that time” (הַהוּא בְּ־עֵת), a midrash deduced that the events of the two verses took place at the same time. Thus [Rav Huna](#) taught that as soon as God told Moses to hand over his office to Joshua, Moses immediately began to pray to be permitted to enter the Promised Land. The midrash compared Moses to a governor who could be sure that the king would confirm whatever orders he gave so long as he retained his office. The governor redeemed whomever he desired and imprisoned

whomever he desired. But as soon as the governor retired and another was appointed in his place, the gatekeeper would not let him enter the king's palace. Similarly, as long as Moses remained in office, he imprisoned whomever he desired and released whomever he desired, but when he was relieved of his office and Joshua was appointed in his stead, and he asked to be permitted to enter the Promised Land, God in [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) denied his request. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:5.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments



Moses Maimonides

[\[edit\]](#) According to Maimonides

[Maimonides](#) cited verses in the parshah for three negative [commandments](#):

- That the [judge](#) not be afraid of a bad person when judging ([Deuteronomy 1:17](#).)

- Not to appoint as judge one who is not learned in the laws of the Torah, even if the person is learned in other disciplines ([Deuteronomy 1:17.](#))
- That warriors shall not fear their enemies nor be frightened of them in battle ([Deuteronomy 3:22.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Negative Commandments 58](#), [276](#), [284](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvoth of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2:55–56, 259, 265–66. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4.](#))

[[edit](#)] According to Sefer ha-Chinuch

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are two negative commandments in the parshah.

- Not to appoint any judge who is unlearned in the Torah, even if the person is generally learned ([Deuteronomy 1:17.](#))
- That a judge presiding at a trial should not fear any evil person ([Deuteronomy 1:17.](#))



the haftarah for parshah Devarim

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:238–45. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7](#).)

[[edit](#)] Haftarah

Devarim is always read on the final Shabbat of Admonition, the Shabbat immediately prior to Tisha B'Av. That Shabbat is called *Shabbat Chazon*, corresponding to the first word of the [haftarah](#), which is [Isaiah 1:1–27](#). Many communities chant the majority of this haftarah in the mournful melody of the [Book of Lamentations](#) due to the damning nature of the vision as well as its proximity to the saddest day of the [Hebrew calendar](#), the holiday on which Lamentations is chanted.



Mount Hermon

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

Some Jews recite the blessing of fruitfulness in [Deuteronomy 1:10–11](#) among the verses of blessing recited at the conclusion of the Sabbath. (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 643. Brooklyn: [Mesorah Publications](#), 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

“Mount Lebanon . . . Siryon,” another name for [Mount Hermon](#), as [Deuteronomy 3:9](#) explains, is reflected in [Psalm 29:6](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#) . ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on [Siddur Sim Shalom](#) for Shabbat and Festivals*, 20. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Devarim, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hijaz, the maqam that expresses mourning and sadness. This maqam is appropriate not due to the content of the parshah, but because this is the parshah that falls on the Shabbat prior to [Tisha B'Av](#), the date that marks the destruction of the [Temples](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 14:5–6](#) (Rephaim, Emim, Horites); [15:5](#) (numerous as stars); [22:17](#) (numerous as stars); [26:4](#) (numerous as stars).
- [Exodus 4:21](#); [7:3](#); [9:12](#); [10:1](#), [20](#), [27](#); [11:10](#); [14:4](#), [8](#) (hardening of heart); [18:13–26](#) (appointment of the chiefs); [32:34](#) (command to lead the people to the Promised Land).
- [Numbers 10:11–34](#) (departure for the Promised Land); [13:1–14:45](#) (the spies); [20:14–21](#); [21:21–35](#) (victories over Sihon and Og); [27:18–23](#); [32:1–33](#).
- [Deuteronomy 9:23](#).

- [Joshua 1:6–9, 12–18; 11:20](#) (hardening of heart); [13:8–32](#).



Josephus

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 3:14:1–2; 3:15:1–3; 4:1:1–3; 4:4:5; 4:5:1–3](#).
- [Romans 9:14–18](#). 1st Century. (hardening of heart).
- [Revelation 17:17](#). Late 1st Century. (changing hearts to God’s purpose).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- Mishnah: Taanit 4:6; Sotah 7:8. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 315, 459. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Sukkah 3:13; Sotah 4:6, 7:12, 17, 14:4; Menachot 7:8; Arakhin 5:16. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner.

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 1:1–25:6. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:15–65. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): [Sheviit 47a](#); [Maasrot 4b](#); [Challah 45a](#); [Bikkurim 12a](#). Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 6b, 9, 11, 12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 32a](#); [Shabbat 85a](#); [Eruvin 30a, 100b](#); [Yoma 86b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 2b, 28b](#); [Taanit 20a, 30b](#); [Megillah 2b, 10a](#); [Moed Katan 15b](#); [Chagigah 6b](#); [Yevamot 47a, 86b](#); [Nedarim 20b](#); [Nazir 23b, 61a](#); [Sotah 34b, 35b, 47b, 48b](#); [Gittin 38a](#); [Kiddushin 18a](#); [Bava Kamma 38a–b](#); [Bava Batra 121b](#); [Sanhedrin 6b, 7b–8a, 17a, 102a](#); [Shevuot 16a, 47b](#); [Avodah Zarah 25a, 37b](#); [Horayot 10b](#); [Zevachim 115b](#); [Menachot 65a](#); [Chullin 60b, 90b](#); [Arakhin 16b, 32b, 33b](#); [Tamid 29a](#); [Niddah](#)

[24b](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval



Rashi

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:1–25. Land of Israel, 9th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, 7: 1–28. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 1–3*. Troyes, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:1–44. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari. 2:14*. Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 91. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).

- [Benjamin of Tudela](#). *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. Spain, 1173. Reprinted in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*. Introductions by Michael A. Singer, Marcus Nathan Adler, A. Asher, 91. Malibu, Calif.: Joseph Simon, 1983. [ISBN 0-934710-07-4](#). (giants).
- [Zohar](#) 1:178a; 2:31a, 68b, 183b, 201a, 214a; 3:117b, 190a, 260b, 284a, 286b. Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Hirsch

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 265–67. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.
- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.

- [Alan R. Millard](#). “Kings Og’s Iron Bed: Fact or fancy?” *Bible Review* 6 (2) (Apr. 1990).
- [Moshe Weinfeld](#). *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 5:125–89. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1991. [ISBN 0-385-17593-0](#).
- Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 3–38, 422–30. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).
- Elie Kaplan Spitz. [“On the Use of Birth Surrogates.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1997. EH 1:3.1997b. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 529, 535–36. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (that Jews will become as numerous as “the stars of heaven” requires human help).
- Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*, 38–45, 51–52. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003. [ISBN 0-316-73908-1](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Travelogue.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 102. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
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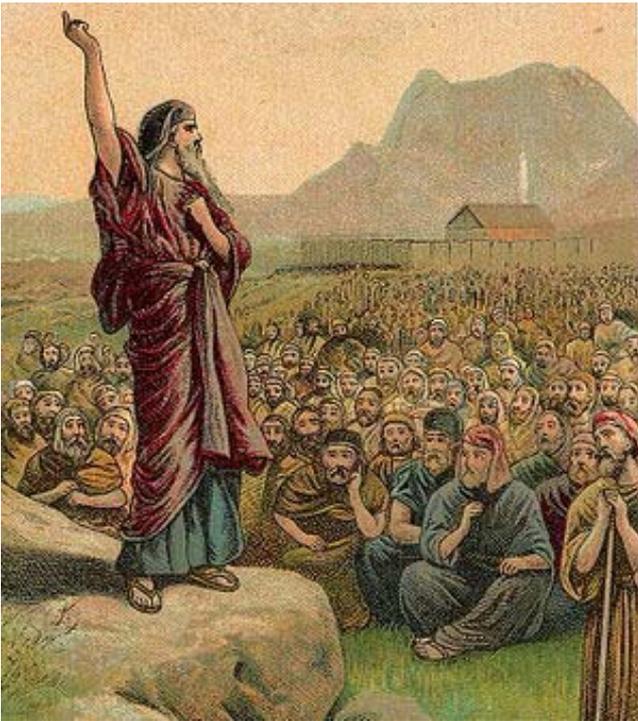
Va'etchanan

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Va'etchanan (וַאֲנִי־נִתְחַנַּנְתִּי — [Hebrew](#) for “and I pleaded,” the first word in the parshah) is the 45th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the second in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late July or August. It is always read on the [special Sabbath](#) *Shabbat Nachamu*, the Sabbath immediately after [Tisha B'Av](#).

As the parshah describes how the [Israelites](#) would sin and be banished from the [Land of Israel](#), Jews also read part of the parshah, [Deuteronomy 4:25–40](#), as the Torah reading for the morning (*Shacharit*) [prayer service](#) on *Tisha B'Av*, which commemorates the destruction of both the [First Temple](#) and [Second Temple](#) in [Jerusalem](#).



Moses Pleading with Israel (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

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Summary



Moses Views the Land of Israel (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

Moses asked to see the land

[Moses](#) pleaded with [God](#) to let him cross over and see the land on the other side of the [Jordan River](#). ([Deuteronomy 3:23–25](#).) But God was [wrathful](#) with Moses and would not listen, telling Moses never to speak of the matter again, and Moses blamed his punishment on the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 3:26](#).) God directed Moses to climb the [summit](#) of [Pisgah](#) and gaze about to look at the land. ([Deuteronomy 3:27](#).) And God told Moses to give [Joshua](#) his instructions and imbue him with strength and [courage](#), for Joshua was to lead the people and allot to them the land. ([Deuteronomy 3:28](#).)

Arguments to obey the law



Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law (painting by [João Zeferino da Costa](#))

Moses exhorted the Israelites to heed God's [laws](#), not to add anything to them, and not to take anything away from them, so that they might live to enter and occupy the land that God was giving them. ([Deuteronomy 4:1–2](#).) Moses noted that in the [sin of Baal-peor](#), God wiped out every person who followed Baal-peor, while preserving alive those who held fast to God. ([Deuteronomy 4:3–4](#).) Moses argued that observing the laws faithfully would prove to other peoples the Israelites' [wisdom](#) and discernment,

for no other great [nation](#) had a god so close at hand as God, and no other great nation had laws and rules as perfect as God's.

([Deuteronomy 4:6–8.](#))

Moses urged the Israelites to take utmost care not to [forget](#) the things that they saw, and to make them known to their [children](#) and children's children: How they stood before God at [Horeb](#), the [mountain](#) was ablaze with flames, God spoke to them out of the [fire](#), and God declared to them the [Ten Commandments](#).

([Deuteronomy 4:9–13.](#)) At the same time, God commanded Moses to impart to the Israelites laws for them to observe in the land that they were about to occupy. ([Deuteronomy 4:14.](#))



Moses Promulgates the Law (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Because the Israelites saw no shape when God spoke to them out of the fire at Horeb, Moses warned them not to make for themselves a sculptured image in any likeness whatever — the form of a man, woman, beast, bird, creeping thing, or fish. ([Deuteronomy 4:15–18](#).) And when they looked up and saw the sun, moon, stars, and heaven, they were not to be lured into [bowing down](#) to them or serving them, for God allotted those

things to other peoples, but God took the Israelites and brought them out of [Egypt](#) to be God's very own people. ([Deuteronomy 4:19–20.](#))

Moses said that God was angry with him on account of the Israelites, and God swore that Moses would not enter the land but would die in the land east of the Jordan. ([Deuteronomy 4:21–22.](#)) Moses cautioned the Israelites not to forget the [covenant](#) that God concluded with them, and not to make a sculptured image, for God is a consuming fire, an impassioned God. ([Deuteronomy 4:23–24.](#))

Moses called heaven and [earth](#) to witness against the Israelites that should they make for themselves a sculptured image when they were in the land, then God would scatter them among the peoples, leaving only a scant few alive. ([Deuteronomy 4:25–27.](#))

There in [exile](#) they would serve man-made gods of wood and stone, that would not be able to see, hear, eat, or smell.

([Deuteronomy 4:28.](#)) But when they were in distress and they searched for God with all their heart and soul, returned to God, and obeyed God, then they would find God, even there.

([Deuteronomy 4:29–30.](#)) For God is a compassionate God, Who would not fail them, let them perish, or forget the covenant that God made with their fathers. ([Deuteronomy 4:31.](#))

Moses invited the Israelites to consider whether in any time or space any people had ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire and survived, or any god had taken one nation from the midst of another by prodigious acts and awesome power as their God had done for them in Egypt before their very [eyes](#).

([Deuteronomy 4:32–34](#).) Moses said that it had been clearly demonstrated to them that the Lord alone is God and there is none beside God. ([Deuteronomy 4:35](#).) Moses thus admonished them to observe God’s laws and commandments, which Moses enjoined upon them that day, that it might go well with them and their children, and that they might long remain in the land that God was assigning to them for all time. ([Deuteronomy 4:40](#).)

Cities of refuge

Then Moses set aside three [cities of refuge](#) on the east side of the Jordan to which a [manslayer](#) who unwittingly slew a person without having been hostile to him in the past could escape and live: Bezer among the [Reubenites](#), [Ramoth](#) in [Gilead](#) among the [Gadites](#), and [Golan](#) in [Bashan](#) among the [Manassites](#). ([Deuteronomy 4:41–43](#).)



1768 Decalogue parchment by [Jekuthiel Sofer](#)

The Ten Commandments

Moses summoned the Israelites and called on them to hear the laws and rules that he proclaimed that day, to study them and observe them faithfully. ([Deuteronomy 5:1](#).) At Horeb, God made a covenant with them — not with their fathers, but with them, the living, every one of them. ([Deuteronomy 5:2–3](#).) God spoke to them [face](#) to face out of the fire on the mountain. ([Deuteronomy 5:4](#).) Moses stood between God and them to convey God’s words to them, for they were afraid of the fire and

did not go up the mountain. ([Deuteronomy 5:5](#).) God said the Ten Commandments:

- “I the Lord am your God.” ([Deuteronomy 5:6](#).)
- “You shall have no other gods beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them.” ([Deuteronomy 5:6–8](#); 5:7–9 in NJPS.)
- “You shall not [swear](#) falsely by the name of the Lord your God.” ([Deuteronomy 5:10](#); 5:11 in NJPS.)
- “Observe the Sabbath day and keep it [holy](#).” ([Deuteronomy 5:11](#); 5:12 in NJPS.)
- “Honor your [father](#) and your [mother](#).” ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#); 5:16 in NJPS.)
- “You shall not [murder](#).”
- “You shall not commit [adultery](#).”
- “You shall not [steal](#).”
- “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” ([Deuteronomy 5:16](#); 5:17 in NJPS.)
- “You shall not [covet](#) your neighbor’s [wife](#). You shall not crave your neighbor’s [house](#), or his [field](#), or his male or

female [slave](#), or his [ox](#), or his [ass](#), or anything that is your neighbor's.” ([Deuteronomy 5:17](#); 5:18 in NJPS)

God spoke these words to the whole congregation at the mountain, with a mighty voice out of the fire and the dense [clouds](#), and God inscribed them on two tablets of stone, which God gave to Moses. ([Deuteronomy 5:18](#), 5:19 in NJPS.) When the Israelites heard the voice out of the darkness and saw the mountain ablaze with fire, the tribal heads and elders asked Moses to hear all that God had to say and then tell the people, and they would willingly obey. ([Deuteronomy 5:19–24](#); 5:20–24 in NJPS.)

(A note on verse numbering: The Mechon Mamre Hebrew-English Bible to which articles in this series link numbers its verses according to the Lower Trope Marks system, in which the verses are numbered naturally in their form for study. Many Jewish Bibles in both Hebrew and English (including the 1917 [Jewish Publication Society *Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*](#), the [New Jewish Publication Society *Tanakh*](#), and the [ArtScroll *Chumash*](#)) use the numbering of the Upper Trope Marks system as used for public readings. Parallel verse numbering thus appears for the Ten Commandments in [Exodus 20](#) and here in [Deuteronomy 5](#).)

וְאֵת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ:
 הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה הַיּוֹם לְעַל לְבָבְךָ:
 גַּם לְבַנְיֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָם
 בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִכְתּוֹתֶיךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשֹׁכְבְךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ:
 וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפוֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ:
 וְעַל מְזֻזוֹת בְּיַתְּךָ וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ:

the *V'abavta* ([Deuteronomy 6:5–9](#)) in Hebrew



“Bind them for a sign upon your hand” (illustration from a Bible card published 1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The *Shema*

And Moses imparted God’s instruction, the *Shema* and *V'abavta*, saying: “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all

your soul, and with all your might. And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shall [teach](#) them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when thou rise up. And you shall bind them for a sign upon your [hand](#), and they shall be for frontlets between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house, and upon your gates.” ([Deuteronomy 6:4–9.](#))

Further exhortation to obey God

Moses exhorted the Israelites, when God brought them into the land and they ate their fill, not to forget the God who freed them from bondage in Egypt, to revere and worship only God, and to swear only by God’s name. ([Deuteronomy 6:10–13.](#)) Moses warned the Israelites not to follow other gods, any gods of the people about them, lest the anger of God blaze forth against them and wipe them off the face of the earth. ([Deuteronomy 6:14–15.](#)) Moses warned the Israelites not to try God, as they did at [Massah](#), but to keep God’s commandments and do what is right in God’s sight, that it might go well with them, that they might be able to possess the land, and that all their enemies might be driven out before you them. ([Deuteronomy 6:16–19.](#)) And when their children would ask the meaning of the commandments, they were to answer that they were slaves to [Pharaoh](#) in Egypt, and God wrought before them marvelous and destructive signs and portents, freed them with a mighty hand to give them the land, and then commanded them to observe all

these laws for their lasting good and survival. ([Deuteronomy 6:20–24.](#))

Instructions for conquest

Moses told the Israelites that when God brought them to the land and dislodged seven nations before them — the [Hittites](#), [Girgashites](#), [Amorites](#), [Canaanites](#), [Perizzites](#), [Hivites](#), and [Jebusites](#) — the Israelites were to doom them to destruction, grant them no terms, and give them no quarter. ([Deuteronomy 7:1–2.](#)) The Israelites were not to intermarry with them, for they would turn the Israelites’ children away from God to worship other gods, and God’s anger would blaze forth against the Israelites and wipe them out. ([Deuteronomy 7:3–4.](#)) The Israelites were to tear down their [altars](#), smash their pillars, cut down their sacred posts, and consign their images to the fire. ([Deuteronomy 7:5.](#))

The Israelites were a people consecrated to God, and God chose them from all the peoples on earth to be God’s treasured people. ([Deuteronomy 7:6.](#)) God chose them not because they were the most numerous of peoples, but because God favored them and kept the oath God made with their fathers. ([Deuteronomy 7:7–8.](#)) Moses told them to note that only God is God, the steadfast God who keeps God’s covenant faithfully to the thousandth [generation](#) of those who love God and keep God’s commandments, but who instantly requites with destruction those who reject God. ([Deuteronomy 7:9–10.](#))

In inner-Biblical interpretation

Deuteronomy chapter 4

Moses calls heaven and earth to serve as witnesses against Israel in [Deuteronomy 4:26](#), [30:19](#), [31:28](#), and [32:1](#). Similarly, [Psalm 50:4–5](#) reports that God “summoned the heavens above, and the earth, for the trial of His people,” saying “Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice!” [Psalm 50:6](#) continues: “Then the heavens proclaimed His righteousness, for He is a God who judges.”

In classical rabbinic interpretation

Deuteronomy chapter 3

Noting that [Deuteronomy 3:21](#) and [3:23](#) both use the same expression “at that time” (הַהוּא בְּעֵת־כֵּן), a [midrash](#) deduced that the events of the two verses took place at the same time. Thus [Rav Huna](#) taught that as soon as God told Moses to hand over his office to Joshua, Moses immediately began to pray to be permitted to enter the Promised land. The midrash compared Moses to a governor who could be sure that the king would confirm whatever orders he gave so long as he retained his office. The governor redeemed whomever he desired and imprisoned whomever he desired. But as soon as the governor retired and another was appointed in his place, the gatekeeper would not let him enter the king’s palace. Similarly, as long as Moses remained in office, he imprisoned whomever he desired and released

whomever he desired, but when he was relieved of his office and Joshua was appointed in his stead, and he asked to be permitted to enter the Promised Land, God in [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) denied his request. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah 2:5](#).)

The [Gemara](#) deduced from Moses's example in [Deuteronomy 3:23](#) that one should seek a suppliant frame of mind before praying. [Rav Huna](#) and [Rav Hisda](#) were discussing how long to wait between recitations of the [Amidah](#) if one erred in the first reciting and needed to repeat the prayer. One said: long enough for the person praying to fall into a suppliant frame of mind, citing the words "And I supplicated the Lord" in [Deuteronomy 3:23](#). The other said: long enough to fall into an interceding frame of mind, citing the words "And Moses interceded" in [Exodus 32:11](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 30b](#).)

Rabbi [Simlai](#) deduced from [Deuteronomy 3:23–25](#) that one should always first praise God at the beginning of prayer, for Moses praised God in [Deuteronomy 3:24](#) before he asked God in [Deuteronomy 3:25](#) to let him see the good land. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32a](#), [Avodah Zarah 7b–8a](#).) Rabbi Eleazar deduced from [Deuteronomy 3:26–27](#) that God let Moses see the Promised Land only because Moses prayed, and thus Rabbi Eleazar concluded that prayer is more effective than good deeds, for no one was greater in good deeds than Moses, and yet God let Moses see the land only after Moses prayed. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32b](#).)



The Temple in Jerusalem, with the altar at right

Rabban [Johanan ben Zakai](#) interpreted the word “Lebanon” in [Deuteronomy 3:25](#) to refer to the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) and “that goodly mountain” to refer to the Temple Mount. Thus one can interpret [Deuteronomy 3:25](#) to say that Moses asked to see God’s House. ([Babylonian Talmud Gittin 56b.](#)) Similarly, a midrash interpreted the word “Lebanon” in [Deuteronomy 3:25](#) to refer to the altar. Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) explained that the altar was called “Lebanon” because it made white (*malbin*) the sins of Israel, as indicated by the words of [Isaiah 1:18](#): “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white (*yalbinnu*) as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Rabbi Tabyomi said that the altar was called “Lebanon” because all hearts (*lebabo*) rejoice there, as indicated by the words of [Psalm 48:3](#): “Fair in situation, the joy of the whole earth, even Mount Zion.” And the Rabbis said that the altar was called “Lebanon” because of the words of [1 Kings 9:3](#), which says of God and the Temple: “My eyes and My heart (*libbi*) shall be there perpetually. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 1:2.)

Another midrash employed the understanding of “Lebanon” as the Temple to explain the role of gold in the world. Rabbi [Simeon ben Lakish](#) taught that the world did not deserve to have the use of gold. But God created gold for the sake of the Temple. The midrash deduced this from the use of the word “good” in both [Genesis 2:12](#), where it says, “the gold of that land is good,” and [Deuteronomy 3:25](#), where it says, “that goodly hill-country, and Lebanon.” ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 16:2.)



Destruction of Korah Dathan and Abiram (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Rabbi Levi taught that God told Moses “enough!” in [Deuteronomy 3:26](#) to repay Moses measure for measure for when Moses told [Korah](#) “enough!” in [Numbers 16:3](#). The Gemara provided another explanation of the word “enough! (*rab*)” in [Deuteronomy 3:26](#): God was telling Moses that Moses had a master (*rab*), namely Joshua, waiting to assume authority to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, and thus Moses should not

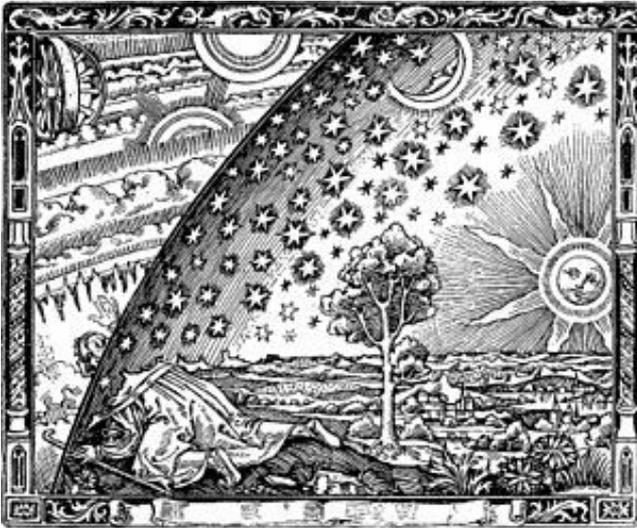
delay another master's reign by prolonging his own. The Gemara provided a third explanation of the word "enough!": God was telling Moses not to petition him anymore, so that people should not say: "How severe is the Master, and how persistent is the student." The Gemara explained why God was so hard on Moses with a [Baraita](#) taught in the School of [Rabbi Ishmael](#): according to the camel is the burden; that is, a stronger, more righteous one must bear a greater burden. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 13b.](#))

The School of Rabbi Ishmael taught that whenever Scripture uses the word "command (*tzav*)" (as [Deuteronomy 3:28](#) does), it denotes exhortation to obedience immediately and for all time. A Baraita deduced exhortation to immediate obedience from the use of the word "command" in [Deuteronomy 3:28](#), which says, "charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him." And the Baraita deduced exhortation to obedience for all time from the use of the word "command" in [Numbers 15:23](#), which says, "even all that the Lord has commanded you by the hand of Moses, from the day that the Lord gave the commandment, and onward throughout your generations." ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 29a.](#))

Deuteronomy chapter 4

In [Deuteronomy 4:1](#), Moses calls on Israel to heed the "statutes" (*bukim*) and "ordinances" (*mishpatim*). The Rabbis in a Baraita taught that the "ordinances" (*mishpatim*) were commandments that logic would have dictated that we follow even had Scripture not commanded them, like the laws concerning idolatry, adultery,

bloodshed, robbery, and blasphemy. And “statutes” (*hukim*) were commandments that the Adversary challenges us to violate as beyond reason, like those relating to *shaatnez* (in [Leviticus 19:19](#) and [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)), *halizab* (in [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#)), purification of the person with *tzaraat* (in [Leviticus 14](#)), and the [scapegoat](#) (in [Leviticus 16](#)). So that people do not think these “ordinances” (*mishpatim*) to be empty acts, [Leviticus 18:4](#), which speaks of the “statutes” (*hukim*) and “ordinances” (*mishpatim*), says “I am the Lord,” indicating that the Lord made these statutes, and we have no right to question them. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 67b.](#))



Rabbi Jonah taught not to investigate what was before (illustration from [Camille Flammarion](#)'s 1888 *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire*).

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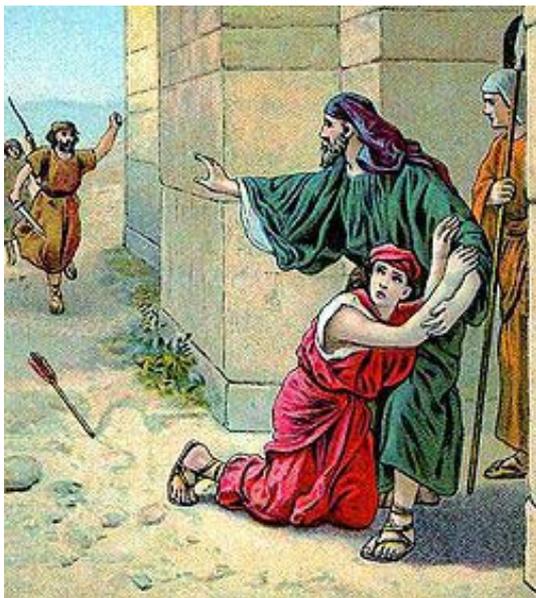
the Hebrew letter *bet*

Rabbi Jonah taught in the name of Rabbi Levi that the world was created with a letter *bet* (the first letter in [Genesis 1:1](#), which begins, *Bereishit bara Elohim*, “In the beginning God created”) because just as the letter *bet* is closed at the sides but open in front, so one is not permitted to investigate what is above and what is below, what is before and what is behind. Similarly, [Bar Kappara](#) reinterpreted the words of [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to say, “ask *not* of the days past, which were before you, since the day that God created man upon the earth,” teaching that one may speculate from the day that days were created, but one should not speculate on what was before that. And one may investigate from one end of heaven to the other, but one should not investigate what was before this world. (Genesis Rabbah 1:10.) Similarly, the Rabbis in a Baraita interpreted [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) to forbid inquiry into the work of creation in the presence of two people, reading the words “for ask now of the days past” to indicate that *one* may inquire, but not *two*. The Rabbis reasoned that the words “since the day that God created man upon the earth” in [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) taught that one must not inquire concerning the time before creation. The Rabbis reasoned that the words “the days past that were before you” in [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) taught that one may inquire about the six days of creation. The Rabbis

further reasoned that the words “from the one end of heaven to the other” in [Deuteronomy 4:32](#) taught that one must not inquire about what is beyond the universe, what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 11b.](#))

Rabbi Levi addressed the question that [Deuteronomy 4:33](#) raises: “Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?” ([Deuteronomy 4:33](#), in turn, refers back to the encounter at Sinai reported at [Exodus 19:18–19](#), [20:1](#), and after.) Rabbi Levi taught that the world would not have been able to survive hearing the voice of God in God’s power, but instead, as [Psalm 29:4](#) says, “The voice of the Lord is with power.” That is, the voice of God came according to the power of each individual — young, old, or infant — to receive it. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 29:1.)

Chapter 2 of tractate [Makkot](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the cities of refuge in [Exodus 21:12–14](#), [Numbers 35:1–34](#), [Deuteronomy 4:41–43](#), and [19:1–13](#). ([Mishnah Makkot 2:1–8](#); [Tosefta Makkot 2:1–3:10](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Makkot](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–13a.](#))



Cities of Refuge (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah taught that those who killed in error went into banishment. One would go into banishment if, for example, while one was pushing a roller on a roof, the roller slipped over, fell, and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while one was lowering a cask, it fell down and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while coming down a ladder, one fell and killed someone. But one would *not* go into banishment if while pulling *up* the roller it fell back and killed someone, or while *raising* a bucket the rope snapped and the falling bucket killed someone, or while going *up* a ladder one fell down and killed someone. The Mishnah's general principle was that whenever the death occurred in the course of a downward movement, the

culpable person went into banishment, but if the death did not occur in the course of a downward movement, the person did not go into banishment. If while chopping wood, the iron slipped from the ax handle and killed someone, [Rabbi](#) taught that the person did not go into banishment, but the sages said that the person did go into banishment. If from the split log rebounding killed someone, Rabbi said that the person went into banishment, but the sages said that the person did not go into banishment. (Mishnah Makkot 2:1; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–b.](#))



[Deuteronomy 4:38–6:3](#) in the [Aleppo Codex](#)

Rabbi Jose bar Judah taught that to begin with, they sent a slayer to a city of refuge, whether the slayer killed intentionally or not. Then the court sent and brought the slayer back from the city of refuge. The Court executed whomever the court found guilty of a

capital crime, and the court acquitted whomever the court found not guilty of a capital crime. The court restored to the city of refuge whomever the court found liable to banishment, as [Numbers 35:25](#) ordained, “And the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge from where he had fled.” (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 9b](#).) [Numbers 35:25](#) also says, “The manslayer . . . shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil,” but the Mishnah taught that the death of a high priest who had been anointed with the holy anointing oil, the death of a high priest who had been consecrated by the many vestments, or the death of a high priest who had retired from his office each equally made possible the return of the slayer. Rabbi Judah said that the death of a priest who had been anointed for war also permitted the return of the slayer. Because of these laws, mothers of high priests would provide food and clothing for the slayers in cities of refuge so that the slayers might not pray for the high priest’s death. (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11a](#).) If the high priest died at the conclusion of the slayer’s trial, the slayer did not go into banishment. If, however, the high priests died before the trial was concluded and another high priest was appointed in his stead and then the trial concluded, the slayer returned home after the new high priest’s death. (Mishnah Makkot 2:6; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11b](#).)

Deuteronomy chapter 5

Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon taught that the familiarity with which God spoke with the Israelites in [Deuteronomy 5:4](#) befit the infancy of Israel's nationhood. Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah ben Rabbi Simon explained in a parable. A mortal king had a daughter whom he loved exceedingly. So long as his daughter was small, he would speak with her in public or in the courtyard. When she grew up and reached puberty, the king determined that it no longer befit his daughter's dignity for him to converse with her in public. So he directed that a pavilion be made for her so that he could speak with his daughter inside the pavilion. In the same way, when God saw the Israelites in Egypt, they were in the childhood of their nationhood, as [Hosea 11:1](#) says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son." When God saw the Israelites at Sinai, God spoke with them as [Deuteronomy 5:4](#) says, "The Lord spoke with you face to face." As soon as they received the Torah, became God's nation, and said (as reported in [Exodus 24:7](#)), "All that the Lord has spoken will we do, and obey," God observed that it was no longer in keeping with the dignity of God's children that God should converse with them in the open. So God instructed the Israelites to make a Tabernacle, and when God needed to communicate with the Israelites, God did so from the Tabernacle. And thus [Numbers 7:89](#) bears this out when it says, "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting that He might speak with him."

([Numbers Rabbah](#) 12:4; see also [Pesikta de-Rav Kahana](#) 1:2, attributing the parable to Rabbi [Judah bar Ilai](#).)



Moses on Mount Sinai (painting circa 1895–1900 by [Jean-Léon Gérôme](#))

Rabbi Levi said that the section beginning at [Leviticus 19:1](#) was spoken in the presence of the whole Israelite people, because it includes each of the Ten Commandments, noting that: (1) [Exodus 20:2](#) says, “I am the Lord your God,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “I am the Lord your God”; (2) [Exodus 20:2–3](#) says, “You shall have no other gods,” and [Leviticus 19:4](#) says, “Nor make to yourselves molten gods”; (3) [Exodus 20:6](#) (20:7 in NJPS) says, “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain,” and

[Leviticus 19:12](#) says, “And you shall not swear by My name falsely”; (4) [Exodus 20:7](#) (20:8 in NJPS) says, “Remember the Sabbath day,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “And you shall keep My Sabbaths”; (5) [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in NJPS) says, “Honor your father and your mother,” and [Leviticus 19:3](#) says, “You shall fear every man his mother, and his father”; (6) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in NJPS) says, “You shall not murder,” and [Leviticus 19:16](#) says, “Neither shall you stand idly by the blood of your neighbor”; (7) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in NJPS) says, “You shall not commit adultery,” and [Leviticus 20:10](#) says, “Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death; (8) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in NJPS) says, “You shall not steal,” and [Leviticus 19:11](#) says, “You shall not steal”; (9) [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in NJPS) says, “You shall not bear false witness,” and [Leviticus 19:16](#) says, “You shall not go up and down as a talebearer”; and (10) [Exodus 20:13](#) (20:14 in NJPS) says, “You shall not covet . . . anything that is your neighbor's,” and [Leviticus 19:18](#) says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Leviticus Rabbah 24:5.)



“Honor thy father and thy mother” (illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Noting that [Exodus 20:7](#) (20:8 in NJPS) says, “*Remember* the Sabbath day,” and [Deuteronomy 5:11](#) (5:12 in NJPS) says, “*Observe* the Sabbath day,” the Gemara taught that God pronounced both “Remember” and “Observe” in a single utterance, an utterance that the mouth cannot utter, nor the ear hear. ([Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 20b](#); see also [Mekhilta Bahodesh 7:8:1](#).) Rav [Ada bar Ahabah](#) taught that the Torah thus obligates women to sanctify the Sabbath (by reciting or hearing the [Kiddush](#), even though women are generally not bound to observe such positive precepts that depend on specified times). For Scripture says both “Remember” and “Observe,” and all who are included in the exhortation “Observe” are included in the exhortation “Remember.” And women, since they are included in

“Observe” (which the Rabbis interpret as a negative commandment that binds all Jews), are also included in “Remember.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 20b.](#))

A midrash noted that almost everywhere, Scripture mentions a father's honor before the mother's honor. (E.g., [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in NJSP), [Deuteronomy 5:15](#) (5:16 in NJPS), [27:16](#).) But [Leviticus 19:3](#) mentions the mother first to teach that one should honor both parents equally. (Genesis Rabbah 1:15.)

Rabbi Tanchum ben Chanilai found in God's calling to Moses alone in [Leviticus 1:1](#) proof that a burden that is too heavy for 600,000 — hearing the voice of God (see [Deuteronomy 5:22](#)) — can be light for one. (Leviticus Rabbah 1:1.)

Deuteronomy chapter 6

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with “milk and honey,” as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3](#), [Leviticus 20:24](#), [Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by

sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs.

([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a.](#))

The first three chapters of tractate [Berakhot](#) in the Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud and the first two chapters of tractate Berakhot in the Tosefta interpreted the laws of the *Shema* in [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#) and [11:13–21](#). ([Mishnah Berakhot 1:1–3:6](#); Tosefta Berakhot 1:1–2:21; Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 1a–42b; [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 2a–26a.](#))

The Gemara explained that when Jews recite the *Shema*, they recite the words, “blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom for ever and ever,” quietly between the words, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” from [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), and the words, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might,” from [Deuteronomy 6:5](#), for the reason that Rabbi [Simeon ben Lakish](#) expounded when he explained what happened in [Genesis 49:1](#). That verse reports, “And Jacob called to his sons, and said: ‘Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what will befall you in the end of days.’” According to Rabbi Simeon, Jacob wished to reveal to his sons what would happen in the end of the days, but just then, the [Shechinah](#) departed from him. So Jacob said that perhaps, Heaven forbid, he had fathered a son who was unworthy to hear the prophecy, just as [Abraham](#) had fathered [Ishmael](#) or [Isaac](#) had fathered [Esau](#). But his sons answered him (in the words of [Deuteronomy 6:4](#)), “Hear O

Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One,” explaining that just as there was only One in Jacob’s heart, so there was only One in their hearts. And Jacob replied, “Blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom for ever and ever.” The Rabbis considered that Jews might recite “Blessed be the name of God’s glorious Kingdom for ever and ever” aloud, but rejected that option, as Moses did not say those words in [Deuteronomy 6:4–5](#). The Rabbis considered that Jews might not recite those words at all, but rejected that option, as Jacob did say the words. So the Rabbis ruled that Jews should recite the words quietly. Rabbi Isaac taught that the School of Rabbi Ammi said that one can compare this practice to that of a princess who smelled a spicy pudding. If she revealed her desire for the pudding, she would suffer disgrace; but if she concealed her desire, she would suffer deprivation. So her servants brought her pudding secretly. Rabbi [Abbahu](#) taught that the Sages ruled that Jews should recite the words aloud, so as not to allow heretics to claim that Jews were adding improper words to the *Shema*. But in [Nehardea](#), where there were no heretics so far, they recited the words quietly. ([Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 56a](#).)



mezuzah text

[Abaye](#) interpreted the words “and you shall love the Lord your God” in [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) to teach that one should strive through one’s actions to cause others to love the Name of Heaven. So that if people see that those who study Torah and Mishnah are honest in business and speak pleasantly, then they will accord honor to the Name of God. But if people see that those who study Torah and Mishnah are dishonest in business

and discourteous, then they will associate their shortcomings with their being Torah scholars. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 86a](#))

In [Deuteronomy 6:5](#), the heart loves, and in [Deuteronomy 6:6](#), the heart takes in words. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes

([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:36](#).)



tefillin

Discussions of the laws of *tefillin* in [Deuteronomy 6:8](#) appear at [Mishnah Menachot 3:7](#) and [Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 37b](#), [Sanhedrin 4b](#), and [Menachot 34b–37b](#).

Discussions of the laws of the *mezuzah* in [Deuteronomy 6:9](#) appear at [Babylonian Talmud Menachot 31b–34b](#).

In [Leviticus 14:33–34](#), God announced that God would “put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession.” Rabbi Hiyya asked: Was it then a piece of good news that plagues were to come upon them? Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) answered that when the [Canaanites](#) heard that the Israelites were approaching, they hid their valuables in their houses. But God promised the Israelites’ forbearers that God would bring the Israelites into a land full of good things, including, in the words

of [Deuteronomy 6:11](#), “houses full of all good things.” So God brought plagues upon a house of one of the Israelites so that when he would pull it down, he would find a treasure. (Leviticus Rabbah 17:6.)

Deuteronomy chapter 7

A midrash expounded on why Israel was, in the words of [Jeremiah 11:16](#), like “a leafy olive tree.” In one explanation, the midrash taught that just as all liquids commingle one with the other, but oil refuses to do so, so Israel keeps itself distinct, as it is commanded in [Deuteronomy 7:3](#). (Exodus Rabbah 36:1.)

Commandments



Moses Maimonides

According to Maimonides

[Maimonides](#) cited verses in the parshah for 11 positive and 15 negative [commandments](#):

- That warriors shall not fear their enemies nor be frightened of them in battle ([Deuteronomy 3:22](#); [7:21](#).)
- To know that there exists God ([Exodus 20:2](#); [Deuteronomy 5:6](#).)
- Not to entertain the thought that there is any god but the Lord ([Exodus 20:2](#); [Deuteronomy 5:6](#).)
- Not to make a graven image, neither to make oneself nor to have made for oneself by others ([Exodus 20:3](#); [Deuteronomy 5:7](#).)
- Not to bow down to an object of idolatry, even if that is not its normal way of worship ([Exodus 20:4](#); [Deuteronomy 5:8](#).)
- Not to worship an object of idolatry in its normal ways of worship ([Exodus 20:4](#), [23:24](#); [Deuteronomy 5:8](#).)
- Not to take an oath in vain ([Exodus 20:6](#); [Deuteronomy 5:10](#).)
- Not to do work on the Sabbath ([Exodus 20:9](#); [Deuteronomy 5:13](#).)

- To honor one's father and mother ([Exodus 20:11](#); [Deuteronomy 5:15](#).)
- Not to kill an innocent person ([Exodus 20:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:16](#).)
- Not to kidnap any person of Israel; this is theft of a person. ([Exodus 20:12](#); [Deuteronomy 5:16](#).)
- Not to covet ([Exodus 20:13](#); [Deuteronomy 5:17](#).)



tefillin for the arm



a mezuzah

- Not to desire ([Deuteronomy 5:17.](#))
- To acknowledge God's Oneness ([Deuteronomy 6:4.](#))
- To love God ([Deuteronomy 6:5; 11:1.](#))
- To read the *Shema* twice daily ([Deuteronomy 6:7.](#))
- To learn Torah and teach it ([Deuteronomy 6:7.](#))
- To bind *tefillin* on the head ([Deuteronomy 6:8.](#))
- To bind *tefillin* on the arm ([Deuteronomy 6:8.](#))
- To fasten a *mezuzah* ([Deuteronomy 6:9; 11:20.](#))
- To fear God ([Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20.](#))
- To swear by God's Name ([Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20.](#))
- Not to test the word of God ([Deuteronomy 6:16.](#))
- Not to make a covenant with the seven Canaanite nations ([Deuteronomy 7:2.](#))
- Not to have mercy on idolaters ([Deuteronomy 7:2.](#))
- Not to intermarry with idolaters ([Deuteronomy 7:3.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Positive Commandments 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15](#), and [210](#); [Negative Commandments 1, 2, 5, 6, 48, 50, 52, 58, 62, 64, 243, 265, 266, 289](#), and [320](#). Cairo, Egypt,

1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:1–7, 10–11, 15–23, 226–27; 2:1–2, 4–8, 47–51, 55–56, 60–61, 63–64, 232, 250–52, 269, 295. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

According to Sefer ha-Chinuch

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 8 positive and 4 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- Not to desire another's possession ([Deuteronomy 5:18](#).)
- To know that God is [one](#) ([Deuteronomy 6:4](#).)
- To love God ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#).)
- To study Torah ([Deuteronomy 6:7](#).)
- To say the *Shema* twice daily ([Deuteronomy 6:7](#).)
- To bind *tefillin* on the arm ([Deuteronomy 6:8](#).)
- To wear *tefillin* on the head ([Deuteronomy 6:8](#).)
- To put a *mezuzah* on each door post ([Deuteronomy 6:9](#).)
- Not to test the [prophet](#) unduly ([Deuteronomy 6:16](#).)
- Not to make a covenant with [idolaters](#) ([Deuteronomy 7:2](#).)
- Not to show favor to them ([Deuteronomy 7:2](#).)

- Not to marry idolaters ([Deuteronomy 7:3.](#))



[Isaiah](#) (fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:245–305. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))

Haftarah

The parshah is always read on the special Sabbath *Shabbat Nachamu*, the Sabbath immediately after *Tisha B'Av*. *Shabbat Nachamu* (“Sabbath of comfort”) takes its name from the first word of the [haftarah](#) for the parshah, [Isaiah 40:1–26](#), which speaks of "comforting" the Jewish people for their suffering. The haftarah is the first in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after *Tisha B'Av*, leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).



“God sits above the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers.”

Summary

God told the prophet to comfort God’s people and bid Jerusalem to take heart, as the city’s guilt had been paid off. ([Isaiah 40:1–2.](#)) A voice in the wilderness called to clear the way and make a highway for God, for every valley will be lifted up, every mountain will be made low, and God’s glory will be revealed to all. ([Isaiah 40:3–5.](#)) A voice proclaimed that all flesh is grass, its goodness like a flower of the field, which withers and fades; but God’s word will stand for ever. ([Isaiah 40:6–8.](#)) The herald of good tidings should go to the mountain and announce to the cities of Judah that God will come as a Mighty One to rule, as a shepherd that feeds the flock, gathers the lambs, carries them, and gently leads them. ([Isaiah 40:9–11.](#))



“Lift up your eyes on high, and see: Who has created these?”

Who has held the waters in hand, measured the heavens, comprehended the earth, and weighed mountains in the balance?

([Isaiah 40:12.](#)) Who has counseled or instructed God? ([Isaiah](#)

[40:13–14.](#)) Nations are like a drop in a bucket, like dust in the

balance, as nothing before God. ([Isaiah 40:15–17.](#)) Can one

compare God to anything, to an idol that a woodworker carved?

([Isaiah 40:18–20.](#)) God sits above the earth, and its inhabitants

are like grasshoppers. ([Isaiah 40:22.](#)) God brings princes to

nothing, makes the judges of the earth like nothing; scarcely are

they planted, but God blows upon them, and they wither and

blow away. ([Isaiah 40:23–24.](#))

To whom then to liken God? Lift up your eyes and see: The One

who created the stars, called them by name, by the greatness of

God’s might and strong power each one appears. ([Isaiah 40:25–](#)

[26.](#))

Connection to the Special Sabbath

The haftarah answers laments read on Tisha B'Av from the [book of Lamentations](#). [Lamentations 1:2](#) and [9](#) complain that Jerusalem “has none to comfort her,” “she has no comforter.” In [Isaiah 40:1](#), the haftarah answers, “Comfort, comfort My people, says your God.” [Lamentations 1:4](#) complains that “the ways of Zion mourn.” In [Isaiah 40:3](#), the haftarah answers, “Clear in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make plain in the desert a highway for our God.” [Lamentations 1:6](#) complains that Zion’s princes “are gone without strength before the pursuer.” In [Isaiah 40:9](#) and [26](#), the haftarah answers, “lift up your voice with strength,” God “is strong in power.” [Lamentations 4:22](#) hoped for Jerusalem that “the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished” and God “will no more carry you away into captivity.” In [Isaiah 40:2](#), the haftarah affirms, “Bid Jerusalem take heart, and proclaim to her, that her time of service is accomplished, that her guilt is paid off.”

As well, the haftarah echoes the parshah. In the parshah in [Deuteronomy 3:25](#), Moses pleads, “Let me go over, I pray, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that goodly hill-country, and Lebanon.” As if in answer, the haftarah rejoins in [Isaiah 40:15–16](#), “the nations are as a drop of a bucket, . . . and Lebanon is not sufficient fuel, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for burnt-offerings.”



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

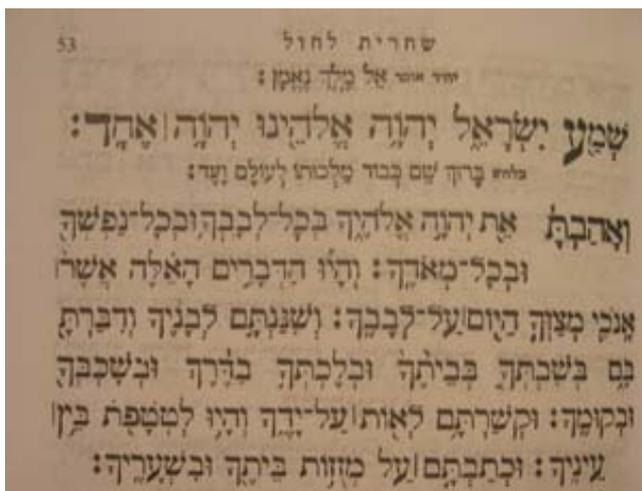
In the liturgy

The Torah reader and the congregation recite [Deuteronomy 4:4](#) immediately before the Torah reading, signifying how learning the Torah embodies remaining steadfast to God. ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 141. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), quotes [Deuteronomy 4:34](#) to elucidate the term “great terribleness” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “great terribleness” to mean the revelation of the [Shekhinah](#) or Divine Presence. (Menachem

Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 49–50. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. ISBN 1-57819-064-9 Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 94. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](https://www.isbn-international.org/product/978-0-8276-0858-0).)

The [Lekhah Dodi](#) liturgical poem of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#) quotes both the commandment of [Exodus 20:7](#) (Exodus 20:8 in the NJPS) to “remember” the Sabbath and the commandment of [Deuteronomy 5:11](#) (Deuteronomy 5:12 in NJPS) to “keep” or “observe” the Sabbath, saying that they “were uttered as one by our Creator.” (Hammer, at 21.)



the beginning of the *Shema* prayer in the [Siddur](#)

The verses of the *Shema* and *V'abavta* in [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#) constitute a central prayer in Jewish prayer services. Jews combine [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#) along with [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#),

and [Numbers 15:37–41](#) to form the core of *K'riat Shema*, recited in the evening (*Ma'ariv*) and morning (*Shacharit*) prayer services. (*Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 30–31, 112–13, 282–83. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2007. [ISBN 0-916219-13-5](#).) A shorter version of the *Shema*, composed of simply [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), appears in the Torah service (*Seder K'riat HaTorah*) and the *Kedushah* of the Musaf service for Shabbat. (*Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, at 141, 157.) And the *Shema* and for some the *V'avavta*, [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#), are among the first prayers said upon arising and form the central prayer of the bedtime *Shema*, said just before retiring for sleep. (Hammer, at 66. Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 35–36, 416–17. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

The commandment to love God in [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) is reflected in [Psalm 97:10](#), which is in turn one of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 18.)

The “love” of God that [Deuteronomy 6:5](#) urges finds reflection in the characterization of God as the “Beloved” in the *Lekhah Dodi* liturgical poem of the Kabbalat Shabbat prayer service. (Hammer, at 21.)

And the *leshem yibud* prayer before putting on [tefillin](#) quotes the commandment of [Deuteronomy 6:8](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 6. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

In the *magid* section, the Haggadah combines [Deuteronomy 6:21](#) and [5:14](#) in the first answer to the Four Questions (*Ma Nisbtana*) in the *magid* section of the Seder. (Tabory, at 84.) And shortly thereafter, the Haggadah quotes [Deuteronomy 6:20](#) to provide the question of the wise son, also in the *magid* section. (Tabory, at 86; Davis, at 29.)

Also in the *magid* section, the Haggadah quotes [Deuteronomy 6:23](#) — emphasizing the word “us” (*otanu*) — for the proposition that God did not redeem the ancestral Israelites alone, but also the current generation of Jews with them. (Davis, at 60; Tabory, at 100.)

The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Va'etchanan, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Hoseni, the maqam that expresses beauty. This is especially appropriate in this parshah because it is the parshah where Moses repeats to the Israelites their history of receiving the Ten Commandments.

Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



Hammurabi

Ancient

- [Code of Hammurabi Epilogue reverse 25, lines 60–73](#). Babylonia, Circa 1780 BCE. Reprinted in e.g. [James B. Pritchard](#). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 178. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#). (not to change the law).

Biblical

- [Exodus 13:1–2](#) (firstborn); [13:12–13](#) (firstborn); [20:4](#); [20:5](#) in NJPS (punishing children for fathers' sin); [20:1–19](#) (Ten Commandments); [21:12–14](#) (cities of refuge); [22:28–29](#) (firstborn); [34:7](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Numbers 3:11–13](#) (firstborn); [14:18](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [18:15–18](#) (firstborn); [35:1–33](#).
- [Deuteronomy 17:2–5](#) (worshipping sun, moon, stars); [19:1–13](#); [24:16](#) (*no* capital punishment of children for fathers' sin).
- [Joshua 20:1–9](#) (cities of refuge).
- [Jeremiah 8:1–2](#) (worshipping sun, moon, stars); [31:28–29](#), (31:29–30 in NJPS) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin).

- [Ezekiel 8:16–18](#) (sun worship); [18:1–4](#) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin); [18:5–7](#) (the just one does not rob).
- [Psalms 19:8–12](#) (value of God's law); [71:19](#) (God's righteousness reaches to heaven); [86:8](#) (none like God among the gods); [89:6](#) (heavens praise God in the assembly of the holy ones); [111:10](#) (fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom).
- [Job 31:26–28](#) (worshipping sun, moon).

Early nonrabbinic

- [Mark 12:28–34](#). Circa 70 CE. (*Shema*).



Josephus

- [Matthew 22:34–40](#). Circa 70–100 CE. (*Shema*).
- [Luke 10:25–28](#). Circa 80–150 CE. (*Shema*).
- [Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:2, 13](#) Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William](#)

[Whiston](#). Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987.
[ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Berakhot 1:1–3:6](#); [9:5](#); Orlah 1:7; [Sotah 7:1, 8](#); [Bava Kamma 5:7](#); [Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Makkot 2:1–8](#); Avot 3:8; [Zevachim 8:10](#); [Menachot 3:7](#); Tamid 5:1. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 3–7, 14, 160, 457, 459, 515, 586, 612–16, 679, 717, 739, 869. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Berakhot 1:1–3:1, 6:1; Maaser Sheni 5:28; Shekalim 2:2; Rosh Hashanah 2:13; Chagigah 2:7; Sotah 7:7, 17, 8:10; Bava Kamma 6:18, 7:9; Sanhedrin 4:7; Makkot 2:1–3:10; Avodah Zarah 1:16, 3:15; Zevachim 8:23. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 26:1–36:4. Reprinted in, e.g., Jacob Neusner. *Sifre to Deuteronomy*, 69–104. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:67–104. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 1a–42b, 53a, 54a, 72b, 86b–88a, 92b, 93b; Peah 6b–7a; Sheviit 46b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–3, 6b. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2008.



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 2a–6a, 30b, 32a–b, 48b, 54a, 61b](#); [Shabbat 9b, 10b, 32b, 33b, 51b, 56b, 75a, 78b, 79b, 87a–b, 103b, 132a](#); [Eruvin 13a, 22a, 48a, 92b, 95b](#); [Pesachim 22b, 25a, 55a, 56a](#); [Yoma 10a, 11a, 19b, 33b, 72b, 82a, 86a](#); [Sukkah 3a–b, 10b, 25a–b, 41b–42a, 53b](#); [Beitzah 5a](#); [Rosh Hashanah 18a–b, 27a, 28b, 32b](#); [Taanit 9a](#); [Megillah 9a–b, 11a, 17b, 20a, 21a, 24b, 31b](#); [Moed Katan 7b, 15a–b, 18b, 21b](#); [Chagigah 3a, 9b, 11b–12a](#); [Yevamot 6b, 17a, 23a, 48b, 49b, 62a, 76a, 78b, 105a, 109b](#); [Ketubot 111b](#); [Nedarim 8a, 37a, 38a, 62b](#); [Sotah 5a, 10b, 13b, 31a, 32b, 49a](#); [Gittin 12a, 45b, 56b, 57b, 88a](#); [Kiddushin 29a–30b, 34a, 39b–40a, 57a, 58a, 68b](#); [Bava Kamma 41b, 54b–55a, 67b, 79b, 87a, 92b, 102b](#); [Bava Metzia 16b, 35a, 89a, 108a](#); [Bava Batra 110a](#); [Sanhedrin 4b, 17a, 21b–22a, 29a, 38a–b, 56a–57a, 59b](#),

[64a, 67b, 74a; Makkot 9b–10a, 11b, 12b–13a; Shevuot 20b, 36a; Avodah Zarah 2b–3a, 4b–5a, 7b, 11a, 20a, 23b, 25a, 36b, 45b, 54b, 58b; Zevachim 19a, 37b, 80a; Menachot 28a, 31b–37b, 42b, 43b–44a, 53b, 71a, 99b; Chullin 7b, 17a, 23a, 89a, 91b, 119b, 141a, 142a; Bekhorot 29a, 57a; Arakhin 3b; Temurah 3b–4a, 28b.](#)

Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*.

Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 2:1–37. Land of Israel, 9th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Rashi

Medieval

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- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 3–7*. Troyes, France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:45–81. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
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Mendelssohn

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- [Zohar 3:260a–270a](#). Spain, late 13th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

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- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, 3:42; 4:45. England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 545–47, 672, 676. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
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- [Emily Dickinson](#). [Poem 112 \(Where bells no more affright the morn —\)](#). Circa 1859. [Poem 168 \(If the foolish, call them "flowers" —\)](#). Circa 1860. [Poem 564 \(My period had come for Prayer —\)](#). Circa 1862. [Poem 597 \(It always felt to me — a wrong\)](#). Circa 1862. [Poem 1260 \(Because that you are going\)](#). Circa 1873. [Poem 1591 \(The Bobolink is gone —\)](#). Circa 1883. [Poem 1719 \(God is indeed a jealous God —\)](#). 19th century. [Poem 1733 \(No man saw awe, nor to his house\)](#). 19th century. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 53, 79–80, 274–75, 293–94, 551–52, 659, 698, 703. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960. [ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).



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External links

Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)

- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
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- 613.org Jewish Torah Audio
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- Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill
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Eikev

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Eikev, **Ekev**, **Ekeb**, or **Eqeb** (עֵקֶב — [Hebrew](#) for “if [you follow],” the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 46th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the third in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It comprises [Deuteronomy 7:12–11:25](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in August.





The Golden Calf (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

Contents

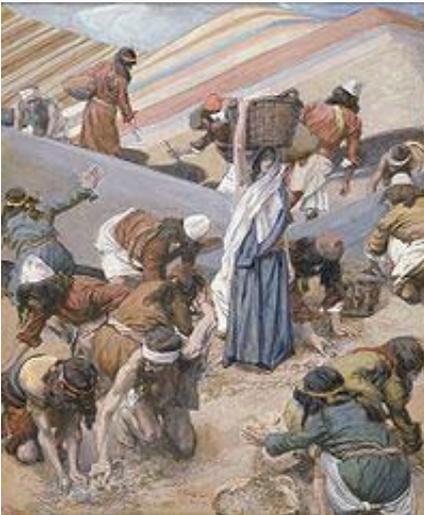
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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) Blessings of obedience

[Moses](#) told the [Israelites](#) that if they obeyed [God's](#) rules, God would faithfully maintain the [covenant](#), would bless them with [fertility](#) and [agricultural productivity](#), and would ward off [sickness](#). ([Deuteronomy 7:12–15](#).)





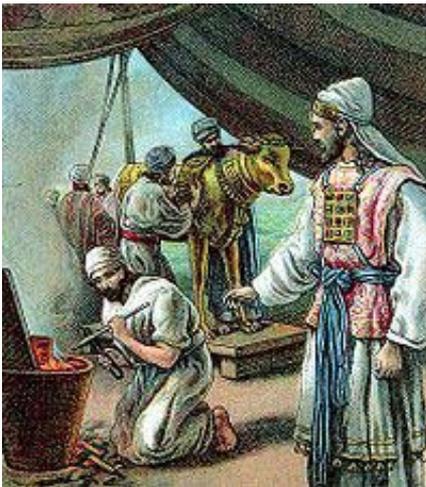
The Gathering of the Manna (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

[[edit](#)] Taking the land

Moses directed the Israelites to destroy all the peoples whom God delivered to them, showing no pity and not [worshiping](#) their gods. ([Deuteronomy 7:16.](#)) Moses told the Israelites not to fear these nations because they were numerous, for the Israelites had but to recall what God did to [Pharaoh](#) and the [Egyptians](#) and the wonders by which God [liberated](#) them. ([Deuteronomy 7:17–19.](#)) God would do the same to the peoples whom they feared, and would send a plague against them, too. ([Deuteronomy 7:19–20.](#)) God would dislodge those peoples little by little, so that the wild beasts would not take over the [land](#). ([Deuteronomy 7:22.](#)) Moses directed the Israelites to burn the images of their gods, not to covet nor keep the [silver](#) and [gold](#) on them, nor to bring an abhorrent thing into their houses. ([Deuteronomy 7:25–26.](#))

God made the Israelites travel the long way in the [wilderness](#) for 40 years to test them with hardships to learn what was in their hearts and whether they would keep God’s commandments. ([Deuteronomy 8:2.](#)) God subjected them to hunger and then gave them [manna](#) to teach them that man does not live on [bread](#) alone, but on anything that God decrees. ([Deuteronomy 8:3.](#)) Their [clothes](#) did not wear out, nor did their [feet](#) swell for 40 years. ([Deuteronomy 8:4.](#)) God disciplined them as a man disciplines his son. ([Deuteronomy 8:5.](#))

Moses told the Israelites that God was bringing them into a good land, where they might eat [food](#) without end, and thus when they had eaten their fill, they were to give thanks to God for the good land that God had given them. ([Deuteronomy 8:7–10.](#)) Moses warned the Israelites not to forget God, not to violate God’s commandments, and not to grow haughty and believe that their own power had won their wealth, but to remember that God gave them the power to prosper. ([Deuteronomy 8:11–18.](#)) Moses warned that if they forgot God and followed other gods, then they would certainly perish like the nations that God was going to displace from the land. ([Deuteronomy 8:19–20.](#)) Moses warned the Israelites not to believe that God had enabled them to possess the land because of their [virtue](#), for God was dispossessing the land’s current inhabitants because of those nations’ wickedness and to fulfill the oath that God had made to [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.](#) ([Deuteronomy 9:4–6.](#))



The Golden Calf (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)



Moses with the Tablets of the Law (1659 painting by [Rembrandt](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **The golden calf**

Moses exhorted the Israelites to remember how they had provoked God to anger in the wilderness from the day that they left [Egypt](#) until that day. ([Deuteronomy 9:7.](#)) At [Horeb](#) they so provoked God that God was angry enough to have destroyed them. ([Deuteronomy 9:8.](#)) Moses ascended the mountain, stayed on the mountain 40 days and nights, and ate no bread and drank no water. ([Deuteronomy 9:9.](#)) At the end of the 40 days, God gave Moses two [stone tablets](#) that God had inscribed with the words and the covenant that God had addressed to the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 9:10–11.](#)) God told Moses to hurry down, for the

people whom Moses brought out of Egypt had acted wickedly and had made a molten image. ([Deuteronomy 9:12.](#)) God told Moses that God was inclined to destroy them and make of Moses a nation far more numerous than they. ([Deuteronomy 9:14.](#)) Moses started down the mountain with the two tablets in his hands, when he saw how the Israelites had made themselves a [molten calf](#). ([Deuteronomy 9:15–16.](#)) Moses flung the two tablets away, smashing them before their eyes, and threw himself down before God, fasting another 40 days and nights. ([Deuteronomy 9:17–18.](#)) And God gave heed to Moses. ([Deuteronomy 9:19.](#)) God was angry enough with [Aaron](#) to have destroyed him, so Moses also interceded for Aaron. ([Deuteronomy 9:20.](#)) Moses burned the calf, broke it to bits, ground it into dust, and threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain. ([Deuteronomy 9:21.](#))

Moses reminded the Israelites how they provoked God at [Taberah](#), and at [Massah](#), and at [Kibroth-hattaavah](#). ([Deuteronomy 9:22.](#)) And when God sent them from [Kadesh-barnea](#) to take possession of the land, they flouted God's command and did not put their trust in God. ([Deuteronomy 9:23.](#))



Moses Receiving the Tablets of the Law (1868 painting by [João Zeferino da Costa](#))

When Moses lay prostrate before God those 40 days, because God was determined to destroy the Israelites, Moses [prayed](#) to God not to annihilate God's own people, whom God freed from Egypt, but to give thought to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and ignore the Israelites' sinfulness, else the Egyptians would say that God was powerless to bring them into the land that God had promised them. ([Deuteronomy 9:25–29.](#)) And God agreed not to destroy them. ([Deuteronomy 10:10.](#))

Thereupon God told Moses to carve out two tablets of stone like the first, come up to the mountain, and make an [ark](#) of wood. ([Deuteronomy 10:1.](#)) God inscribed on the tablets the [Ten Commandments](#) that were on the first tablets that Moses had

smashed, and Moses came down from the mountain and deposited the tablets in the ark. ([Deuteronomy 10:2–5.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Aaron's death

The Israelites marched to Moserah, where Aaron died and was buried, and his son [Eleazar](#) became [priest](#) in his stead. ([Deuteronomy 10:6.](#)) From there they marched to Gudgod, and on to [Jotbath](#). ([Deuteronomy 10:7.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Levites' duties

God set apart the [Levites](#) to carry the ark of the covenant, to stand in attendance upon the [Tabernacle](#), and to bless in God's Name, and that was why the Levites were to receive no portion of the land, as God was their portion. ([Deuteronomy 10:8–9.](#))



Pharaoh's Army Engulfed by the Red Sea (1900 painting by [Frederick Arthur Bridgman](#))

[[edit](#)] Exhortations to serve God

Moses exhorted the Israelites to revere God, to walk only in God's paths, to love God, to serve God with all their heart and soul, and to keep God's commandments. ([Deuteronomy 10:12–13.](#)) Moses noted that although heaven and earth belong to God, God was drawn to love their fathers, so that God chose the Israelites from among all peoples. ([Deuteronomy 10:14–15.](#)) Moses described God as supreme, great, mighty, and awesome, showing no favor and taking no bribe, but upholding the cause of the fatherless and the [widow](#), and befriending the stranger. ([Deuteronomy 10:17–18.](#)) Moses thus instructed the Israelites to befriend the stranger, for they were strangers in Egypt. ([Deuteronomy 10:19.](#)) Moses exhorted the Israelites to revere God, worship only God, and swear only by God's name, for God was their glory, who wrought for them marvelous deeds, and made them as numerous as the [stars](#). ([Deuteronomy 10:20–22.](#))





Destruction of Korah Dathan and Abiram (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

Moses exhorted the Israelites to love God and always keep God's commandments. ([Deuteronomy 11:1.](#)) Moses asked the Israelites to note that they themselves witnessed the signs that God performed in Egypt against Pharaoh, what God did to Egypt's [army](#), how God rolled upon them the waters of the Sea of Reeds, what God did for them in the wilderness, and what God did to [Dathan](#) and [Abiram](#) when the earth swallowed them.

([Deuteronomy 11:2–7.](#)) Moses instructed them therefore to keep all the law so that they might have the strength to enter and possess the land and long endure on that land flowing with milk and honey. ([Deuteronomy 11:8–9.](#)) Moses extolled the land as a land of hills and valleys that soaks up its water from the rains, a land that God looks after. ([Deuteronomy 11:10–12.](#))

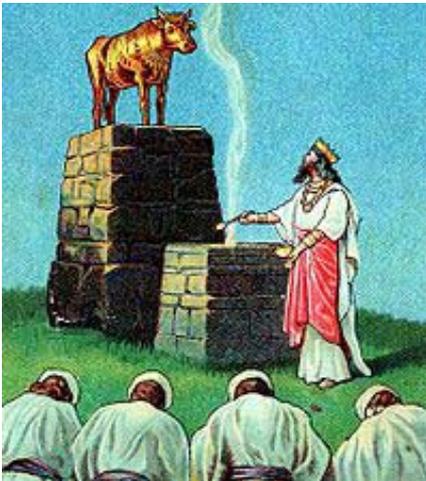
Then Moses told them words now found in the [Shema](#) prayer ([Deuteronomy 11:13–21.](#)): If the Israelites obeyed the commandments, loving God and serving God with heart and soul, God would grant the rain in season and they would gather their grain, wine, and oil. ([Deuteronomy 11:13–14.](#)) God would provide grass for their cattle and the Israelites would eat their fill. ([Deuteronomy 11:15.](#)) Moses warned them not to be lured away to serve other gods, for God's anger would flare up against them, God would suspend the rain, and they would soon perish. ([Deuteronomy 11:16–17.](#)) Moses urged them to impress God's words upon their heart, bind them as a sign on their hands, let

them serve as a symbol on their foreheads, teach them to your children, and recite them when they stayed at home and when they were away, when they lay down and when they got up.

([Deuteronomy 11:18–19](#).) Moses instructed them to inscribe God’s words on the doorposts of their houses and on their gates, so that they and their children might endure in the land that God swore to their fathers as long as there is a heaven over the earth.

([Deuteronomy 11:20–21](#).)

Moses promised that if they faithfully kept all the law, loving God, walking in all God’s ways, and holding fast to God, then God would dislodge the nations then in the land, and every spot on which their feet tread would be theirs, and their territory would extend from the wilderness to [Lebanon](#) and from the [Euphrates](#) to the [Mediterranean Sea](#). ([Deuteronomy 11:22–24](#).)



Jeroboam's Idolatry (illustration from a Bible card published 1904 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 9

[1 Kings 12:25–33](#) reports a parallel story of golden calves. King [Jeroboam](#) of the northern [Kingdom of Israel](#) made two calves of gold out of a desire to prevent the kingdom from returning to allegiance to the [house of David](#) and the southern [Kingdom of Judah](#). ([1 Kings 12:26–28](#).) In [Exodus 32:4](#), the people said of the Golden Calf, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” Similarly, in [1 Kings 12:28](#), Jeroboam told the people of his golden calves, “You have gone up long enough to [Jerusalem](#); behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.” Jeroboam set up one of the calves in [Bethel](#), and the other in [Dan](#), and the people went to worship before the calf in Dan. ([1 Kings 12:29–30](#).) Jeroboam made houses of [high places](#), and made priests from people who were not [Levites](#). ([1 Kings 12:31](#).) He ordained a feast like [Sukkot](#) on the fifteenth day of the eighth month (a month after the real Sukkot), and he went up to the altar at Bethel to sacrifice to the golden calves that he had made, and he installed his priests there. ([1 Kings 12:32–33](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 7

A [midrash](#) likened the second word of [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), *eikev* (“if” or “because”) to the word *akeivai* (“footsteps”) in [Psalm](#)

[49:6](#), which the midrash interpreted to mean: “Why should I fear in the days of evil? The iniquity of my footsteps encompasses me.” The midrash taught that people sometimes fail to observe minor commandments, thus trampling those commandments beneath their heels. The midrash thus taught that the Psalmist feared the day of judgment because he may have trampled minor commandments. (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Devorim Eikev 1.)



Balaam Blessing the Israelites (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Another midrash played on two possible meanings of the second word of [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), *eikev*, “as a consequence” and “the end.” Israel asked God when God would grant reward for the

observance of commandments. God replied that when people observe commandments, they enjoy some fruits now, but God will give them their full reward in the *end*, after death.

([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 3:1.)

Another midrash played on two possible meanings of the second word of [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), *eikev*, “as a consequence” and “heel.” The midrash interpreted the words “upon Edom I cast my shoe” in [Psalms 60:10](#) and [108:10](#) to mean that God says that when Israel repents, then God will tread with God’s heel, so to speak, on Israel’s enemy Edom. And the midrash taught, in the words of [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), that “it shall come to pass, because (*eikev*) you hearken.” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 3:2.)

Rabbi Samuel bar Nahmani interpreted the words “that the Lord your God shall keep for you” in [Deuteronomy 7:12](#), teaching that all the good that Israel enjoys in this world results from the blessings with which [Balaam](#) blessed Israel, but the blessings with which the [Patriarchs](#) blessed Israel are reserved for the time to come, as signified by the words, “that the Lord your God shall keep for you.” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 3:4.)

Rabbi Bibi ben Giddal said that [Simeon the Just](#) taught that the law prohibited a Jew from robbing a non-Jew, although a Jew could take possession of a non-Jew’s lost article. [Rav Huna](#) read [Deuteronomy 7:16](#) to prohibit a Jew from robbing a non-Jew, because [Deuteronomy 7:16](#) provided that the Israelites were to take from the enemies that God would deliver to them in time of war, thus implying that the Israelites could not take from non-

Jews in time of peace, when God had not delivered them into the Israelites' hands. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 113b.](#))



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) (1863 painting by [Simeon Solomon](#))

Chapter 3 of tractate [Avodah Zarah](#) in the [Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of not deriving benefit from [idols](#) in [Deuteronomy 7:25–26](#). ([Mishnah Avodah Zarah 3:1–10](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Avodah Zarah ch. 3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 40b–49b.](#))

The Rabbis told the story that God, [Daniel](#), and [Nebuchadnezzar](#) conspired to keep Daniel out of the [fiery furnace](#). God said: “Let Daniel depart, lest people say that [Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah](#) were delivered through Daniel’s merit instead of their own.”

Daniel said: “Let me go, so that I will not become a fulfillment of the words (in [Deuteronomy 7:25](#)), ‘the graven images of their gods you shall burn with fire.’” And Nebuchadnezzar said: “Let

Daniel depart, lest people say that the king has burned his god in fire.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 93a.](#))

The [Gemara](#) deduced from the command of [Deuteronomy 7:26](#), “you shall not bring an abomination into your house, lest you be a cursed thing like it,” that whatever one might bring into being out of an idolatrous thing would have the same cursed status. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 58a.](#))

[Rabbi Johanan](#) in the name of Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) noted the word “abomination” in common in both [Deuteronomy 7:26](#) and [Proverbs 16:5](#) and deduced that people who are haughty of spirit are as though they worshiped idols. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 4b.](#))



The Seven Species

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 8

The Mishnah taught that first fruits were brought only from the [Seven Species](#) (*Shiv'at Ha-Minim*) that [Deuteronomy 8:8](#) noted to praise the Land of Israel: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olive-oil, and date-honey. But first fruits could not be brought from dates grown on hills, or from valley-fruits, or from olives that were not of the choice kind. (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:3.)

Rabbi Awira told — sometimes in the name of [Rabbi Ammi](#), and sometimes in the name of [Rabbi Assi](#) — that the [angels](#) asked God whether God was not showing favor to Israel. And God asked the angels how God could not show favor to Israel, when [Deuteronomy 8:10](#) required them to bless God when they had eaten and were satisfied, but the Israelites bless God even when they have eaten only the quantity of an olive or an egg. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 20b.](#))

Rabbi Johanan deduced from [Deuteronomy 8:14](#) that people who are haughty of spirit are as though they had denied the fundamental principle of God's existence. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 4b.](#))

In [Deuteronomy 8:14](#), the heart becomes proud. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah](#)

[40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)



Moses Smashing the Tables of the Law (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that “A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*,” and [Rabbi Johanan](#) thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, “he spread the tent over the tabernacle,” and a Master taught that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, “Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board.” Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, “And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them,” and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness.

Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God’s instruction to Moses, “Carve yourself two tablets of stone,” and the Rabbis interpreted the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, “You have made him a little lower than God.” Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a.](#))



Moses Casts Down the Two Tablets (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 9

A Baraita taught that because of God’s displeasure with the Israelites, the north wind did not blow on them in any of the 40 years during which they wandered in the wilderness. [Rashi](#) attributed God’s displeasure to the Golden Calf, although the

[Tosafot](#) attributed it to the incident of the spies in [Numbers 13](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 72a](#).)

A midrash explained why Moses broke the stone tablets. When the Israelites committed the sin of the Golden Calf, God sat in judgment to condemn them, as [Deuteronomy 9:14](#) says, “Let Me alone, that I may destroy them,” but God had not yet condemned them. So Moses took the tablets from God to appease God’s wrath. The midrash compared the act of Moses to that of a king’s marriage-broker. The king sent the broker to secure a wife for the king, but while the broker was on the road, the woman corrupted herself with another man. The broker (who was entirely innocent) took the marriage document that the king had given the broker to seal the marriage and tore it, reasoning that it would be better for the woman to be judged as an unmarried woman than as a wife. ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 43:1.)

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 10

Reading the words, “which you broke, and you shall put them,” in [Deuteronomy 10:2](#), [Rav Joseph](#) noted that the verse employs superfluous words to describe the Tablets. Rav Joseph reasoned that the two mentionings of the Tablets teaches that both the Tablets and the fragments of the Tablets that Moses broke were deposited in the Ark. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 14b](#); [Menachot 99a](#).) Rav Joseph deduced from this that a scholar who has forgotten his learning through no fault of his own (through old age, sickness, or trouble, but not through willful neglect) is still due respect (by analogy to the broken pieces of the tablets

that the Israelites nonetheless treated with sanctity). ([Babylonian Talmud Menachot 99a.](#))

[Resh Lakish](#) deduced from the interjection of the apparently parenthetical words, “which you broke,” in [Deuteronomy 10:2](#) that God was thereby saying to Moses that Moses did well to break them. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 14b.](#))

Rabbi Hanina deduced from [Deuteronomy 10:12](#) that everything is in the hand of Heaven except the fear of Heaven, for [Deuteronomy 10:12](#) says: “What does the Lord your God ask of you, but only to fear the Lord your God.” The Gemara asked whether the fear of Heaven was such a little thing that [Deuteronomy 10:12](#) says “only.” Rabbi Hanina said in the name Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai that God has in God’s treasury nothing but a store of the fear of Heaven, as [Isaiah 33:6](#) says: “The fear of the Lord is His treasure,” and thus the fear of Heaven must be a great thing. The Gemara responded that for Moses, the fear of Heaven was a small thing, for he had it. Rabbi Hanina illustrated with a parable: If a man is asked for a big article and he has it, it seems like a small article to him; if he is asked for a small article and he does not have it, it seems like a big article to him. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 33b.](#))

Rav Awira (or some say Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#)) taught that the Evil Inclination has seven names. God called it “Evil” in [Genesis 8:21](#), saying, “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.” Moses called it “the Uncircumcised” in [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), saying, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart.” [David](#) called it “Unclean” in [Psalm 51:12](#); [Solomon](#) called it “the

Enemy” in [Proverbs 25:21–22](#); [Isaiah](#) called it “the Stumbling-Block” in [Isaiah 57:14](#); [Ezekiel](#) called it “Stone” in [Ezekiel 36:26](#); and [Joel](#) called it “the Hidden One” in [Joel 2:20](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 52a](#).)



Jeremiah (fresco circa 1508–1512 by [Michelangelo](#))



Daniel (fresco circa 1508–1512 by Michelangelo)

Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) said that the men of the Great Assembly were so called because they restored the crown of the divine attributes — the enumeration of God’s praise — to its ancient completeness. For in [Deuteronomy 10:17](#), Moses called God “the

great, the mighty, and the awesome.” Then when [Jeremiah](#) saw foreigners despoiling the Temple, he asked where God’s awesome deeds were, and thus in [Jeremiah 32:18](#), he omitted “awesome.” And then when Daniel saw foreigners enslaving the Israelites, he asked where God’s mighty deeds were, and thus in [Daniel 9:4](#), he omitted the word “mighty.” But the men of the Great Assembly came and said that these circumstances showed God’s mighty deeds, because God suppressed God’s wrath, extending long suffering to the wicked. And these circumstances showed God’s awesome powers, for but for the fear of God, how could the single nation of Israel survive among the many nations. The Gemara asked how Jeremiah and Daniel could alter words established by Moses. Rabbi [Eleazar](#) said that since Jeremiah and Daniel knew that God insists on truth, they did not want to ascribe false attributions to God. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 69b.](#))

Reading the words, “love the stranger, in giving him food and clothing,” in [Deuteronomy 10:18](#), Akilas the proselyte asked [Rabbi Eliezer](#) whether food and clothing constituted all the benefit of [conversion to Judaism](#). Rabbi Eliezer replied that food and clothing are no small things, for in [Genesis 28:20](#), Jacob prayed to God for “bread to eat, and clothing to put on,” while God comes and offers it to the convert on a platter. Akilas then visited [Rabbi Joshua](#), who taught that “bread” refers to the Torah (as in [Proverbs 9:5](#), Wisdom — the Torah — says, “Come, eat of my bread”), while “clothing” means the Torah scholar’s cloak. A person privileged to study the Torah is thus privileged to perform

God's precepts. Moreover, converts' daughters could marry into the priesthood, so that their descendants could offer burnt-offerings on the altar. The midrash offered another interpretation: "Bread" refers to the [showbread](#), while "clothing" refers to the priestly vestments. The midrash offered yet another interpretation: "Bread" refers to [challah](#), while "clothing" refers to the first shearings of the sheep, both of which belong to the priests. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 70:5.)

The Gemara deduced from [Deuteronomy 10:20](#) that it is a positive commandment to fear the Lord. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 56a.](#))

A midrash taught that the Israelites were counted on ten occasions: (1) when they went down to Egypt ([Deuteronomy 10:22](#)); (2) when they went up out of Egypt ([Exodus 12:37](#)); (3) at the first census in Numbers ([Numbers 1:1–46](#)); (4) at the second census in Numbers ([Numbers 26:1–65](#)); (5) once for the banners; (6) once in the time of [Joshua](#) for the division of the land of Israel; (7) once by [Saul](#) ([1 Samuel 11:8](#)); (8) a second time by Saul ([1 Samuel 15:4](#)); (9) once by [David](#) ([2 Samuel 24:9](#)); and once in the time of [Ezra](#) ([Ezra 2:64](#)). (Midrash Tanhuma Ki Sisa 9.)

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 11

The first three chapters of tractate [Berakhot](#) in the Mishnah, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud and the first two chapters of tractate Berakhot in the [Tosefta](#) interpreted the laws of the *Shema* in [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#) and [11:13–21](#). ([Mishnah](#)

[Berakhot 1:1–3:6](#); Tosefta Berakhot 1:1–2:21; Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 1a–42b; [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 2a–26a.](#))

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with "milk and honey," as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3](#), [Leviticus 20:24](#), [Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3](#), [11:9](#), [26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a.](#))

Interpreting the words "to walk in all His ways" in [Deuteronomy 11:22](#), the [Sifre](#) taught that to walk in God's ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) "merciful and gracious." (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.) Similarly, Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, "You shall walk after the Lord your God." How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, "[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire"? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that

the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after [Abraham](#) was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed [Isaac](#) his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 6 positive and 2 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- Not to derive benefit from any ornamentation of an idol ([Deuteronomy 7:25.](#))
- Not to take any object from idolatry into our possession, to derive benefit from it ([Deuteronomy 7:26.](#))
- The precept of blessing the Almighty for the food we receive ([Deuteronomy 8:10.](#))
- The precept of love for converts to Judaism ([Deuteronomy 10:19.](#))

- The precept of reverent awe for the Eternal Lord ([Deuteronomy 10:20.](#))
- The precept of prayer to the Almighty ([Deuteronomy 10:20.](#))
- The mitzvah of associating with Torah scholars and adhering to them ([Deuteronomy 10:20.](#))
- That whoever needs to take an oath should swear by the Name of the Eternal Lord ([Deuteronomy 10:20.](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:304–57. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))



Isaiah (1509 fresco by Michelangelo)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 49:14–51:3](#). The haftarah is the second in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

In the Blessing after Meals (*Birkat Hamazon*), Jews sometimes quote [Deuteronomy 8:10](#), the Scriptural basis for the Blessing after Meals, immediately before the invitation (*zimun*), and quote it again at the close of the second blessing (for the [Land of Israel](#)). (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for the Sabbath and Festivals with an Interlinear Translation*, 159, 165. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-697-3](#).)

The opening sentence of the [Amidah](#) quotes Moses's characterization of God in [Deuteronomy 10:17](#) as “the great, the mighty, and the awesome.” (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 35a–b. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), quotes [Deuteronomy 10:22](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah*:

The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments, 44. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 90. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)

[Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#) is the second of three blocks of verses in the *Shema*, a central prayer in Jewish prayer services. Jews combine [Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#), [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#), and [Numbers 15:37–41](#) to form the core of *K'riat Shema*, recited in the evening (*Ma'ariv*) and morning (*Shacharit*) prayer services. (Hammer, at 30–31, 112–13, 282–83.)

[[edit](#)] Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[[edit](#)] Biblical

- [Exodus 23:25–26](#) (blessings of health and fertility); [23:27–30](#) (driving out the Canaanites); [32:1–35](#) (the Golden Calf); [34:1](#).
- [Numbers 13:1–14:45](#); [20:23–29](#).



Pliny

- [Deuteronomy 1:19–44; 28:1–11](#) (blessings).
- [1 Kings 12:26–30](#).
- [Jeremiah 4:1–4](#) (circumcise your heart).
- [Psalms 11:7](#) (God loves); [63:4](#) (God’s loving kindness); [105:5](#) (remember God’s wonders); [106:36](#) (their idols became a snare); [136:16](#) (God led the people through the wilderness); [146:8](#) (God loves).

[edit] Early nonrabbinic

- [Pliny the Elder. *Natural History* 26:3, 5](#). 1st Century C.E. (Egyptian diseases).



Josephus

- [Josephus. *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:2–3](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#). Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Matthew 4:4](#) (not live by bread alone).

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Berakhot 1:1–3:6](#); [Bikkurim 1:3](#); [Sotah 7:8](#); [Avodah Zarah 1:9](#), [3:1–10](#); [Tamid 5:1](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 3–7, 167, 458–59, 662, 664–67, 869. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 37:1–52:1. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): [Berakhot 1a–42b](#), [72b](#), [88b](#); [Peah 23a](#); [Kilayim 30a](#); [Sheviit 42b](#); [Terumot 12a](#); [Challah 18b](#); [Sukkah 20b](#); [Avodah Zarah ch. 3](#). Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–3, 5, 6b–7, 11, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005–2010.

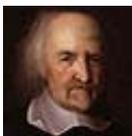
- Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot 2a–26a, 32a–b, 33b–34a, 35a–b, 36b–37a, 38a, 40a–41b, 44a, 48b, 51b, 55a; Shabbat 31b, 32b, 82b, 105b, 108a; Eruvin 4a; Pesachim 36a, 49b, 53a, 87b, 101b, 104a, 119a; Yoma 3b, 11b, 69b, 72b, 74b, 75b, 79b, 81b; Sukkah 5b, 26b, 35a, 52a; Rosh Hashanah 7a, 8a–b, 17b; Taanit 2a, 3b–4a, 6a–b, 7b, 9b, 26b; Megillah 19b, 21a, 25a, 31a; Chagigah 12a–b; Yevamot 78b; Ketubot 47b, 111a; Nedarim 7b, 32a, 38a; Sotah 4b–5a, 11a, 33a; Gittin 62a; Kiddushin 29b–30b, 36a, 58a; Bava Kamma 113b; Bava Batra 9b, 14b, 19a, 21a, 110b, 121a; Sanhedrin 4b, 56a, 90b, 93a, 99a, 110a, 113a; Makkot 7b; Shevuot 30b; Avodah Zarah 15a, 21a, 40b–49b, 52a, 54b; Horayot 13a; Zevachim 16a; Menachot 28b, 31b, 37b, 43b, 84a–b, 99a; Chullin 84b, 120b, 135b, 140a; Bekhorot 6b, 44b; Arakhin 4a; Temurah 3b, 28b, 30b; Niddah 16b, 70b.
 Babylonian, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



Rashi

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 7–11*. Troyes, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:83–118. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. 1:97; 2:14, 47–48, 56. Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 68–69, 89, 111–12, 119. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).
- [Benjamin of Tudela](#). *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*. Spain, 1173. Reprinted in *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: Travels in the Middle Ages*. Introductions by Michael A. Singer, Marcus Nathan Adler, A. Asher, 91. Malibu, Calif.: Joseph Simon, 1983. [ISBN 0-934710-07-4](#). (Anak).



Hobbes

- [Zohar 3:270a–](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[[edit](#)] Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, 2:26; 3:40; 4:45. England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 319, 504–05, 672, 676–77. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
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Hirsch

- [Abraham Isaac Kook](#). *The Moral Principles*. Early 20th Century. Reprinted in *Abraham Isaac Kook: the Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems*. Translated by [Ben Zion Bokser](#), 176. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press 1978. [ISBN 0-8091-2159-X](#).
- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 788. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005.

[ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.

- [Abraham Joshua Heschel](#). *Man's Quest for God: Studies in Prayer and Symbolism*, 36. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954.
- [Bob Dylan](#). "Gates of Eden." In [Bringing It All Back Home](#). [Columbia Records](#), 1965. ("Aladdin and his lamp sits with Utopian hermit monks side saddle on the Golden Calf").
- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.



Dylan

- [Moshe Weinfeld](#). *Deuteronomy 1-11*, 5:357–455. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1991. [ISBN 0-385-17593-0](#).
- [Joel Roth](#). "Homosexuality." New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1992. EH 24.1992b. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 613, 615. New York: Rabbinical Assembly,

2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (interpreting the term “abhorrence”).
- [Elliot N. Dorff](#). [“Artificial Insemination, Egg Donation and Adoption.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1994. EH 1:3.1994. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 461, 462, 464. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (children among life’s chief goods).
 - [Jacob Milgrom](#). “‘The Alien in Your Midst’: Every nation has its ger: the permanent resident. The Torah commands us, first, not to oppress the ger, and then to befriend and love him.” *Bible Review*. 11 (6) (Dec. 1995).
 - Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 88–115, 438–46. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).
 - Elliot N. Dorff. [“Assisted Suicide.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1997. YD 345.1997a. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 379, 380. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (implications for assisted suicide of God’s ownership of the universe).

- Elie Kaplan Spitz. [“On the Use of Birth Surrogates.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1997. EH 1:3.1997b. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 529, 536. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (promise of abundant offspring).
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Goldstein

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[[edit](#)] External links

[[edit](#)] Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[[edit](#)] Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
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- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](#)
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Re'eh

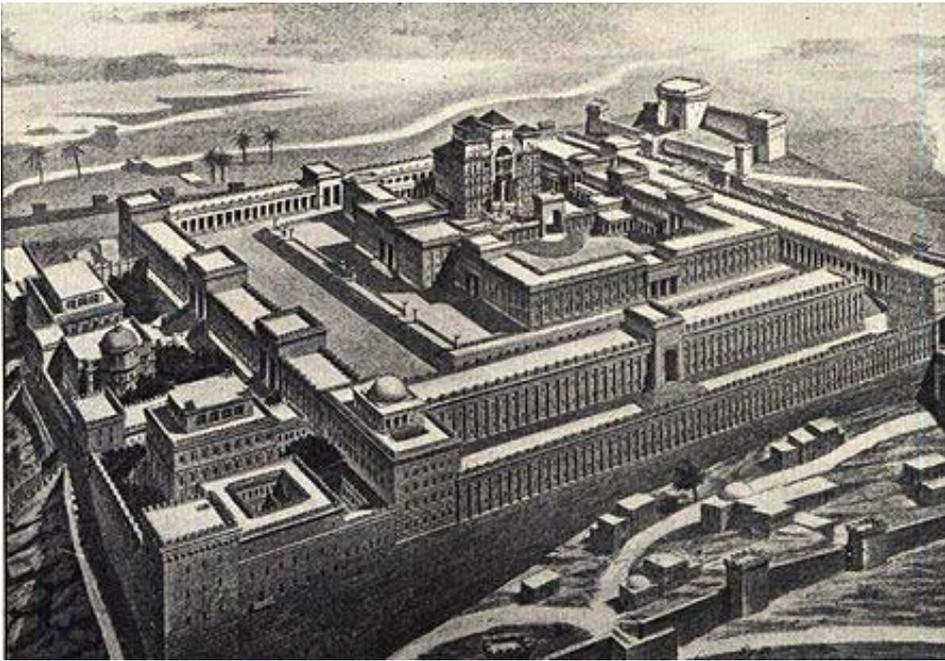
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Re'eh, **Reeh**, **R'eih**, or **Ree** (ראה — [Hebrew](#) for "see", the first word in the parshah) is the 47th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fourth in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 11:26–16:17](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in August or early September.

Jews read part of the parshah, [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:17](#), which addresses the [Three Pilgrim Festivals](#) (*Shalosh Regalim*), as the initial Torah reading on the eighth day of [Passover](#) when it falls on a weekday and on the second day of [Shavuot](#) when it falls on a weekday. And Jews read a larger selection from the same part of the parshah, [Deuteronomy 14:22–16:17](#), as the initial Torah reading on the eighth day of Passover when it falls on a Sabbath, on the second day of Shavuot when it falls on a Sabbath, and on [Shemini Atzeret](#).

In the parshah, [Moses](#) set before the [Israelites](#) the choice between [blessing](#) and [curse](#). Moses instructed the Israelites in the [laws](#) that they were to observe, including the law of a single, centralized place of worship. Moses warned against following other gods and their [prophets](#). And Moses set forth laws of [Kashrut](#), [tithes](#), the [Sabbatical year](#), the Hebrew slave, firstborn animals, and the three pilgrim festivals.



a reconstruction of [Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem](#), the site that God would choose as God's habitation, within the meaning of Deuteronomy 12

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Mount Gerizim

[\[edit\]](#) Blessing and curse

Moses told the Israelites that he set before them blessing and curse: blessing if they obeyed [God's commandments](#) and curse if they did not obey but turned away to follow other gods. ([Deuteronomy 11:26–28](#).) Moses directed that when God brought them into the [land](#), they were to pronounce the blessings at [Mount Gerizim](#) and the curses at [Mount Ebal](#). ([Deuteronomy 11:29](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Centralized worship

Moses instructed the Israelites in the laws that they were to observe in the land: They were to destroy all the sites at which the residents [worshiped](#) their gods, tear down their [altars](#), smash their pillars, put their sacred posts to the fire, and cut down the [images](#)

of their gods. ([Deuteronomy 12:1–3.](#)) They were not to worship God as the land’s residents had worshiped their gods, but to look only to the site that God would choose as God’s habitation to establish God’s name. ([Deuteronomy 12:4–5.](#)) There they were to bring their burnt offerings and other [sacrifices](#), [tithes](#) and contributions, offerings, and the firstlings of their [herds](#) and flocks. ([Deuteronomy 12:6.](#)) There, together with their households, they were to feast before God, happy in all God’s blessings. ([Deuteronomy 12:7.](#)) Moses warned them not to sacrifice burnt offerings in any place, but only in the place that God would choose. ([Deuteronomy 12:13–14.](#)) But whenever they desired, they could [slaughter](#) and eat [meat](#) in any of their settlements, so long as they did not partake of the blood, which they were to pour on the ground. ([Deuteronomy 12:15–16.](#)) They were not, however, to consume in their settlements their tithes, firstlings, vow offerings, freewill offerings, or contributions; these they were to consume along with their [children](#), [slaves](#), and their local [Levites](#) before God in the place that God would choose. ([Deuteronomy 12:17–18.](#))



14th-12th century B.C.E. [bronze](#) figurine of the [Canaanite](#) god [Baal](#), found in Ras Shamra (ancient [Ugarit](#)), now at the [Louvre](#)



7th century B.C.E. [alabaster Phoenician](#) figure probably of the Canaanite goddess [Astarte](#), now at the [National Archaeological Museum of Spain](#)

[[edit](#)] Not following other gods

Moses warned them against being lured into the ways of the residents of the land, and against inquiring about their gods, for the residents performed for their gods every abhorrent act that God detested, even offering up their sons and daughters in fire to their gods. ([Deuteronomy 12:29–31](#).)

Moses warned the Israelites carefully to observe only that which he enjoined upon them, neither adding to it nor taking away from it. ([Deuteronomy 13:1](#).) If a prophet appeared before them and gave them a sign or a portent and urged them to worship another

god, even if the sign or portent came true, they were not to heed the words of that prophet, but [put the offender to death](#).

([Deuteronomy 13:2–6](#).) If a [brother](#), son, daughter, [wife](#), or closest [friend](#) enticed one in secret to worship other gods, the Israelites were to show no [pity](#), but stone the offender to death.

([Deuteronomy 13:7–12](#).) And if they heard that some scoundrels had subverted the inhabitants of a town to worship other gods, the Israelites were to investigate thoroughly, and if they found it true, they were to destroy the inhabitants and the [cattle](#) of that town, burning the town and all its spoil as a holocaust to God.

([Deuteronomy 13:13–19](#).) Moses prohibited the Israelites from gashing themselves or [shaving](#) the front of their [heads](#) because of the dead. ([Deuteronomy 14:1](#).)

[[edit](#)] Kashrut

Moses prohibited the Israelites from eating anything abhorrent.

([Deuteronomy 14:3](#).) Among land animals, they could eat [ox](#), [sheep](#), [goat](#), [deer](#), [gazelle](#), [roebuck](#), [wild goat](#), [ibex](#), [antelope](#), [mountain sheep](#), and any other animal that has true hoofs that are cleft in two and chews cud. ([Deuteronomy 14:4–6](#).) But the Israelites were not to eat or touch the carcasses of [camel](#), [hare](#), daman, or [swine](#). ([Deuteronomy 14:7–8](#).) Of animals that live in water, they could eat anything that has [fins](#) and [scales](#), but nothing else. ([Deuteronomy 14:9–10](#).) They could eat any clean bird, but could not eat [eagle](#), [vulture](#), [black vulture](#), [kite](#), [falcon](#), [buzzard](#), [raven](#), [ostrich](#), [nighthawk](#), sea [gull](#), [hawk](#), [owl](#), [pelican](#), [bustard](#), [cormorant](#), [stork](#), [heron](#), [hoopoe](#), or [bat](#). ([Deuteronomy](#)

[14:11–18.](#)) They could not eat any [winged swarming](#) things. ([Deuteronomy 14:19.](#)) They could not eat anything that had died a natural death, but they could give it to the stranger or you sell it to a foreigner. ([Deuteronomy 14:21.](#)) They could not boil a kid in its mother’s [milk](#). ([Deuteronomy 14:21.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Tithes

They were to set aside every year a tenth part of all the yield of their harvest. ([Deuteronomy 14:22.](#)) They were to consume the tithes of their new [grain](#), [wine](#), and [oil](#), and the firstlings of their herds and flocks, in the presence of God in the place where God would choose to establish God’s name. ([Deuteronomy 14:23.](#)) If the distance was too great to transport, they could convert the tithes or firstlings into money, take the proceeds to the place that God had chosen, and spend the money and feast there. ([Deuteronomy 14:24–26.](#)) But they were not to neglect the Levite in their community, for the Levites had no hereditary portion of land. ([Deuteronomy 14:27.](#)) Every third year, they were to bring out the full tithe, but leave it within their settlements, and the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the [widow](#) in their settlements could come and eat their fill. ([Deuteronomy 14:28–29.](#))



The Year of Jubilee (painting by Henry Le Jeune)

[\[edit\]](#) The Sabbatical year

Every seventh year, the Israelites were to remit [debts](#) from fellow Israelites, although they could continue to dun [foreigners](#).

([Deuteronomy 15:1–3](#).) There would be no needy among them if only they heeded God and kept all God's laws, for God would bless them. ([Deuteronomy 15:4–6](#).) But if one of their kinsmen fell into need, they were not to harden their hearts, but were to open their [hands](#) and lend what the kinsman needed.

([Deuteronomy 15:7–8](#).) The Israelites were not to harbor the base thought that the year of remission was approaching and not lend, but they were to lend readily to their kinsman, for in return God would bless them in all their efforts. ([Deuteronomy 15:9–10](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) The Hebrew slave

If a fellow Hebrew was sold into servitude, the Hebrew slave would serve six years, and in the seventh year go free.

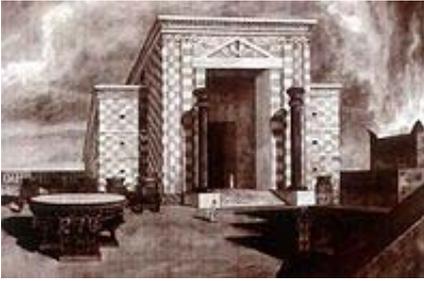
([Deuteronomy 15:12.](#)) When the master set the slave free, the master was to give the former slave parting gifts. ([Deuteronomy 15:13–14.](#)) Should the slave tell the master that the slave did not want to leave, the master was to take an [awl](#) and put it through the slave's ear into the door, and the slave was to become the master's slave in perpetuity. ([Deuteronomy 15:16–17.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The firstling

The Israelites were to consecrate to God all male firstlings that were born in their herds and flocks eat it with their household before God in the place that God would choose. ([Deuteronomy 15:19–20.](#)) If it had a defect, they were not to sacrifice it, but eat it in their settlements, as long as they poured out its blood on the ground. ([Deuteronomy 15:21–23.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Three pilgrim festivals

Moses instructed the Israelites to observe Passover, Shavuot, and [Sukkot](#). ([Deuteronomy 16:1–15.](#)) Three times a year, on those three festivals, all Israelite men were to appear before God in the place that God would choose, each with his own gift, according to the blessing that God had bestowed upon him. ([Deuteronomy 16:16–17.](#))



The Temple in Jerusalem



Josiah hearing the reading of Deuteronomy (illustration by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#))

[[edit](#)] In inner-biblical interpretation

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 12

[Leviticus 17:1–10](#), like [Deuteronomy 12:1–28](#), addresses the centralization of sacrifices and the permissibility of eating meat. [Leviticus 17:3–4](#) prohibited killing an ox, lamb, or goat (each a

sacrificial animal) without bringing it to the door of the [Tabernacle](#) as an offering to God. [Deuteronomy 12:15](#), however, allows killing and eating meat in any place.

[2 Kings 23:1–25](#) and [2 Chronicles 34:1–33](#) recount how King [Josiah](#) implemented the centralization called for in [Deuteronomy 12:1–19](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 16

[\[edit\]](#) Passover

[Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#) refers to the [Festival](#) of Passover. In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Passover is called:

- “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48; 34:25; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 9:2, 4–6, 10, 12–14; 28:16; 33:3; Deuteronomy 16:1–2, 5–6; Joshua 5:10–11; 2 Kings 23:21–23; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:19–20; 2 Chronicles 30:1–2, 5, 15, 17–18; 35:1, 6–9, 11, 13, 16–19](#));
- “The Feast of Unleavened Bread” (*Chag haMatzot*, חַג הַמַּצּוֹת) ([Exodus 12:17; 23:15; 34:18; Leviticus 23:6; Deuteronomy 16:16; Ezekiel 45:21; Ezra 6:22; 2 Chronicles 8:13; 30:13, 21; 35:17](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a solemn assembly” (*mikrah kodesh*, מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ) ([Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 23:7–8; Numbers 28:18, 25](#)).



The Search for Leaven (illustration circa 1733–1739 by [Bernard Picart](#))

Some explain the double nomenclature of “Passover” and “Feast of Unleavened Bread” as referring to two separate feasts that the Israelites combined sometime between [the Exodus](#) and when the Biblical text became settled. (See, e.g., [W. Gunther Plaut](#). *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 456. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).) [Exodus 34:18–20](#) and [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:8](#) indicate that the dedication of the firstborn also became associated with the festival.

Some believe that the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” was an agricultural festival at which the Israelites celebrated the beginning of the grain harvest. Moses may have had this festival in mind when in [Exodus 5:1](#) and [10:9](#) he petitioned Pharaoh to let the Israelites go to celebrate a feast in the wilderness. (Plaut, at 464.)

“Passover,” on the other hand, was associated with a thanksgiving sacrifice of a lamb, also called “the Passover,” “the Passover lamb,” or “the Passover offering.” ([Exodus 12:11, 21, 27, 43, 48](#); [Deuteronomy 16:2, 5–6](#); [Ezra 6:20](#); [2 Chronicles 30:15, 17–18](#); [35:1, 6–9, 11, 13.](#))



The Passover Seder of the Portuguese Jews (illustration circa 1733–1739 by Bernard Picart)

[Exodus 12:5–6](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), and [Numbers 9:3](#) and [5](#), and [28:16](#) direct “Passover” to take place on the evening of the fourteenth of [Aviv](#) ([Nisan](#) in the [Hebrew calendar](#) after the [Babylonian captivity](#)). [Joshua 5:10](#), [Ezekiel 45:21](#), [Ezra 6:19](#), and [2 Chronicles 35:1](#) confirm that practice. [Exodus 12:18–19](#), [23:15](#), and [34:18](#), [Leviticus 23:6](#), and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct the “Feast of Unleavened Bread” to take place over seven days and [Leviticus 23:6](#) and [Ezekiel 45:21](#) direct that it begin on the fifteenth of the month.

Some believe that the propinquity of the dates of the two festivals led to their confusion and merger. (Plaut, at 464.)

[Exodus 12:23](#) and [27](#) link the word “Passover” (*Pesach*, פֶּסַח) to God’s act to “pass over” (*pasach*, פָּסַח) the Israelites’ houses in the [plague](#) of the firstborn. In the Torah, the consolidated Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread thus commemorate the Israelites’ liberation from [Egypt](#). ([Exodus 12:42](#); [23:15](#); [34:18](#); [Numbers 33:3](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), 3, 6.)

The Hebrew Bible frequently notes the Israelites’ observance of Passover at turning points in their history. [Numbers 9:1–5](#) reports God’s direction to the Israelites to observe Passover in the wilderness of [Sinai](#) on the anniversary of their liberation from Egypt. [Joshua 5:10–11](#) reports that upon entering the [Promised Land](#), the Israelites kept the Passover on the plains of [Jericho](#) and ate unleavened cakes and parched corn, produce of the land, the next day. [2 Kings 23:21–23](#) reports that King Josiah commanded the Israelites to keep the Passover in [Jerusalem](#) as part of Josiah’s reforms, but also notes that the Israelites had not kept such a Passover from the days of the [Biblical judges](#) nor in all the days of the [kings of Israel](#) or the [kings of Judah](#), calling into question the observance of even Kings [David](#) and [Solomon](#). The more reverent [2 Chronicles 8:12–13](#), however, reports that Solomon offered sacrifices on the festivals, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And [2 Chronicles 30:1–27](#) reports King [Hezekiah](#)’s observance of a second Passover anew, as sufficient numbers of neither the priests nor the people were prepared to do so before then. And [Ezra 6:19–22](#) reports that the Israelites

returned from the Babylonian captivity observed Passover, ate the Passover lamb, and kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy.



offering of first fruits (illustration from a Bible card published between 1896 and 1913 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[[edit](#)] Shavuot

[Deuteronomy 16:10](#) refers to the Festival of Shavuot. In the Hebrew Bible, Shavuot is called:

- The Feast of Weeks (חַג שָׁבֻעֹת, *Chag Shavuot*) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); see also [2 Chronicles 8:13](#) (חַג הַשָּׁבֻעֹת, *Chag haShavuot*));
- The Day of the First-fruits (יוֹם הַבִּקּוּרִים, *Yom haBikurim*) ([Numbers 28:26](#));

- The Feast of Harvest (חג הקציר, *Chag haKatzir*) ([Exodus 23:16](#)); and
- A holy convocation (מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ, *mikrah kodesh*) ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#))

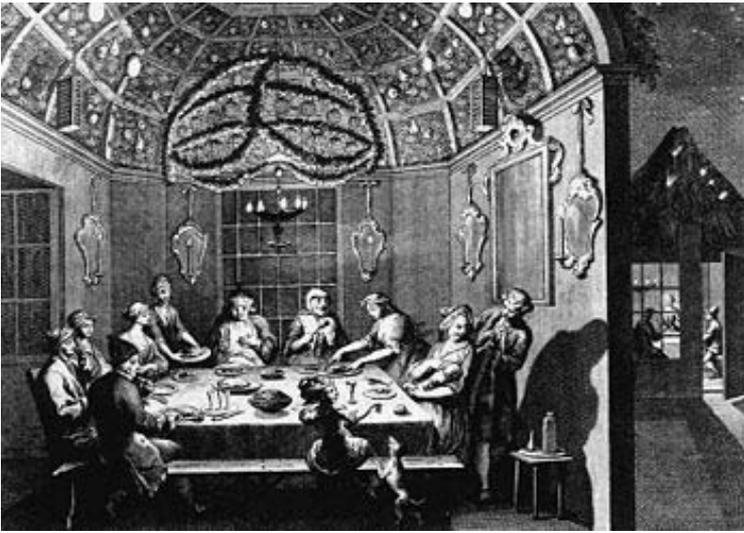
[Exodus 34:22](#) associates Shavuot with the first-fruits (בְּכוֹרֵי, *bikurei*) of the wheat harvest. (See also [Exodus 23:16](#); [Leviticus 23:17](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).) In turn, [Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) set out the ceremony for the bringing of the first fruits.

To arrive at the correct date, [Leviticus 23:15](#) instructs counting seven weeks from the day after the day of rest of Passover, the day that they brought the sheaf of barley for waving. Similarly, [Deuteronomy 16:9](#) directs counting seven weeks from when they first put the sickle to the standing barley.

[Leviticus 23:16–19](#) sets out a course of offerings for the fiftieth day, including a meal-offering of two loaves made from fine flour from the first-fruits of the harvest; burnt-offerings of seven lambs, one bullock, and two rams; a sin-offering of a goat; and a peace-offering of two lambs. Similarly, [Numbers 28:26–30](#) sets out a course of offerings including a meal-offering; burnt-offerings of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs; and one goat to make atonement. [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) directs a freewill-offering in relation to God's blessing.

[Leviticus 23:21](#) and [Numbers 28:26](#) ordain a holy convocation in which the Israelites were not to work.

[2 Chronicles 8:13](#) reports that Solomon offered burnt-offerings on the Feast of Weeks.



Eating in a [Sukkah](#) (1723 engraving by Bernard Picart)

[\[edit\]](#) Sukkot

And [Deuteronomy 16:13–15](#) refers to the Festival of [Sukkot](#). In the Hebrew Bible, Sukkot is called:

- “The Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths)” ([Leviticus 23:34](#); [Deuteronomy 16:13, 16; 31:10](#); [Zechariah 14:16, 18, 19](#); [Ezra 3:4](#); [2 Chronicles 8:13](#));
- “The Feast of Ingathering” ([Exodus 23:16, 34:22](#));
- “The Feast” or “the festival” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65; 12:32](#); [2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8](#));
- “The Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39](#); [Judges 21:19](#));

- “The festival of the seventh month” ([Ezekiel 45:25](#); [Nehemiah 8:14](#)); and
- “A holy convocation” or “a sacred occasion” ([Numbers 29:12](#)).



Celebrating Sukkot with the Four Species (painting circa 1894–1895 by Leopold Pilichowski)

Sukkot’s agricultural origin is evident from the name "The Feast of Ingathering," from the ceremonies accompanying it, and from the season and occasion of its celebration: "At the end of the year when you gather in your labors out of the field" ([Exodus 23:16](#)); "after you have gathered in from your threshing-floor and from your winepress." ([Deuteronomy 16:13](#).) It was a thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. (Compare [Judges 9:27](#).) And in what may explain the festival’s name, [Isaiah](#) reports that grape harvesters kept booths in their [vineyards](#). ([Isaiah 1:8](#).) Coming as it did at the completion of the harvest, Sukkot was regarded as a general thanksgiving for the bounty of nature in the year that had passed.

Sukkot became one of the most important feasts in Judaism, as indicated by its designation as “the Feast of the Lord” ([Leviticus 23:39](#); [Judges 21:19](#)) or simply “the Feast.” ([1 Kings 8:2, 65: 12:32](#); [2 Chronicles 5:3; 7:8.](#)) Perhaps because of its wide attendance, Sukkot became the appropriate time for important state ceremonies. Moses instructed the children of Israel to gather for a reading of the Law during Sukkot every seventh year. ([Deuteronomy 31:10–11.](#)) King Solomon dedicated the [Temple in Jerusalem](#) on Sukkot. ([1 Kings 8](#); [2 Chronicles 7.](#)) And Sukkot was the first sacred occasion observed after the resumption of sacrifices in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. ([Ezra 3:2–4.](#))



Sephardic Jews Observe Hoshanah Rabbah (engraving circa 1723–1743 by Bernard Picart)

In the time of [Nehemiah](#), after the Babylonian captivity, the Israelites celebrated Sukkot by making and dwelling in booths, a

practice of which Nehemiah reports: “the Israelites had not done so from the days of Joshua.” ([Nehemiah 8:13–17](#).) In a practice related to that of the [Four Species](#), Nehemiah also reports that the Israelites found in the Law the commandment that they “go out to the mountains and bring leafy branches of [olive](#) trees, [pine](#) trees, [myrtles](#), [palms](#) and [other] leafy trees to make booths.” ([Nehemiah 8:14–15](#).) In [Leviticus 23:40](#), God told Moses to command the people: “On the first day you shall take the product of *badar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and [willows](#) of the brook,” and “You shall live in booths seven days; all citizens in Israel shall live in booths, in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.” ([Leviticus 23:42–43](#).) The book of Numbers, however, indicates that while in the wilderness, the Israelites dwelt in tents. ([Numbers 11:10](#); [16:27](#).) Some secular scholars consider [Leviticus 23:39–43](#) (the commandments regarding booths and the four species) to be an insertion by a late [redactor](#). (E.g., [Richard Elliott Friedman](#). *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 228–29. New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003.)

[Jeroboam](#) son of Nebat, King of the northern [Kingdom of Israel](#), whom [1 Kings 13:33](#) describes as practicing “his evil way,” celebrated a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, one month after Sukkot, “in imitation of the festival in Judah.” ([1 Kings 12:32–33](#).) “While Jeroboam was standing on the [altar](#) to present the offering, the man of God, at the command of the Lord, cried out against the altar” in disapproval. ([1 Kings 13:1](#).)

According to the prophet [Zechariah](#), in the messianic era, Sukkot will become a universal festival, and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there. ([Zechariah 14:16–19](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 12

[Josephus](#) interpreted the centralization of worship in [Deuteronomy 12:1–19](#) to teach that just as there is only one God, there would be only one Temple; and the Temple was to be common to all people, just as God is the God for all people. ([Against Apion 2:24\(193\)](#).)



A Guardian Angel (18th Century painting)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 11

The Rabbis taught that the words of [Deuteronomy 11:26](#), “Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse,” demonstrate that God did not set before the Israelites the Blessings and the Curses of [Leviticus 26](#) and [Deuteronomy 28](#) to hurt them, but only to show them the good way that they should choose in order to receive reward. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 4:1.) Rabbi Levi compared the proposition of [Deuteronomy 11:26](#) to a master who offered his servant a golden necklace if the servant would do the master’s will, or iron chains if he did not. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 4:2.) Rabbi Haggai taught that not only had God in [Deuteronomy 11:26](#) set two paths before the Israelites, but God did not administer justice to them according to the strict letter of the law, but allowed them mercy so that they might (in the words of [Deuteronomy 30:19](#)) “choose life.” ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 4:3.) And Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#) taught that when a person makes the choice that [Deuteronomy 11:26–27](#) urges and observes the words of the Torah, a procession of angels passes before the person to guard the person from evil, bringing into effect the promised blessing. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 4:4.)

Our Rabbis asked in a [Baraita](#) why [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) says, “You shall set the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon mount Ebal.” [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) cannot say so merely to teach where the Israelites were to say the blessings and curses, as

[Deuteronomy 27:12–13](#) already says, “These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people . . . and these shall stand upon Mount Ebal for the curse.” Rather, the Rabbis taught that the purpose of [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) was to indicate that the blessings must precede the curses. It is possible to think that all the blessings must precede all the curses; therefore the text states “blessing” and “curse” in the singular, and thus teaches that one blessing precedes one curse, alternating blessings and curses, and all the blessings do not precede all the curses. A further purpose of [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) is to draw a comparison between blessings and curses: As the curse was pronounced by the Levites, so the blessing had to be pronounced by the Levites. As the curse was uttered in a loud voice, so the blessing had to be uttered in a loud voice. As the curse was said in Hebrew, so the blessing had to be said in Hebrew. As the curses were in general and particular terms, so must the blessings had to be in general and particular terms. And as with the curse both parties respond “Amen,” so with the blessing both parties respond “Amen.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 37b.](#))

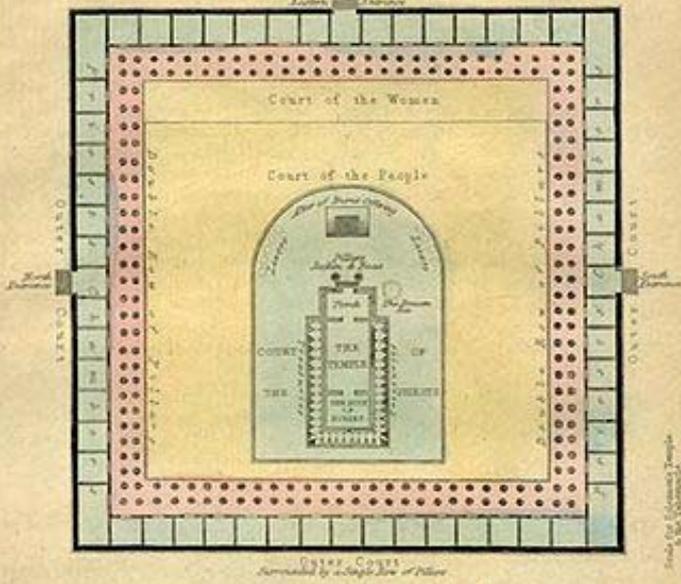
The [Mishnah](#) noted the common mention of the [terebinths](#) of [Moreh](#) in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) and [Genesis 12:6](#) and deduced that Gerizim and Ebal were near [Shechem](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 7:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 32a.](#)) But [Rabbi Judah](#) deduced from the words “beyond the [Jordan](#)” in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) that Gerizim and Ebal were some distance beyond the Jordan. [Rabbi Judah](#) deduced from the words “behind the way of the going down of the sun” in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) that Gerizim and Ebal

were far from the east, where the sun rises. And Rabbi Judah also deduced from the words “over against [Gilgal](#)” in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) that Gerizim and Ebal were close to Gilgal. Rabbi Eleazar ben Jose said, however, that the words “Are they not beyond the Jordan” in [Deuteronomy 11:30](#) indicated that Gerizim and Ebal were near the Jordan. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 32b.](#))

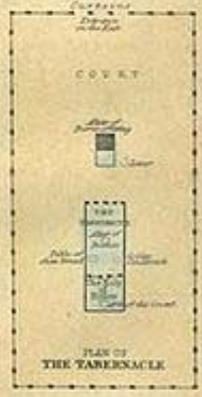
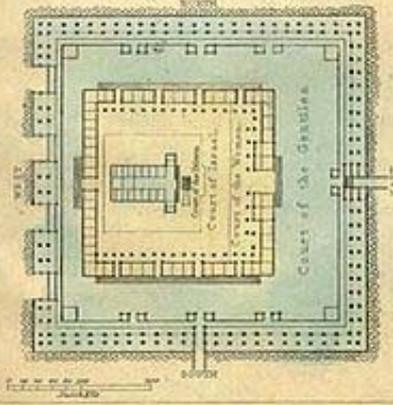
[edit] Deuteronomy chapter 12

Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Judah derived from the use of the two instances of the verb “destroy” in the Hebrew for “you shall surely destroy” in [Deuteronomy 12:2](#) that the Israelites were to destroy the Canaanite’s idols twice, and the Rabbis explained that this meant by cutting them and then by uprooting them from the ground. The [Gemara](#) explained that Rabbi Jose derived from the words “and you shall destroy their name out of that place” in [Deuteronomy 12:3](#) that the place of the idol must be renamed. And Rabbi Eliezer deduced from the same words in [Deuteronomy 12:3](#) that the Israelites were to eradicate every trace of the idol. ([Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 45b.](#))

PLAN OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.
with the two lesser Courts.



PLAN OF HEROD'S TEMPLE.



Engraved by Edm. Stone from the Works of the Rev. J. G. ...

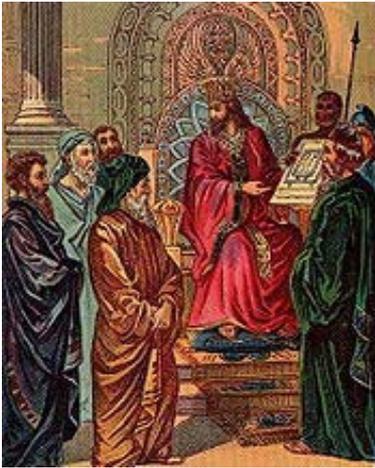


Plan of the Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and Herod's Temple

The Mishnah recounted the history of decentralized sacrifice. Before the [Tabernacle](#), [high places](#) were permitted, and Israelite firstborn performed the sacrifices. After the Israelites set up the Tabernacle, high places were forbidden, and [priests](#) performed the services. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land and came to Gilgal, high places were again permitted. When the Israelites came to [Shiloh](#), high places were again forbidden. The Tabernacle there had no roof, but consisted of a stone structure covered with cloth. The Mishnah interpreted the Tabernacle at Shiloh to be the “rest” to which Moses referred in [Deuteronomy 12:9](#). When the Israelites came to [Nob](#) and [Gibeon](#), high places were again permitted. And when the Israelites came to [Jerusalem](#), high places were forbidden and never again permitted. The Mishnah interpreted the sanctuary in Jerusalem to be “the inheritance” to which Moses referred in [Deuteronomy 12:9](#). ([Mishnah Zevachim 14:4–8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Zevachim 112b](#).)

The Mishnah explained the different practices at the various high places when high places were permitted. The Mishnah taught that there was no difference between a Great Altar (at the Tabernacle or the Temple) and a small altar (a local high place), except that the Israelites had to bring obligatory sacrifices that had a fixed time, like the Passover sacrifice, to the Great Altar. ([Mishnah Megillah 1:10](#); [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 9b](#).) Further, the Mishnah explained that there was no difference between Shiloh and Jerusalem except that in Shiloh they ate minor sacrifices and second tithes (*ma'aser sheni*) anywhere within sight of Shiloh, whereas at Jerusalem they were eaten within the wall. And the sanctity of Shiloh was followed by a period when high places

were permitted, while after the sanctity of Jerusalem high places were no longer permitted. ([Mishnah Megillah 1:11](#); [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 9b–10a.](#))



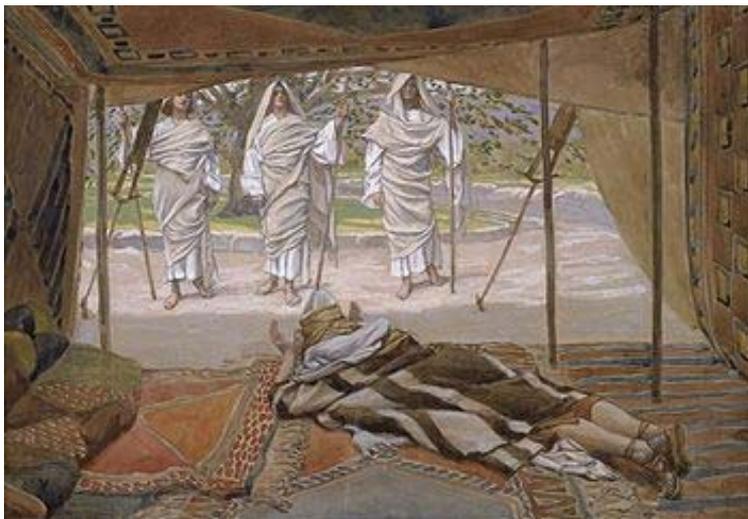
King Solomon and the Plan for the Temple (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Rabbi Judah (or some say Rabbi Jose) said that three commandments were given to the Israelites when they entered the land: (1) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) to appoint a king, (2) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 25:19](#) to blot out [Amalek](#), and (3) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 12:10–11](#) to build the Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbi Nehorai, on the other hand, said that [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) did not command the Israelites to choose a king, but was spoken only in anticipation of the Israelites’ future complaints, as [Deuteronomy 17:14](#) says, “And (you) shall say, ‘I will set a king over me.’” A

Baraita taught that because [Deuteronomy 12:10–11](#) says, “And when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about,” and then proceeds, “then it shall come to pass that the place that the Lord your God shall choose,” it implies that the commandment to exterminate Amalek was to come before building of the Temple. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 20b.](#))

Tractate [Chullin](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the slaughter of animals for purposes other than sacrifice in [Deuteronomy 12:15–25](#). ([Mishnah Chullin 1:1–12:5](#); [Tosefta Shechitat Chullin 1:1–10:16](#); [Babylonian Talmud Chullin 2a–142a.](#))

Tractate [Bikkurim](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of the first fruits in [Exodus 23:19](#), [Numbers 18:13](#), and [Deuteronomy 12:17–18](#) and [26:1–11](#). ([Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–3:12](#); [Tosefta Bikkurim 1:1–2:16](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 1a–26b.](#))





Abraham and the Three Angels (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 13

The Jerusalem Talmud interpreted [Deuteronomy 13:2](#) — “a prophet . . . gives you a sign or a wonder” — to demonstrate that a prophet’s authority depends on the prophet’s producing a sign or wonder. (Jerusalem Talmud Berakhot 12a.)

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, “You shall walk after the Lord your God.” How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, “[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire”? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, “And the Lord God made for [Adam](#) and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them” — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, “And the Lord appeared to him by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after [Abraham](#) was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed [Isaac](#) his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in

God's ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) "merciful and gracious." (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)

The Gemara taught that [Deuteronomy 13:18](#) sets forth one of the three most distinguishing virtues of the Jewish People. The Gemara taught that David told the [Gibeonites](#) that the Israelites are distinguished by three characteristics: They are merciful, bashful, and benevolent. They are merciful, for [Deuteronomy 13:18](#) says that God would "show you [the Israelites] mercy, and have compassion upon you, and multiply you." They are bashful, for [Exodus 20:16](#) (20:17 in NJPS) says "that God's fear may be before you [the Israelites]." And they are benevolent, for [Genesis 18:19](#) says of Abraham "that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice." The Gemara taught that David told the Gibeonites that only one who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join the Jewish People. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 79a.](#))

[Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:4–6](#), Tosefta Sanhedrin 14:1–6, and [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 111b–13b](#) interpreted [Deuteronomy 13:13–19](#) to address the law of the apostate town. The Mishnah held that only a court of 71 judges could declare such a city, and the court could not declare cities on the frontier or three cities within one locale to be apostate cities. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 1:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 2a.](#)) A Baraita taught that there never was an apostate town and never will be. Rabbi Eliezer said that no city containing even a single [mezuzah](#) could be condemned as an apostate town, as [Deuteronomy 13:17](#)

instructs with regard to such a town, “you shall gather all the spoil of it in the midst of the street thereof and shall burn . . . all the spoil,” but if the spoil contains even a single mezuzah, this burning would be forbidden by the injunction of [Deuteronomy 12:3–4](#), which states, “you shall destroy the names of [the idols] . . . You shall not do so to the Lord your God,” and thus forbids destroying the Name of God. [Rabbi Jonathan](#), however, said that he saw an apostate town and sat upon its ruins. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 71a](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 14

Tractates [Maasrot](#) and [Maaser Sheni](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of tithes in [Leviticus 27:30–33](#), [Numbers 18:21–24](#), and [Deuteronomy 14:22–29](#). (Mishnah Maasrot 1:1–5:8; Tosefta Maasrot 1:1–3:16; Jerusalem Talmud Maasrot 1a–46a; [Mishnah Maaser Sheni 1:1–5:15](#); Tosefta Maaser Sheni 1:1–5:30; Jerusalem Talmud Maaser Sheni 1a–59b.)

The precept of [Deuteronomy 14:26](#) to rejoice on the festivals (or some say the precept of [Deuteronomy 16:14](#) to rejoice on the festival of Sukkot) is incumbent upon women notwithstanding the general rule that the law does not bind women to observe precepts that depend on a certain time. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 27a](#).)

[Mishnah Peah 8:5–9](#) and Tosefta Peah 4:2–10 interpreted [Deuteronomy 14:28–29](#) to address the tithe given to the poor and the Levite.

A Baraita deduced from the parallel use of the words “at the end” in [Deuteronomy 14:28](#) (regarding tithes) and [31:10](#) (regarding the great assembly) that just as the Torah required the great assembly to be done at a festival ([Deuteronomy 31:10](#)), the Torah also required tithes to be removed at the time of a festival. (Jerusalem Talmud Maaser Sheni 53a.)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 15

Tractate [Sheviit](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of the Sabbatical year in [Exodus 23:10–11](#), [Leviticus 25:1–34](#), and [Deuteronomy 15:1–18](#), and [31:10–13](#). (Mishnah Sheviit 1:1–10:9; Tosefta Sheviit 1:1–8:11; Jerusalem Talmud Sheviit 1a–87b.)



Hillel (sculpture at the [Knesset Menorah](#), Jerusalem)

Mishnah Sheviit chapter 10 and Tosefta Sheviit 8:3–11 interpreted [Deuteronomy 15:1–10](#) to address debts and the

Sabbatical year. The Mishnah held that the Sabbatical year cancelled loans, whether they were secured by a bond or not, but did not cancel debts to a shopkeeper or unpaid wages of a laborer, unless these debts were made into loans. (Mishnah Sheviit 10:1.) When [Hillel](#) saw people refraining from lending, in transgression of [Deuteronomy 15:9](#), he ordained the *prosbul*, which ensured the repayment of loans notwithstanding the Sabbatical year. (Mishnah Sheviit 10:3.) Citing the literal meaning of [Deuteronomy 15:2](#) — “this is the *word* of the release” — the Mishnah held that a creditor could accept payment of a debt notwithstanding an intervening Sabbatical year, if the creditor had first by word told the debtor that the creditor relinquished the debt. (Mishnah Sheviit 10:8.)

Rabbi Isaac taught that the words of [Psalm 103:20](#), “mighty in strength that fulfill His word,” speak of those who observe the Sabbatical year. Rabbi Isaac said that we often find that a person fulfills a precept for a day, a week, or a month, but it is remarkable to find one who does so for an entire year. Rabbi Isaac asked whether one could find a mightier person than one who sees his field untilled, see his vineyard untilled, and yet pays his taxes and does not complain. And Rabbi Isaac noted that [Psalm 103:20](#) uses the words “that fulfill His *word* (*dabar*),” and [Deuteronomy 15:2](#) says regarding observance of the Sabbatical year, “And this is the *manner* (*dabar*) of the release,” and argued that “*dabar*” means the observance of the Sabbatical year in both places. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 1:1.)

Rabbi Shila of Nawha (a place east of [Gadara](#) in the [Galilee](#)) interpreted the word “needy” (אֶבְיוֹן, *evyon*) in [Deuteronomy 15:7](#) to teach that one should give to the poor person from one’s wealth, for that wealth is the poor person’s, given to you in trust. Rabbi Abin observed that when a poor person stands at one’s door, God stands at the person’s right, as [Psalm 109:31](#) says: “Because He stands at the right hand of the needy.” If one gives something to a poor person, one should reflect that the One who stands at the poor person’s right will reward the giver. And if one does not give anything to a poor person, one should reflect that the One who stands at the poor person’s right will punish the one who did not give, as [Psalm 109:31](#) says: “He stands at the right hand of the needy, to save him from them that judge his soul.” (Leviticus Rabbah 34:9.)





Charity (illustration from a Bible card published 1897 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Rabbis interpreted the words “sufficient for his need, whatever is lacking for him” in [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) to teach the level to which the community must help an impoverished person. Based on these words, the Rabbis taught in a Baraita that if an orphan applied to the community for assistance to marry, the community must rent a house, supply a bed and necessary household furnishings, and put on the wedding, as [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) says, “sufficient for his need, whatever is lacking for him.” The Rabbis interpreted the words “sufficient for his need” to refer to the house, “whatever is lacking” to refer to a bed and a table, and “for him (יָד, לוֹ)” to refer to a wife, as [Genesis 2:18](#) uses the same term, “for him (יָד, לוֹ),” to refer to [Adam](#)’s wife, whom [Genesis 2:18](#) calls “a helpmate *for him*.” The Rabbis taught that the words “sufficient for his *need*” command us to maintain the poor person, but not to make the poor person rich. But the Gemara interpreted the words “whatever is lacking *for him*” to include even a horse to ride upon and a servant to run before the impoverished person, if that was what the particular person lacked. The Gemara told that once Hillel bought for a certain impoverished man from an affluent family a horse to ride upon and a servant to run before him, and once when Hillel could not find a servant to run before the impoverished man, Hillel himself ran before him for three miles. The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that once the people of [Upper Galilee](#) bought a pound of meat

every day for an impoverished member of an affluent family of [Sepphoris](#). [Rav Huna](#) taught that they bought for him a pound of premium poultry, or if you prefer, the amount of ordinary meat that they could buy with a pound of money. [Rav Ashi](#) taught that the place was such a small village with so few buyers for meat that every day they had to waste a whole animal just to provide for the pauper's needs. Once when a pauper applied to [Rabbi Nehemiah](#) for support, Rabbi Nehemiah asked him of what his meals consisted. The pauper told Rabbi Nehemiah that he had been used to eating well-marbled meat and aged wine. Rabbi Nehemiah asked him whether he could get by with Rabbi Nehemiah on a diet of lentils. The pauper consented, joined Rabbi Nehemiah on a diet of lentils, and then died. Rabbi Nehemiah lamented that he had caused the pauper's death by not feeding him the diet to which he had been accustomed, but the Gemara answered that the pauper himself was responsible for his own death, for he should not have allowed himself to become dependent on such a luxurious diet. Once when a pauper applied to [Rava](#) for support, Rava asked him of what his meals consisted. The pauper told Rava that he had been used to eating fattened chicken and aged wine. Rava asked the pauper whether he considered the burden on the community of maintaining such a lifestyle. The pauper replied that he was not eating what the community provided, but what God provided, as [Psalm 145:15](#) says: "The eyes of all wait for You, and You give them their food in due season." As the verse does not say "in their season" (in the plural), but "in His season" (in the singular), it teaches that God provides every person the food that the person needs. Just then,

Rava's sister, who had not seen him for 13 years, arrived with a fattened chicken and aged wine. Thereupon, Rava exclaimed at the coincidence, apologized to the pauper, and invited him to come and eat. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

The Gemara turned to how the community should convey assistance to the pauper. [Rabbi Meir](#) taught that if a person has no means but does not wish to receive support from the community's charity fund, then the community should give the person what the person requires as a loan and then convert the loan into a gift by not collecting repayment. The Sages, however, said (as Rava explained their position) that the community should offer the pauper assistance as a gift, and then if the pauper declines the gift, the community should extend funds to the pauper as a loan. The Gemara taught that if a person has the means for self-support but chooses rather to rely on the community, then the community may give the person what the person needs as a gift, and then make the person repay it. As requiring repayment would surely cause the person to decline assistance on a second occasion, [Rav Papa](#) explained that the community exacts repayment from the person's estate upon the person's death. [Rabbi Simeon](#) taught that the community need not become involved if a person who has the means for self-support chooses not to do so. Rabbi Simeon taught that if a person has no means but does not wish to receive support from the community's charity fund, then the community should ask for a pledge in exchange for a loan, so as thereby to raise the person's self-esteem. The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that the instruction to

“lend” in [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) refers to the person who has no means and is unwilling to receive assistance from the community’s charity fund, and to whom the community must thus offer assistance as a loan and then give it as a gift. Rabbi Judah taught that the words “you . . . shall surely lend him” in [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) refer to the person who has the means for self-support but chooses rather to rely on the community, to whom the community should give what the person needs as a gift, and then exact repayment from the person’s estate upon the person’s death. The Sages, however, said that the community has no obligation to help the person who has the means of self-support. According to the Sages, the use of the emphatic words “you . . . shall surely lend him” in [Deuteronomy 15:8](#) (in which the Hebrew verb for “lend” is doubled, תִּעֲבֹדְתֶנּוּ, תִּעֲבֹדְתֶנּוּ) is merely stylistic and without legal significance. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))



Judah and Tamar (painting circa 1650–1660 by the school of [Rembrandt](#))

The Gemara related a story about how to give to the poor. A poor man lived in Mar Ukba's neighborhood, and every day Mar Ukba would put four [zuz](#) into the poor man's door socket. One day, the poor man thought that he would try to find out who did him this kindness. That day Mar Ukba came home from the house of study with his wife. When the poor man saw them moving the door to make their donation, the poor man went to greet them, but they fled and ran into a furnace from which the fire had just been swept. They did so because, as [Mar Zutra bar Tobiah](#) said in the name of [Rav](#) (or others say Rav Huna bar Bizna said in the name of [Rabbi Simeon the Pious](#), and still others say [Rabbi Johanan](#) said in the name of [Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai](#)), it is better for a person to go into a fiery furnace than to shame a neighbor publicly. One can derive this from [Genesis 38:25](#), where [Tamar](#), who was subject to being burned for the adultery with which [Judah](#) had charged her, rather than publicly shame Judah with the facts of his complicity, sent Judah's possessions to him with the message, "By the man whose these are am I with child." ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

The Gemara related another story of Mar Ukba's charity. A poor man lived in Mar Ukba's neighborhood to whom he regularly sent 400 zuz on the eve of every [Yom Kippur](#). Once Mar Ukba sent his son to deliver the 400 zuz. His son came back and reported that the poor man did not need Mar Ukba's help. When Mar Ukba asked his son what he had seen, his son replied that

they were sprinkling aged wine before the poor man to improve the aroma in the room. Mar Ukba said that if the poor man was that delicate, then Mar Ukba would double the amount of his gift and send it back to the poor man. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

When Mar Ukba was about to die, he asked to see his charity accounts. Finding gifts worth 7,000 Sijan gold [denarii](#) recorded therein, he exclaimed that the provisions were scanty and the road was long, and he forthwith distributed half of his wealth to charity. The Gemara asked how Mar Ukba could have given away so much, when Rabbi Elai taught that when the [Sanhedrin](#) sat at [Usha](#), it ordained that if a person wishes to give liberally the person should not give more than a fifth of the person's wealth. The Gemara explained that this limitation applies only during a person's lifetime, as the person might thereby be impoverished, but the limitation does not apply to gifts at death. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

The Gemara related another story about a Sage's charity. Rabbi Abba used to bind money in his scarf, sling it on his back, and go among the poor so that they could take the funds they needed from his scarf. He would, however, look sideways as a precaution against swindlers. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 67b.](#))

Rabbi Hiyya bar Rav of Difti taught that Rabbi Joshua ben Korha deduced from the parallel use of the term "base" with regard to withholding charity and practicing idolatry that people who shut their eyes against charity are like those who worship idols. [Deuteronomy 15:9](#) says regarding aid to the poor, "Beware that

there be not a *base* thought in your heart . . . and your eye will be evil against your poor brother,” while [Deuteronomy 13:14](#) uses the same term “base” when it says regarding idolatry, “Certain *base* fellows are gone out from the midst of you . . . saying: ‘Let us go and serve other gods there.’” That Deuteronomy employs the same adjective for both failings implies that withholding charity and practicing idolatry are similar. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 68a.](#))

In [Deuteronomy 15:10](#), the heart is troubled. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12.](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in

repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 16

The Gemara noted that in listing the several festivals in [Exodus 23:15](#), [Leviticus 23:5](#), [Numbers 28:16](#), and [Deuteronomy 16:1](#), the Torah always begins with Passover. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 2b](#).)

Tractate [Pesachim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the Passover in [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#); [13:6–10](#); [34:25](#); [Leviticus 23:4–8](#); [Numbers 9:1–14](#); and [Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#). ([Mishnah Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); Tosefta Pisha 1:1–10:13; Jerusalem Talmud [Pesachim 1a–](#); [Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 2a–121b](#).)

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the [Festivals](#) in [Exodus 12:3–27](#), [43–49](#); [13:6–10](#); [23:16](#); [34:18–23](#); [Leviticus 16](#); [23:4–43](#); [Numbers 9:1–14](#); [28:16–30:1](#); and

[Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13.](#) ([Mishnah Beitzah 1:1–5:7;](#) Tosefta Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–49b; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah 2a–40b.](#))

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah argued that Jews must mention [the Exodus](#) every night, but did not prevail in his argument until Ben Zoma argued that [Deuteronomy 16:3](#), which commands a Jew to remember the Exodus “*all* the days of your life,” used the word “all” to mean both day and night. ([Mishnah Berakhot 1:5;](#) [Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 12b.](#))

The Mishnah reported that Jews read [Deuteronomy 16:9–12](#) on Shavuot. ([Mishnah Megillah 3:5;](#) [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 30b.](#)) So as to maintain a logical unit including at least 15 verses, Jews now read [Deuteronomy 15:19–16:17](#) on Shavuot.

Tractate [Sukkah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of Sukkot in [Exodus 23:16; 34:22;](#) [Leviticus 23:33–43;](#) [Numbers 29:12–34;](#) and [Deuteronomy 16:13–17; 31:10–13.](#) ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1–5:8;](#) Tosefta Sukkah 1:1–4:28; Jerusalem Talmud Sukkah 1a–33b; [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a–56b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah can be no more than 20 [cubits](#) high. Rabbi Judah, however, declared taller sukkot valid. The Mishnah taught that a sukkah must be at least 10 handbreadths high, have three walls, and have more shade than sun. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1;](#) [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 2a.](#)) The [House of Shammai](#) declared invalid a sukkah made 30 days or more before the festival, but the [House of Hillel](#) pronounced it valid. The

Mishnah taught that if one made the sukkah for the purpose of the festival, even at the beginning of the year, it is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a sukkah under a tree is as invalid as a sukkah within a house. If one sukkah is erected above another, the upper one is valid, but the lower is invalid. Rabbi Judah said that if there are no occupants in the upper one, then the lower one is valid. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 9b.](#))

It invalidates a sukkah to spread a sheet over the sukkah because of the sun, or beneath it because of falling leaves, or over the frame of a four-post bed. One may spread a sheet, however, over the frame of a two-post bed. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 10a.](#))

It is not valid to train a vine, gourd, or ivy to cover a sukkah and then cover it with sukkah covering (*s'bach*). If, however, the sukkah-covering exceeds the vine, gourd, or ivy in quantity, or if the vine, gourd, or ivy is detached, it is valid. The general rule is that one may not use for sukkah-covering anything that is susceptible to ritual impurity (*tumah*) or that does not grow from the soil. But one may use for sukkah-covering anything not susceptible to ritual impurity that grows from the soil. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 11a.](#))

Bundles of straw, wood, or brushwood may not serve as sukkah-covering. But any of them, if they are untied, are valid. All

materials are valid for the walls. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 12a.](#))

Rabbi Judah taught that one may use planks for the sukkah-covering, but Rabbi Meir taught that one may not. The Mishnah taught that it is valid to place a plank four handbreadths wide over the sukkah, provided that one does not sleep under it. ([Mishnah Sukkah 1:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 14a.](#))

The Gemara deduced from the parallel use of the word “appear” in [Exodus 23:14](#) and [Deuteronomy 16:15](#) (regarding appearance offerings) on the one hand, and in [Deuteronomy 31:10–12](#) (regarding the great assembly) on the other hand, that the criteria for who participated in the great assembly also applied to limit who needed to bring appearance offerings. A Baraita deduced from the words “that they may hear” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [deaf](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. And the Baraita deduced from the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [mute](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. But the Gemara questioned the conclusion that one who cannot talk cannot learn, recounting the story of two mute grandsons (or others say nephews) of Rabbi Johanan ben Gudguda who lived in [Rabbi’s](#) neighborhood. Rabbi prayed for them, and they were healed. And it turned out that notwithstanding their speech impediment, they had learned [halachah](#), [Sifra](#), [Sifre](#), and the whole Talmud. [Mar Zutra](#) and Rav Ashi read the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) to mean “that they may teach,” and thus to exclude people who could not speak from the obligation to appear at the assembly.

Rabbi Tanhum deduced from the words “in their ears” (using the plural for “ears”) at the end of [Deuteronomy 31:11](#) that one who was deaf in one ear was exempt from appearing at the assembly. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 3a.](#))

[Mishnah Chagigah 1:1–8](#) and Tosefta Chagigah 1:1–7 interpreted [Deuteronomy 16:16–17](#) to address the obligation to bring an offering on the three pilgrim festivals.

[[edit](#)] Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 17 positive and 38 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To destroy idols and their accessories ([Deuteronomy 12:2.](#))
- Not to destroy objects associated with God’s Name ([Deuteronomy 12:4.](#))
- To bring all avowed and freewill offerings to the [Temple](#) on the first subsequent festival ([Deuteronomy 12:5-6.](#))
- Not to offer any sacrifices outside the Temple courtyard ([Deuteronomy 12:13.](#))
- To offer all sacrifices in the Temple ([Deuteronomy 12:14.](#))
- To redeem dedicated animals which have become disqualified ([Deuteronomy 12:15.](#))

- Not to eat the second tithe of grains outside [Jerusalem](#) ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- Not to eat the second tithe of wine products outside Jerusalem ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- Not to eat the second tithe of oil outside Jerusalem ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- The [Kohanim](#) must not eat unblemished firstborn animals outside Jerusalem ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- The Kohanim must not eat sacrificial meat outside the Temple courtyard ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- Not to eat the meat of the burnt offering ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- Not to eat the meat of minor sacrifices before sprinkling the blood on the altar ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- The Kohanim must not eat first fruits before they are set down in the Sanctuary grounds ([Deuteronomy 12:17.](#))
- Not to refrain from rejoicing with, and giving gifts to, the Levites ([Deuteronomy 12:19.](#))
- To ritually slaughter an animal before eating it ([Deuteronomy 12:21.](#))
- Not to eat a limb or part taken from a living animal ([Deuteronomy 12:23.](#))

- To bring all sacrifices from outside [Israel](#) to the Temple ([Deuteronomy 12:26.](#))
- Not to add to the Torah commandments or their oral explanations ([Deuteronomy 13:1.](#))
- Not to diminish from the Torah any commandments, in whole or in part ([Deuteronomy 13:1.](#))
- Not to listen to a false prophet ([Deuteronomy 13:4.](#))
- Not to love an enticer to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 13:9.](#))
- Not to cease hating the enticer to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 13:9.](#))
- Not to save the enticer to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 13:9.](#))
- Not to say anything in defense of the enticer to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 13:9.](#))
- Not to refrain from incriminating the enticer to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 13:9.](#))
- Not to entice an individual to idol worship ([Deuteronomy 13:12.](#))
- Carefully interrogate the witness ([Deuteronomy 13:15.](#))
- To burn a city that has turned to idol worship ([Deuteronomy 13:17.](#))
- Not to rebuild it as a city ([Deuteronomy 13:17.](#))

- Not to derive benefit from it ([Deuteronomy 13:18.](#))
- Not to tear the skin in [mourning](#) ([Deuteronomy 14:1.](#))
- Not to make a [bald](#) spot in mourning ([Deuteronomy 14:1.](#))
- Not to eat sacrifices which have become unfit or blemished ([Deuteronomy 14:3.](#)).
- To examine the signs of [fowl](#) to distinguish between kosher and non-kosher ([Deuteronomy 14:11.](#))
- Not to eat non-kosher flying [insects](#) ([Deuteronomy 14:19.](#))
- Not to eat the meat of an animal that died without ritual slaughter ([Deuteronomy 14:21.](#))
- To set aside the second tithe (*Ma'aser Sheni*) ([Deuteronomy 14:22.](#))
- To separate the tithe for the poor ([Deuteronomy 14:28.](#))
- Not to pressure or claim from the borrower after the seventh year ([Deuteronomy 15:2.](#))
- To press the idolater for payment ([Deuteronomy 15:3.](#))
- To release all loans during the seventh year ([Deuteronomy 15:2.](#))

- Not to withhold [charity](#) from the poor ([Deuteronomy 15:7.](#))
- To give charity ([Deuteronomy 15:8.](#))
- Not to refrain from lending immediately before the release of the loans for fear of monetary loss ([Deuteronomy 15:9.](#))
- Not to send the Hebrew slave away empty-handed ([Deuteronomy 15:13.](#))
- Give the Hebrew slave gifts when he goes free ([Deuteronomy 15:14.](#))
- Not to work [consecrated](#) animals ([Deuteronomy 15:19.](#))
- Not to [shear](#) the fleece of consecrated animals ([Deuteronomy 15:19.](#))
- Not to eat [chametz](#) on the afternoon of the 14th day of [Nisan](#) ([Deuteronomy 16:3.](#))
- Not to leave the meat of the holiday offering of the 14th until the 16th ([Deuteronomy 16:4.](#))
- Not to offer a Passover offering on one's provisional altar ([Deuteronomy 16:5.](#))
- To rejoice on these three Festivals ([Deuteronomy 16:14.](#))

- To be seen at the Temple on Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot ([Deuteronomy 16:16.](#))
- Not to appear at the Temple without offerings ([Deuteronomy 16:16.](#))



[Isaiah](#) (fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 4:357–511. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-457-7.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 54:11–55:5](#). The haftarah is the third in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).

In some congregations, when Re'eh falls on 29 [Av](#), and thus coincides with Shabbat Machar Chodesh (as it did in 2008), the haftarah is [1 Samuel 20:18–42](#). In other congregations, when Re'eh coincides with Shabbat Machar Chodesh, the haftarah is not changed to [1 Samuel 20:18–42](#) (the usual haftarah for

Shabbat Machar Chodesh), but is kept as it would be in a regular year at [Isaiah 54:11–55:5](#).

When Re'eh falls on 30 Av and thus coincides with Shabbat [Rosh Chodesh](#) (as it does in 2012, 2015, and 2016), the haftarah is changed to [Isaiah 66:1-23](#). In those years, the regular haftarah for Re'eh ([Isaiah 54:11–55:5](#)) is pushed off two weeks later, to Parshat [Ki Teitzei](#) (which in those years falls on 14 [Elul](#)), as the haftarot for Re'eh and Ki Teitzei are positioned next to each other in Isaiah.



A page from the Kaufmann Haggadah

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

In the [Passover Haggadah](#) (which takes the story from Mishnah [Berakhot 1:5](#)), Rabbi [Eleazar ben Azariah](#) discusses [Ben Zoma's](#) exposition on [Deuteronomy 16:3](#) in the discussion among the Rabbis at [Bnei Brak](#) in the answer to the Four Questions ([Ma Nishtana](#)) in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 37. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS*

Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary, 85. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 14:20](#) (tithe); [28:22](#) (tithe).
- [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49](#) (Passover); [13:6–10](#) (Passover); [21:1–11, 20–21, 26–27](#); [22:1–2](#); [23:14–19](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [34:22–26](#) (three pilgrim festivals).
- [Leviticus 17:1–10](#) (centralization of sacrifices); [23:4–43](#) (three pilgrim festivals); [25:8–10, 39–55](#); [27:30–33](#) (tithes).
- [Numbers 9:1–14](#) (Passover); [18:21–24](#) (tithes); [28:16–31](#) (Passover, Shavuot); [29:12–34](#) (Sukkot).
- [Deuteronomy 20:10–14](#); [21:10–14](#); [23:16–17](#); [26:13–14](#); [30:19](#) (I set before you blessing and curse); [31:10–13](#) (Sukkot).
- [Judges 21:19](#) (Sukkot).
- [1 Samuel 8:15–17](#) (tithes).

- [1 Kings 8:1–66](#) (Sukkot); [12:32](#) (northern feast like Sukkot); [18:28](#) (ceremonial cutting).
- [2 Kings 4:1–7](#) (debt servitude); [23:1–25](#) (centralization of sacrifices).
- [Isaiah 61:1–2](#) (liberty to captives).
- [Jeremiah 16:6](#); [34:6–27](#); [41:5](#) (ceremonial cutting); [48:37](#) (ceremonial cutting).
- [Ezekiel 6:13](#) (idols on hill, on mountains, under every leafy tree); [45:25](#) (Sukkot).
- [Hosea 4:13](#) (idols on mountains, on hill, under tree).
- [Amos 2:6](#); [4:4–5](#) (tithes).
- [Zechariah 14:16–19](#) (Sukkot).
- [Malachi 3:10](#) (tithes).
- [Ezra 3:4](#) (Sukkot).
- [Nehemiah 5:1–13](#); [8:14–18](#) (Sukkot); [10:38–39](#) (tithes); [12:44](#), [47](#) (tithes); [13:5](#), [12–13](#) (tithes).
- [2 Chronicles 5:3–14](#) (Sukkot); [7:8](#) (Sukkot); [8:12–13](#) (three Pilgrim festivals); [31:4–12](#) (tithes); [34:1–33](#) (centralization of sacrifices).



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[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

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- [Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:2–5, 7–8, 13, 28, 44–45](#). Circa 93–94. [Against Apion 2:24\(193\)](#). Circa 97. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 114–17, 121, 123–24, 806. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Hebrews 7:1–10](#) (tithes).
- [Matthew 23:23–24](#) (tithes).
- [Luke 18:9–14](#) (tithes).
- [John 7:1–53](#) (Sukkot).

[[edit](#)] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah: Berakhot 1:5; Peah 8:5–9; Sheviit 1:1–10:9; Terumot 3:7; Maasrot 1:1–5:8; Maaser Sheni 1:1–5:15;](#)

Challah 1:3; Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Shabbat 9:6; [Pesachim 1:1–10:9](#); [Sukkah 1:1–5:8](#); [Beitzah 1:1–5:7](#); [Megillah 1:3, 3:5](#); [Chagigah 1:1–8](#); [Ketubot 5:6](#); [Sotah 7:5, 8](#); [Kiddushin 1:2–3](#); [Sanhedrin 1:3, 5, 10:4–6](#); [Makkot 3:5, 15](#); [Avodah Zarah 3:3–4](#); [Avot 3:14](#); [Zevachim 9:5, 14:2, 6](#); [Menachot 7:6–8:1](#); [Chullin 1:1–12:5](#); [Bekhorot 4:1](#); Arakhin 8:7. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

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[Yevamot 9a, 13b, 62b, 73a–b, 74b, 79a, 83b, 86a, 93a, 104a; Ketubot 43a, 55a, 58b, 60a, 67b–68a, 89a; Nedarim 13a, 19a, 31a, 36b, 59b; Nazir 4b, 25a, 35b, 49b–50a; Sotah 14a, 23b, 32a–b, 33b, 38a, 39b, 41a, 47b–48a; Gittin 18a, 25a, 30a, 31a, 36a, 37a–b, 38b, 47a, 65a; Kiddushin 11b, 14b–15a, 16b–17b, 20a, 21b–22b, 26a, 29b, 34a–b, 35b–36a, 37a, 38b, 56b–57b, 80b; Bava Kamma 7a, 10a, 41a, 54a–b, 63a, 69b, 78a, 82b, 87b, 91b, 98a, 106b, 110b, 115b; Bava Metzia 6b, 27b, 30b, 31b, 33a, 42a, 44b–45a, 47b, 48b, 53b–54a, 56a, 88b, 90a; Bava Batra 8a, 10a, 63a, 80b, 91a, 145b; Sanhedrin 2a, 4a–b, 11b, 13b, 15b, 20b, 21b, 29a, 30b, 32a, 33b, 34b, 36b, 40a–41a, 43a, 45b, 47a–b, 50a, 52b, 54b, 55a, 56a, 59a, 60b, 61a–b, 63a–b, 64b, 70a, 71a, 78a, 84a, 85b, 87a, 89b–90a, 109a, 111b–13b; Makkot 3a–b, 5a, 8b, 11a, 12a, 13a, 14b, 16b–20a, 21a–22a, 23b; Shevuot 4b, 16a, 22b–23a, 25a, 34a, 44b, 49a; Avodah Zarah 9b, 12a–b, 13b, 20a, 34b, 36b, 42a, 43b, 44b, 45b, 51a–52a, 53b, 66a, 67b; Horayot 4b, 8a, 13a; Zevachim 7b, 9a, 12a, 29b, 34a, 36b, 45a, 49a, 50a, 52b, 55a, 60b, 62b, 76a, 85b, 97a, 104a, 106a, 107a–b, 112b, 114a–b, 117b–18a, 119a; Menachot 23a, 33b, 37b, 40b, 44b–45a, 65b–66a, 67a, 70b–71a, 77b, 78b, 81b–82a, 83a–b, 90b, 93a, 99b, 101b; Chullin 2a–142a; Bekhorot 4b, 6b–7a, 9b–10a, 11b–12a, 14b–15b, 19a, 21b, 23b, 25a, 26b, 27b–28a, 30a, 32a, 33a, 37a–b, 39a, 41a–b, 43a, 50b–51a, 53a–b, 54b, 56b; Arachin 7b, 28b–29a, 30b, 31b, 33a; Temurah 8a, 11b–12a, 17b, 18b, 21a–b, 28b, 31a; Keritot 3b, 4b, 21a, 24a,](#)

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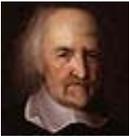


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Shoftim (parsha)

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Shoftim, **Shof'tim**, or **Shofetim** (שׁוֹפְטִים — [Hebrew](#) for “judges,” the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the 48th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the fifth in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 16:18–21:9](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in August or September.

The parshah provides a [constitution](#) — a basic societal structure — for the [Israelites](#). The parshah sets out rules for [magistrates](#), [kings](#), [Levites](#), [prophets](#), [cities of refuge](#), [witnesses](#), [war](#), and an unaccounted [corpse](#).



“Justice, justice shall you pursue.” ([Deuteronomy 16:20](#).)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) Rules for magistrates

[Moses](#) directed the Israelites to appoint magistrates and [officials](#) for their [tribes](#) to [govern](#) the [people](#) with [justice](#), [impartially](#), without [bribes](#). ([Deuteronomy 16:18–19](#).) “Justice, justice shall you pursue,” he said. ([Deuteronomy 16:20](#).)

[edit] Abhorrent practices

Moses warned the Israelites against setting up a sacred post beside [God's altar](#) or erecting a [stone pillar](#). ([Deuteronomy 16:21–22.](#))

Moses warned the Israelites against [sacrificing](#) an [ox](#) or [sheep](#) with any serious [defect](#). ([Deuteronomy 17:1.](#))

If the Israelites found a person who [worshipped](#) other [gods](#), the [sun](#), the [moon](#), or any [celestial body](#), then they were to make a thorough [inquiry](#), and if they established the [fact](#) on the [testimony](#) of two or more witnesses, then they were to [stone the person to death](#), with the witnesses throwing the first stones. ([Deuteronomy 17:2–7.](#)) If a [case](#) proved too baffling for them to decide, then they were promptly to go to [the place that God would choose for God's shrine](#), appear before the [priests](#) or the magistrate in charge and present their problem, and carry out any [verdict](#) that was announced there without deviating either [to the right or to the left](#). ([Deuteronomy 17:8–11.](#)) They were to [execute](#) any man who presumptuously disregarded the priest or the magistrate, so that all the people would hear, [be afraid](#), and not act presumptuously again. ([Deuteronomy 17:12–13.](#))



King [David](#) (statue by F.A. Jerichau)

[[edit](#)] Rules for kings

If, after the Israelites had settled the [land](#), they decided to set a king over them, they were to be free to do so, taking an Israelite chosen by God. ([Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#).) The king was not to keep many [horses](#), [marry](#) many wives, or amass [silver](#) and [gold](#) to excess. ([Deuteronomy 17:16–17](#).) The king was to have the priests write for him a copy of this Teaching to remain with him and read all his life, so that he might learn to revere God and observe these [laws](#) faithfully. ([Deuteronomy 17:18–19](#).) He would thus not act haughtily toward his people nor deviate from the law,

and as a consequence, he and his descendants would enjoy a long reign. ([Deuteronomy 17:20.](#))

[[edit](#)] Rules for Levites

The Levites were to have no territorial portion, but were to live only off of offerings, for God was to be their portion.

([Deuteronomy 18:1–2.](#)) In exchange for their service to God, the priests were to receive the [shoulder](#), cheeks, and [stomach](#) of sacrifices, the first fruits of the Israelites' [grain](#), [wine](#), and [oil](#), and the first [shearing of sheep](#). ([Deuteronomy 18:3–5.](#)) Levites were to be free to come from their settlements to the place that God had chosen as a shrine to serve in the name of God with their fellow Levites, and there they were to receive equal shares of the dues. ([Deuteronomy 18:6–8.](#))

[[edit](#)] Rules for prophets

The Israelites were not to imitate the abhorrent practices of the nations that they were displacing, consign their [children](#) to [fire](#), or act as an [augur](#), [soothsayer](#), [diviner](#), [sorcerer](#), one who casts [spells](#), one who consults [ghosts](#) or familiar [spirits](#), or one who inquires of [the dead](#), for it was because of those abhorrent acts that God was dispossessing the former residents of the land.

([Deuteronomy 18:9–14.](#))

God would raise a prophet from among them like Moses, and the Israelites were to heed him. ([Deuteronomy 18:15.](#)) When at [Horeb](#) the Israelites asked God not to hear God's voice directly, God created the role of the prophet to speak God's words,

promising to hold to account anybody who failed to heed the prophet's words. ([Deuteronomy 18:16–19.](#)) But any prophet who presumed to speak an oracle in God's name that God had not commanded the prophet to utter, or who spoke in the name of other gods, was to die. ([Deuteronomy 18:20.](#)) This was how the people were to determine whether the oracle was spoken by God: If the prophet spoke in the name of God and the oracle did not come [true](#), then that oracle was not spoken by God, the prophet had uttered it presumptuously, and the people were not to fear him. ([Deuteronomy 18:21–22.](#))

[edit] Cities of refuge

When the Israelites had settled in the land, they were to divide the land into three parts and set aside three cities of refuge, so that any [manslayer](#) could have a place to which to flee. ([Deuteronomy 19:1–3.](#)) And if the Israelites faithfully observed all the law and God enlarged the territory, then they were to add three more [towns](#) to those three. ([Deuteronomy 19:8–9.](#))

Only a manslayer who had killed another unwittingly, without being the other's enemy, might flee there and live. ([Deuteronomy 19:4.](#)) For instance, if a man went with his [neighbor](#) into a [grove](#) to cut [wood](#), and as he swung an [ax](#) to cut down a [tree](#), the ax-head flew off the [handle](#) and struck and killed the neighbor, then the man could flee to one of the cities of refuge and live. ([Deuteronomy 19:5.](#)) If, however, one who was the enemy of another lay in wait, struck the other a fatal blow, and then fled to a city of refuge, the [elders](#) of the slayer's town were to have the

slayer turned over to the [blood-avenger](#) to be put to death.
([Deuteronomy 19:11–13.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Landmarks

The Israelites were not to move their countrymen’s landmarks, set up by previous generations, in the property that they were allotted in the land. ([Deuteronomy 19:14.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Rules for witnesses

An Israelite could be found [guilty](#) of an offense only on the testimony of two or more witnesses. ([Deuteronomy 19:15.](#)) If one person gave false testimony against another, then the two parties were to appear before God and the priests or magistrates, the magistrates were to make a thorough investigation, and if the magistrates found the person to have testified falsely, then they were to do to the witness as the witness schemed to do to the other. ([Deuteronomy 19:16–19.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Rules for war

Before the Israelites joined [battle](#), the priest was to tell the troops not to fear, for God would accompany them to do battle against their enemy. ([Deuteronomy 20:2–4.](#)) Then the officials were to ask the troop whether anyone had built a new [house](#) but not dedicated it, planted a [vineyard](#) but never [harvested](#) it, paid the [bride-price](#) for a wife but not yet married her, or become afraid and disheartened, and all these they were to send back to their homes. ([Deuteronomy 20:5–8.](#))

When the Israelites approached a town to attack it, they were to offer it terms of peace, and if the town [surrendered](#), then all the people of the town were to serve the Israelites as [forced labor](#). ([Deuteronomy 20:10–11](#).) But if the town did not surrender, then the Israelites were to lay [siege](#) to the town, and when God granted victory, kill all its men and take as booty the women, children, [livestock](#), and everything else in the town. ([Deuteronomy 20:12–14](#).) Those were the rules for towns that lay very far from Israel, but for the towns of the nations in the land — the [Hittites](#), [Amorites](#), [Canaanites](#), [Perizzites](#), [Hivites](#), and [Jebusites](#) — the Israelites were to kill everyone, lest they lead the Israelites into doing all the abhorrent things that those nations had done for their gods. ([Deuteronomy 20:15–18](#).) When the Israelites besieged a city for a long time, they could eat the [fruit](#) of the city’s trees, but they were not to cut down any trees that could yield [food](#). ([Deuteronomy 20:19–20](#).)

[edit] The found corpse

If, in the land, someone slain was found lying in the open, and the slayer could not be determined, then the elders and magistrates were to measure the distances from the corpse to the nearby towns. ([Deuteronomy 21:1–2](#).) The elders of the town nearest to the corpse were to take a heifer that had never been worked down to an ever-flowing [wadi](#) and break its [neck](#). ([Deuteronomy 21:3–4](#).) The priests were to come forward, all the elders were to wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken, and the elders were to declare that their hands did not

shed the blood nor their eyes see it done. ([Deuteronomy 21:5–7](#).) The elders were to ask God to absolve the Israelites, and not let guilt for the blood of the innocent remain among them, and they would be absolved of bloodguilt. ([Deuteronomy 21:8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 16

[Resh Lakish](#) deduced from the proximity of the discussions of appointment of judges in [Deuteronomy 16:18](#) and the Canaanite idolatrous practice of the [Asherah](#) in [Deuteronomy 16:21](#) that appointing an incompetent judge is as though planting an idolatrous tree. And [Rav Ashi](#) said that such an appointment made in a place where there were scholars is as though planting the idolatrous tree beside the Altar, for [Deuteronomy 16:21](#) concludes “beside the altar of the Lord your God.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 7b](#), [Avodah Zarah 52a](#).)

Resh Lakish contrasted [Leviticus 19:15](#), “In justice shall you judge your neighbor,” with [Deuteronomy 16:20](#), “Justice, justice shall you pursue,” and concluded that [Leviticus 19:15](#) referred to an apparently genuine claim, while [Deuteronomy 16:20](#) referred to the redoubled scrutiny appropriate to a suit that one suspected to be dishonest. Rav Ashi found no contradiction, however, between the two verses, for a [Baraita](#) taught that in the two mentions of “justice” in [Deuteronomy 16:20](#), one mention referred to a decision based on strict law, while the other referred to compromise. For example, where two boats meet on a narrow

river headed in opposite directions, if both attempted to pass at the same time, both would sink, but if one made way for the other, both could pass without mishap. Similarly, if two camels met on the ascent to [Beth-horon](#), if they both ascended at the same time, both could fall into the valley, but if they ascended one after another, both could ascend safely. These were the principles by which the travelers were to resolve their impasse: If one was loaded and the other unloaded, then the unloaded was to give way to the loaded. If one was nearer to its destination than the other, then the nearer was to give way to the farther. If they were equally near to their destinations, then they were to compromise and the one that went first was to compensate the one who gave way. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 32b.](#))

The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that the words “Justice, justice shall you pursue” meant that one should pursue the most respected jurist to the place where the jurist held court. The Rabbis also taught a Baraita that the words “Justice, justice shall you pursue” meant that one should follow sages to their academies. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 32b.](#))

The [Mishnah](#) taught that the words of [Jeremiah 17:7](#), “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose hope is the Lord,” apply to a judge who judges truly and with integrity. The Mishnah taught that the words of [Deuteronomy 16:20](#), “Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue,” apply to tell that an able-bodied person who feigned to be disabled would become disabled. And similarly, the words of [Exodus 23:8](#), “And a gift shall you not accept; for a gift blinds them that have sight,” apply to tell that a

judge who accepted a bribe or who perverted justice would become poor of vision. (Mishnah Peah 8:9.)

Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahmani](#) taught in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) that when a judge unjustly takes the possessions of one and gives them to another, God takes that judge's life, as [Proverbs 22:22–23](#) says: “Rob not the poor because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate, for the Lord will plead their cause, and will despoil of life those that despoil them.”

Rabbi Samuel ben Nahmani also taught in the name of Rabbi Jonathan that judges should always think of themselves as if they had a sword hanging over them and [Gehenna](#) gaping under them, as [Song of Songs 3:7–8](#) says: “Behold, it is the litter of [Solomon](#); 60 mighty men are about it, of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword, and are expert in war; every man has his sword upon his thigh, because of dread in the night.” And [Rabbi Josiah](#) (or others say [Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#)) interpreted the words, “O house of David, thus says the Lord: 'Execute justice in the morning and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor,’” in [Jeremiah 21:12](#) to mean that judges should render judgment only if the judgment that they are about to give is as clear to them as the morning light. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 7a–b.](#))

Rabbi [Eliezer ben Jacob](#) deduced from the prohibition against any kind of tree beside the altar in [Deuteronomy 16:21](#) that wooden [columns](#) were not allowed in the [Temple](#) courtyard. The [Gemara](#) explained that it was not permitted to build with wood

near the altar. [Rav Hisda](#) taught that stone columns were permitted. ([Babylonian Talmud Tamid 28b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 17

The Mishnah questioned why [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) discussed three witnesses, when two witnesses were sufficient to establish guilt. The Mishnah deduced that the language of [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) meant to analogize between a set of two witnesses and a set of three witnesses. Just as three witnesses could discredit two witnesses, two witnesses could discredit three witnesses. The Mishnah deduced from the multiple use of the word “witnesses” in [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) that two witnesses could discredit even a hundred witnesses. Rabbi Simeon deduced from the multiple use of the word “witnesses” in [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) that just as two witnesses were not executed as perjurers until both had been incriminated, so three were not executed until all three had been incriminated. Rabbi [Akiba](#) deduced that the addition of the third witness in [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) was to teach that the perjury of a third, superfluous witness was just as serious as that of the others. Rabbi Akiba concluded that if Scripture so penalized an accomplice just as one who committed a wrong, how much more would God reward an accomplice to a good deed. And the Mishnah further deduced from the multiple use of the word “witnesses” in [Deuteronomy 17:6](#) that just as the disqualification of one of two witnesses would invalidate the evidence of the set of two witnesses, so would the disqualification of one witness invalidate the evidence of even a hundred. Rabbi [Jose](#) said that

these limitations applied only to witnesses in capital charges, and that in monetary suits, the balance of the witnesses could establish the evidence. [Rabbi](#) said that the same rule applied to monetary suits or capital charges where the disqualified witnesses joined to take part in the warning of the defendant, but the rule did not disqualify the remaining witnesses where the disqualified witnesses did not take part in the warning. And the Gemara further qualified the Mishnah's ruling. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:7–8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 5b–6b.](#))

Rav Joseph reported that a Baraita interpreted the reference to “the priests” in [Deuteronomy 17:9](#) to teach that when the priests served in the Temple, a judge could hand down capital punishment, but when the priesthood is not functioning, the judge may not issue such judgments. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 52b.](#))

[Deuteronomy 17:9](#) instructs, “you shall come . . . to the judge *who shall be in those days*,” but how could a person go to a judge who was not in that person's days? The Rabbis taught in a Baraita that [Deuteronomy 17:9](#) employs the words “who shall be in those days” to show that one must be content to go to the judge who is in one's days, and accept that judge's authority. And the Rabbis taught that [Ecclesiastes 7:10](#) conveys a similar message when it says, “Say not, ‘How was it that the former days were better than these?’” ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 25b.](#))

The Mishnah explained the process by which one was found to be a rebellious elder within the meaning of [Deuteronomy 17:12](#). Three courts of law sat in [Jerusalem](#): one at the entrance to the

Temple Mount, a second at the door of the Temple Court, and the third, the Great [Sanhedrin](#), in the Hall of Hewn Stones in the Temple Court. The dissenting elder and the other members of the local court with whom the elder disputed went to the court at the entrance to the Temple Mount, and the elder stated what the elder and the elder's colleagues expounded. If the first court had heard a ruling on the matter, then the court stated it. If not, the litigants and the judges went to the second court, at the entrance of the Temple Court, and the elder once again declared what the elder and the elder's colleagues expounded. If this second court had heard a ruling on the matter, then this court stated it. If not, then they all proceeded to the Great Sanhedrin at the Hall of Hewn Stones, which issued instruction to all Israel, for [Deuteronomy 17:10](#) said that "they shall declare to you from that place that the Lord shall choose," meaning the Temple. If the elder then returned to the elder's town and issued a decision contrary to what the Great Sanhedrin had instructed, then the elder was guilty of acting "presumptuously" within the meaning of [Deuteronomy 17:12](#). But if one of the elder's disciples issued a decision opposed to the Great Sanhedrin, the disciple was exempt from judgment, for the very stringency that kept the disciple from having yet been ordained served as a source of leniency to prevent the disciple from being found to be a rebellious elder. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 11:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 86b](#).)



The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (painting by [Edward Poynter](#))

[Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4–5](#) and [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 20b–22b](#) interpreted the laws governing the king in [Deuteronomy 17:14–20](#).

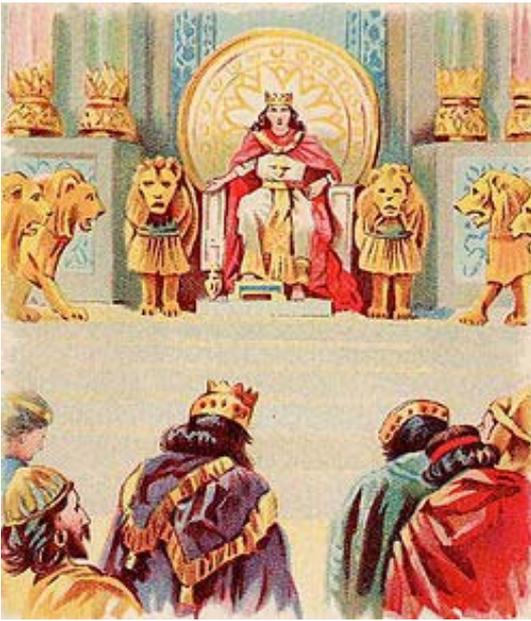


David, King Over All Israel (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah taught that the king could lead the army to a voluntary war on the decision of a court of 71. He could force a way through private property, and none could stop him. There was no limit to the size of the king's road. And he had first choice of the plunder taken by the people in war. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 20b.](#))

The Rabbis disagreed about the powers of the king. The Gemara reported that [Rab Judah](#) said in [Samuel's](#) name that a king was permitted to take all the actions that [1 Samuel 8:4–18](#) enumerated, but [Rab](#) said that [1 Samuel 8](#) was intended only to frighten the people, citing the emphatic double verb in the words

“You shall surely set a king over you” in [Deuteronomy 17:15](#) to indicate that the people would fear the king. And the Gemara also reported the same dispute among other [Tannaim](#); in this account, [Rabbi Jose](#) said that a king was permitted to take all the actions that [1 Samuel 8:4–18](#) enumerated, but [Rabbi Judah](#) said that [1 Samuel 8](#) was intended only to frighten the people, citing the emphatic double verb in the words “You shall surely set a king over you” in [Deuteronomy 17:15](#) to indicate that the people would fear the king. Rabbi Judah (or others say Rabbi Jose) said that three commandments were given to the Israelites when they entered the land: (1) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) to appoint a king, (2) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 25:19](#) to blot out [Amalek](#), and (3) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 12:10–11](#) to build the Temple in Jerusalem. Rabbi Nehorai, on the other hand, said that [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) did not command the Israelites to choose a king, but was spoken only in anticipation of the Israelites’ future complaints, as [Deuteronomy 17:14](#) says, “And (you) shall say, ‘I will set a king over me.’” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 20b.](#))



Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah interpreted the words “He shall not multiply horses to himself” in [Deuteronomy 17:16](#) to limit the king to only as many horses as his chariots required. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21b.](#))



The Queen of Sheba and Solomon (painting by [Tintoretto](#))

The Mishnah interpreted the words “Neither shall he multiply wives to himself” in [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) to limit him to no more than 18 wives. Rabbi Judah said that he could have more wives, provided that they did not turn away his heart. But Rabbi [Simeon](#) said that he must not marry even one wife who would turn away his heart. The Mishnah concluded that [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) prohibited the king from marrying more than 18 wives, even if they were all as righteous as [Abigail](#) the wife of David. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21a](#).) The Gemara noted that Rabbi Judah did not always employ the rationale behind a Biblical passage as a basis for limiting its legal effect, as he did here in [Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#). The Gemara explained that Rabbi Judah employed the rationale behind the law here because [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) itself expounds the rationale behind its legal constraint: The reason behind the command, “he shall not multiply wives to himself,” is so “that his heart be not turned aside.” Thus Rabbi Judah reasoned that [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) itself restricts the law to these conditions, and a king could have more wives if “his heart be not turned aside.” And the Gemara noted that Rabbi Simeon did not always interpret a Biblical passage strictly by its plain meaning, as he appeared to do here in [Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#). The Gemara explained that Rabbi Simeon could have reasoned that [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) adds the words, “that his heart turn not away,” to imply that the king must not marry even a single wife who might turn away his heart. And one could interpret the words “he shall not multiply” to mean

that the king must not marry many wives even if they, like Abigail, would never turn away his heart. The Gemara then analyzed how the anonymous first view in Mishnah [Sanhedrin 2:4](#) came to its conclusion that the king could have no more than 18 wives. The Gemara noted that [2 Samuel 3:2–5](#) refers to the children of six of David’s wives born to David in [Hebron](#). And the Gemara reasoned that [Nathan](#) the Prophet referred to these six wives in [2 Samuel 12:8](#) when he said, “And if that were too little, then would I add to you the like of these, and the like of these,” each “these” implying six more wives. Thus with the original six, these two additions of six would make 18 in all. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21a.](#))



King Solomon (18th Century Russian icon)



King David (illustration from a Bible card published 1896 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah interpreted the words “and silver and gold he shall not greatly multiply to himself” in [Deuteronomy 17:17](#) to limit the king to only as much silver and gold as he needed to pay his soldiers. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21b.](#))

The Mishnah interpreted the words “he shall write a copy of this law in a book” in [Deuteronomy 17:18](#) to teach that when he went to war, he was to take it with him; on returning, he was to bring it back; when he sat in judgment, it was to be with him; and when he sat down to eat, it was to be before him, to fulfill the words of [Deuteronomy 17:19](#), “and it shall be with him and he shall read in

it all the days of his life.” ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 2:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 21b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 18

The interpreters of Scripture by symbol taught that the deeds of [Phinehas](#) explained why [Deuteronomy 18:3](#) directed that the priests were to receive the foreleg, cheeks, and stomach of sacrifices. The foreleg represented the hand of Phinehas, as [Numbers 25:7](#) reports that Phinehas “took a spear in his hand.” The cheeks’ represent the prayer of Phinehas, as [Psalm 106:30](#) reports, “Then Phinehas stood up and prayed, and so the plague was stayed.” The stomach was to be taken in its literal sense, for [Numbers 25:8](#) reports that Phinehas “thrust . . . the woman through her belly.” ([Babylonian Talmud Chullin 134b.](#))





Moses Smashing the Tables of the Law (illustration by [Gustave Doré](#))

In [Deuteronomy 18:15](#), Moses foretold that “A prophet will the Lord your God raise up for you . . . *like me*,” and [Rabbi Johanan](#) thus taught that prophets would have to be, like Moses, strong, wealthy, wise, and meek. Strong, for [Exodus 40:19](#) says of Moses, “he spread the tent over the tabernacle,” and a Master taught that Moses himself spread it, and [Exodus 26:16](#) reports, “Ten [cubits](#) shall be the length of a board.” Similarly, the strength of Moses can be derived from [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), in which Moses reports, “And I took the two tablets, and cast them out of my two hands, and broke them,” and it was taught that the tablets were six handbreadths in length, six in breadth, and three in thickness. Wealthy, as [Exodus 34:1](#) reports God’s instruction to Moses, “Carve yourself two tablets of stone,” and the Rabbis interpreted the verse to teach that the chips would belong to Moses. Wise, for [Rav](#) and Samuel both said that 50 gates of understanding were created in the world, and all but one were given to Moses, for [Psalm 8:6](#) said of Moses, “You have made him a little lower than God.” Meek, for [Numbers 12:3](#) reports, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 38a.](#))

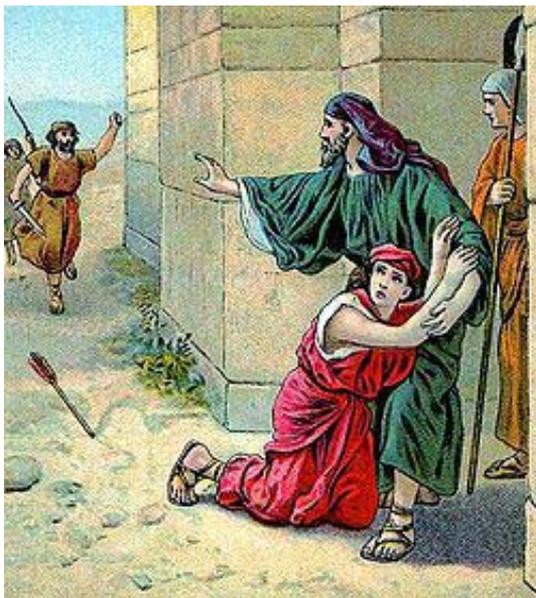
[Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:7](#) and [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 64a–b](#) interpreted the laws prohibiting passing one’s child through the fire to [Molech](#) in [Leviticus 18:21](#) and [20:1–5](#), and [Deuteronomy 18:10](#).

[Rabbi Assi](#) taught that the children of Noah were also prohibited to do anything stated in [Deuteronomy 18:10–11](#): “There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that uses divination, a soothsayer, or an enchanter, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that consults a ghost or a familiar spirit, or a necromancer.” ([Genesis Rabbah 34:8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 19

[\[edit\]](#) Cities of refuge

Chapter 2 of tractate [Makkot](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), [Jerusalem Talmud](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the cities of refuge in [Exodus 21:12–14](#), [Numbers 35:1–34](#), [Deuteronomy 4:41–43](#), and [19:1–13](#). ([Mishnah Makkot 2:1–8](#); [Tosefta Makkot 2:1–3:10](#); [Jerusalem Talmud Makkot](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–13a](#).)



Cities of Refuge (illustration from a Bible card published 1901 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

The Mishnah taught that those who killed in error went into banishment. One would go into banishment if, for example, while one was pushing a roller on a roof, the roller slipped over, fell, and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while one was lowering a cask, it fell down and killed someone. One would go into banishment if while coming down a ladder, one fell and killed someone. But one would *not* go into banishment if while pulling *up* the roller it fell back and killed someone, or while *raising* a bucket the rope snapped and the falling bucket killed someone, or while going *up* a ladder one fell down and killed someone. The Mishnah's general principle was that whenever the death occurred in the course of a downward movement, the

culpable person went into banishment, but if the death did not occur in the course of a downward movement, the person did not go into banishment. If while chopping wood, the iron slipped from the ax handle and killed someone, [Rabbi](#) taught that the person did not go into banishment, but the sages said that the person did go into banishment. If from the split log rebounding killed someone, Rabbi said that the person went into banishment, but the sages said that the person did not go into banishment. ([Mishnah Makkot 2:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 7a–b](#).)

Rabbi Jose bar Judah taught that to begin with, they sent a slayer to a city of refuge, whether the slayer killed intentionally or not. Then the court sent and brought the slayer back from the city of refuge. The Court executed whomever the court found guilty of a capital crime, and the court acquitted whomever the court found not guilty of a capital crime. The court restored to the city of refuge whomever the court found liable to banishment, as [Numbers 35:25](#) ordained, “And the congregation shall restore him to the city of refuge from where he had fled.” ([Mishnah Makkot 2:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 9b](#).) [Numbers 35:25](#) also says, “The manslayer . . . shall dwell therein until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil,” but the Mishnah taught that the death of a high priest who had been anointed with the holy anointing oil, the death of a high priest who had been consecrated by the many vestments, or the death of a high priest who had retired from his office each equally made possible the return of the slayer. Rabbi Judah said that the death of a priest who had been anointed for war also permitted the return of the

slayer. Because of these laws, mothers of high priests would provide food and clothing for the slayers in cities of refuge so that the slayers might not pray for the high priest's death.

([Mishnah Makkot 2:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11a](#).) If the high priest died at the conclusion of the slayer's trial, the slayer did not go into banishment. If, however, the high priests died before the trial was concluded and another high priest was appointed in his stead and then the trial concluded, the slayer returned home after the new high priest's death. ([Mishnah Makkot 2:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 11b](#).)

In [Deuteronomy 19:6](#), the heart becomes hot, and in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#), the heart grows faint. A [midrash](#) catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs](#)

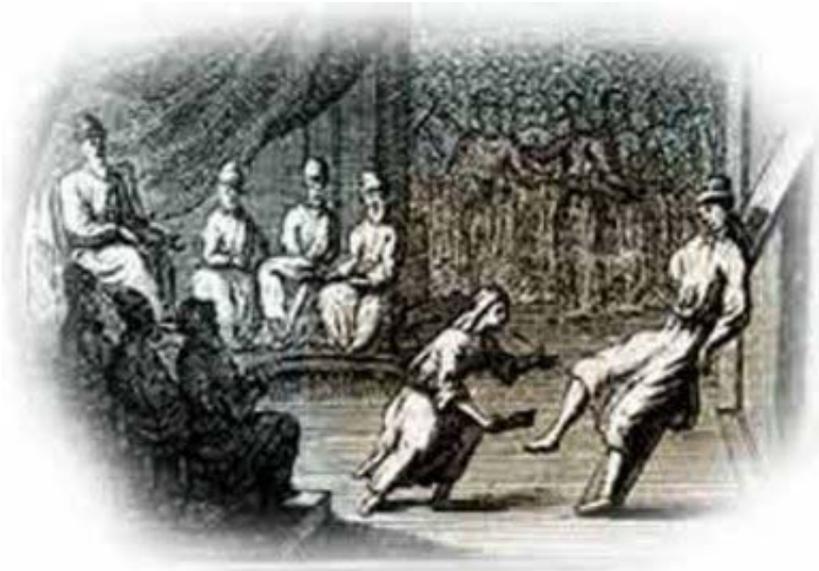
[23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:36](#).)

[edit] Landmarks

[Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba](#) taught in Rabbi Johanan's name that the words of [Deuteronomy 19:14](#), "You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark, which they of old have set," meant that when planting, one should not encroach upon the boundary that they of old set. (Thus, one should not plant so near to one's neighbor's border that one's plants' roots draw sustenance from the neighbor's land, thus impoverishing it.) And the Gemara further cited this analysis for the proposition that one may rely on the Rabbis' agricultural determinations. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 85a](#).)

The [Sifre](#) asked why [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) says, "You shall not remove your neighbor's landmark," when [Leviticus 19:13](#) already says, "You shall not rob." The Sifre explained that [Deuteronomy](#)

[19:14](#) teaches that one who removes a neighbor's boundary mark violates two negative commandments. The Sifre further explained that lest one think that this conclusion applies outside the Land of Israel, [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) says, "in your inheritance that you will inherit in the land," indicating that only in the Land of Israel would one violate two negative commandments. Outside the Land of Israel, one would violate only the one commandment of [Leviticus 19:13](#), "You shall not rob." And the Sifre further taught that one violates the command of [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) not to move a neighbor's landmark (1) if one moves an Israelite's landmark, (2) if one substitutes the statement of [Rabbi Eliezer](#) for that of [Rabbi Joshua](#) or vice versa, or (3) if one sells a burial plot purchased by an ancestor. (Sifre 188.)



a chalitzah ceremony (engraving from an edition of Mishnah Yevamot published in [Amsterdam](#) circa 1700)

[edit] Rules for witnesses

Chapter 1 of tractate Makkot in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of perjury in [Deuteronomy 19:15–21](#). ([Mishnah Makkot 1:1–9](#); Tosefta Makkot 1:1–11; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 2a–7a](#).)

The Mishnah taught how they punished perjurers where they could not punish the perjurers with the punishment that the perjurers sought to inflict. If the perjurers testified that a priest was a son of a divorcee (thus disqualifying the son as a priest) or the son of a woman who had been declined in [Levirate marriage](#) (a woman who had received *chalitzah*, once again disqualifying the son as a priest), they did not order that each perjurer be stigmatized as born of a divorcee or a woman declined in Levirate marriage. Rather, they gave the perjurer 40 lashes. If the perjurers testified that a person was guilty of a charge punishable by banishment, they did not banish the perjurers. Rather, they gave the perjurer 40 lashes. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 2a](#).)

The Mishnah taught that if perjurers testified that a man divorced his wife and had not paid her [ketubah](#), seeing that her ketubah would ultimately have to be paid sooner or later, the assessment was made based on the value of the woman's ketubah in the event of her being widowed or divorced or, alternatively, her husband inheriting her after her death. If perjurers testified that a

debtor owed a creditor 1,000 [zuz](#) due within 30 days, while the debtor says that the debt was due in 10 years, the assessment of the fine is made on the basis of how much one might be willing to offer for the difference between holding the sum of 1,000 zuz to be repaid in 30 days or in 10 years. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 3a.](#))

If witnesses testified that a person owed a creditor 200 zuz, and the witnesses turned out to have perjured themselves, then [Rabbi Meir](#) taught that they flogged the perjurers *and* ordered the perjurers to pay corresponding damages, because [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) sanctions the flogging and [Deuteronomy 19:19](#) sanctions the compensation. But the Sages said that one who paid damages was not flogged. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:2](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 4a.](#))

If witnesses testified that a person was liable to receive 40 lashes, and the witnesses turned out to have perjured themselves, then Rabbi Meir taught that the perjurers received 80 lashes — 40 on account of the commandment of [Exodus 20:12](#) (20:13 in the NJPS) not to bear false witness and 40 on account of the instruction of [Deuteronomy 19:19](#) to do to perjurers as they intended to do to their victims. But the Sages said that they received only 40 lashes. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 4a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a group of convicted perjurers divided monetary penalties among themselves, but penalties of lashes were not divided among offenders. Thus if the perjurers testified that a person owed a friend 200 zuz, and they were found to have

committed perjury, the court divided the damages proportionately among the perjurers. But if the perjurers testified that a person was liable to a flogging of 40 lashes, and they were found to have committed perjury, then each perjurer received 40 lashes. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 5a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that they did not condemn witnesses as perjurers until other witnesses directly incriminated the first witnesses. Thus if the first witnesses testified that one person killed another, and other witnesses testified that the victim or the alleged murderer was with the other witnesses on that day in a particular place, then they did not condemn the first witnesses as perjurers. But if the other witnesses testified that the first witnesses were with the other witnesses on that day in a particular place, then they did condemn the first witnesses as perjurers and executed the first witnesses on the other witnesses' evidence. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:4](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 5a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that if a second set of witnesses came and charged the first witnesses with perjury, and then a third set of witnesses came and charged them with perjury, even if a hundred witnesses did so, they were all to be executed. Rabbi Judah said that this demonstrated a conspiracy, and they executed only the first set of witnesses. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:5](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 5a.](#))

The Mishnah taught that they did not execute perjurers in a capital case until after the conclusion of the trial of the person against whom they testified. The [Sadducees](#) taught that they executed perjurers only after the accused had actually been

executed, pursuant to the injunction “eye for eye” in [Deuteronomy 19:21](#). The (Pharisee) Sages noted that [Deuteronomy 19:19](#) says, “then shall you do to him as he purposed to do to his brother,” implying that his brother was still alive. The Sages thus asked what “life for life” meant. The Sages taught that one might have thought that perjurers were liable to be executed from the moment that they delivered their perjured testimony, so [Deuteronomy 19:21](#) says “life for life” to instruct that perjurers were not to be put to death until after the conclusion of the trial. ([Mishnah Makkot 1:6](#); [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 5b](#).)

The Gemara taught that the words “eye for eye” in [Deuteronomy 19:21](#) meant pecuniary compensation. Rabbi [Simon ben Yohai](#) asked those who would take the words literally how they would enforce equal justice where a blind man put out the eye of another man, or an amputee cut off the hand of another, or where a lame person broke the leg of another. The school of Rabbi Ishmael cited the words “so shall it be given to him” in [Leviticus 24:20](#), and deduced that the word “give” could apply only to pecuniary compensation. The school of Rabbi Hiyya cited the words “hand for hand” in [Deuteronomy 19:21](#) to mean that an article was given from hand to hand, namely money. [Abaye](#) reported that a sage of the school of Hezekiah taught that [Exodus 21:23–24](#) said “eye for eye” and “life for life,” but not “life and eye for eye,” and it could sometimes happen that eye and life would be taken for an eye, as when the offender died while being blinded. [Rav Papa](#) said in the name of [Raba](#) that

[Exodus 21:19](#) referred explicitly to healing, and the verse would not make sense if one assumed that retaliation was meant. And Rav Ashi taught that the principle of pecuniary compensation could be derived from the analogous use of the term “for” in [Exodus 21:24](#) in the expression “eye for eye” and in [Exodus 21:36](#) in the expression “he shall surely pay ox for ox.” As the latter case plainly indicated pecuniary compensation, so must the former. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 84a.](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 20



The Seven Trumpets of Jericho (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[[edit](#)] Rules for war

Chapter 8 of tractate [Sotah](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud and part of chapter 7 of tractate Sotah in the Tosefta interpreted the laws of those excused from war in [Deuteronomy](#)

[20:1–9](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 8:1–7](#); [Tosefta Sotah 7:18–24](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 42a–44b](#).)

The Mishnah taught that when the [High Priest](#) anointed for battle addressed the people, he spoke in Hebrew. The High Priest spoke the words “against your enemies” in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#) to make clear that it was not against their brethren that the Israelites fought, and thus if they fell into the enemies’ hands, the enemies would not have mercy on them. The High Priest said “let not your heart faint” in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#) to refer to the neighing of the horses and the brandishing of swords. He said “fear not” in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#) to refer to the crash of shields and the tramp of the soldiers' shoes. He said “nor tremble” in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#) to refer to the sound of trumpets. He said “neither be afraid” in [Deuteronomy 20:3](#) to refer to the sound of battle-cries. He said the words “for the Lord your God goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you” in [Deuteronomy 20:4](#) to make clear that the enemies would come relying upon the might of flesh and blood, but the Israelites came relying upon the might of God. The High Priest continued, saying that the [Philistines](#) came relying upon the might of [Goliath](#), and his fate was to fall by the sword, and the Philistines fell with him. The [Ammonites](#) came relying upon the might of their captain Shobach, but his fate was to fall by the sword, and the Ammonites fell with him. And thus the High Priest said the words of [Deuteronomy 20:4](#) to allude to the camp of the [Ark of the Covenant](#), which would go to battle with the Israelites. ([Mishnah Sotah 8:1](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 42a](#).)

Even though one might conclude from [Deuteronomy 20:10](#) and [15–18](#) that the Israelites were not to offer peace to the Canaanites, Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman taught that [Joshua](#) sent three edicts to the inhabitants of the Land of Israel before the Israelites entered the land: first, that whoever wanted to leave the land should leave; second, that whoever wished to make peace and agree to pay taxes should do so; and third, that whoever wished to make war should do so. The Gergashites vacated their land and thus merited receiving land in [Africa](#). And the [Gibeonites](#) made peace with the Israelites, as reported in [Joshua 10:1](#). (Jerusalem Talmud Sheviit 45b.)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 21

Chapter 9 of tractate Sotah in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the found corpse and the calf whose neck was to be broken (*eglah arufah*) in [Deuteronomy 21:1–9](#). ([Mishnah Sotah 9:1–9](#); Tosefta Sotah 9:1–2; [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 44b–47b](#).)

A midrash told that when [Joseph](#) was young, he used to study Torah with [Jacob](#). When Joseph's brothers told Jacob in [Genesis 45:26](#) that Joseph was still alive, Jacob did not believe them, but he recalled the subject that Jacob and Joseph had been studying when they last studied together: the passage on the beheaded heifer (עֵגְלָה עֲרוּפָה, *egla arufa*) in [Deuteronomy 21:1–9](#). Jacob told the brothers that if Joseph gave them a sign of which subject Joseph and Jacob had last studied together, then Jacob would believe them. Joseph too had remembered what subject they had

been studying, so (as [Genesis 45:21](#) reports) he sent Jacob wagons (עגלות, *agalot*) so that Jacob might know that the gift came from him. The midrash thus concluded that wherever Joseph went he studied the Torah, just as his forbears did, even though the Torah had not yet been given. (Genesis Rabbah 95:3.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 14 positive and 27 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To appoint judges ([Deuteronomy 16:18.](#))
- Not to plant a tree in the sanctuary ([Deuteronomy 16:21.](#))
- Not to erect a column in a public place of worship ([Deuteronomy 16:22.](#))
- Not to offer a temporarily blemished animal ([Deuteronomy 17:1.](#))
- To act according to the ruling of the [Sanhedrin](#) ([Deuteronomy 17:11.](#))
- Not to deviate from the word of the Sanhedrin ([Deuteronomy 17:11.](#))
- To appoint a king from [Israel](#) ([Deuteronomy 17:15.](#))
- Not to appoint a [convert](#) ([Deuteronomy 17:15.](#))

- The king must not have too many horses. ([Deuteronomy 17:16.](#))
- Not to dwell permanently in [Egypt](#) ([Deuteronomy 17:16.](#))
- The king must not have too many wives. ([Deuteronomy 17:17.](#))
- The king must not have too much silver and gold. ([Deuteronomy 17:17.](#))
- The king must have a separate Torah for himself. ([Deuteronomy 17:18.](#))
- The Tribe of Levi must not be given a portion of the land in Israel; rather they are given cities in which to dwell. ([Deuteronomy 18:1.](#))
- The Levites must not take a share in the spoils of [war](#). ([Deuteronomy 18:1.](#))
- To give the shoulder, two cheeks, and stomach of slaughtered animals to a Kohen ([Deuteronomy 18:3.](#))
- To set aside the [tithe](#) for the Kohen (*Terumah Gedolah*) ([Deuteronomy 18:4.](#))
- To give the first sheering of sheep to a Kohen ([Deuteronomy 18:4.](#))

- The priests' work shifts must be equal during [holidays](#).
([Deuteronomy 18:6-8](#).)
- Not to go into a [trance](#) to foresee events ([Deuteronomy 18:10](#).)
- Not to perform acts of [magic](#) ([Deuteronomy 18:10](#).)
- Not to mutter incantations ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#).)
- Not to consult a medium (*ov*) ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#).)
- Not to consult a wizard (*yidoni*) ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#).)
- Not to attempt to contact the dead ([Deuteronomy 18:11](#).)
- To listen to the prophet speaking in God's Name
([Deuteronomy 18:15](#).)
- Not to prophesize falsely in the name of God
([Deuteronomy 18:20](#).)
- Not to prophesize in the name of an idol ([Deuteronomy 18:20](#).)
- Not to be afraid of putting the false prophet to death
([Deuteronomy 18:22](#).)
- To designate cities of refuge and prepare routes of access
([Deuteronomy 19:3](#).)

- A judge must not pity the [murderer](#) or [assaulter](#) at the [trial](#). ([Deuteronomy 19:13.](#))
- Not to move a boundary marker to steal someone's property ([Deuteronomy 19:14.](#))
- Not to accept testimony from a lone witness ([Deuteronomy 19:15.](#))
- To punish the false witnesses as they tried to punish the defendant ([Deuteronomy 19:19.](#))
- Not to panic and retreat during battle ([Deuteronomy 20:3.](#))
- To appoint a priest to speak with the [soldiers](#) during the war ([Deuteronomy 20:5.](#))
- To offer peace terms to the inhabitants of a city while holding siege, and treat them according to the Torah if they accept the terms ([Deuteronomy 20:10.](#))
- Not to let any of the people of the seven Canaanite nations remain alive ([Deuteronomy 20:16.](#))
- Not to destroy fruit trees even during the siege ([Deuteronomy 20:19.](#))
- To break the neck of a calf by the river valley following an unsolved murder ([Deuteronomy 21:4.](#))

- Not to work nor plant that river valley ([Deuteronomy 21:4](#))

(*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:2–155. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6](#).)



[Isaiah](#) (painting by [Michelangelo](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 51:12–52:12](#). The haftarah is the fourth in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient



Hammurabi

- [Code of Hammurabi 23–24](#). Babylonia, Circa 1780 BCE. Reprinted in e.g. [James B. Pritchard](#). *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 163, 167. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#). (unsolved killing).
- [Hittite laws](#), 6. [Hittite Empire](#), circa 1600–1100 BCE. Reprinted in e.g. James B. Pritchard. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 188, 189. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. [ISBN 0691035032](#). (unsolved killing).

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 26:2](#) (not to go to Egypt); [28:18](#) (pillar).
- [Exodus 24:4](#) (pillars).
- [Leviticus 18:21](#) (Molech); [20:1–5](#) (Molech).
- [Deuteronomy 4:19](#) (worshipping sun, moon, stars).
- [Joshua 24:26](#) (stone pillar).
- [1 Samuel 8:4–22](#) (kings).
- [1 Kings 11:3](#) (Solomon's wives); [11:4–8](#), [33](#) (Molech); [22:6–38](#) (true and false prophets).

- [2 Kings 16:3](#) (son pass through fire); [17:17](#) (children pass through fire); [21:6](#) (son pass through fire); [23:10–14](#) (Molech).
- [Isaiah 28:7–13](#) (false prophets); [57:9](#) (Molech or king).
- [Jeremiah 7:31](#) (child sacrifice); [8:1–2](#) (worshipping sun, moon, stars); [22:1–5](#) (duties of kings); [23:9–40](#) (assessing prophets); [28:7–9](#) (judging prophets by results); [32:35](#) (Molech); [37:19](#) (judging prophets by results); [42:13–22](#) (not to go to Egypt); [49:1–3](#) (Molech or Malcam).
- [Ezekiel 8:16–18](#) (sun worship); [12:21–14:11](#) (true and false prophets); [16:20–21](#) (sacrificing children); [17:15](#) (king seeking horses in Egypt); [23:37](#) (sacrifice of sons).
- [Hosea 3:4](#) (pillar).
- [Amos 5:25–27](#) (Molech or king).
- [Micah 3:5–7](#) (false prophets).
- [Zephaniah 1:4–6](#) (Molech).
- [Psalms 9:13](#) (God avenges blood); [19:13](#) (clearing us from hidden faults); [20:8](#) (some trust in horses); [23:4](#) (God is with me); [27:12](#) (false witnesses risen up); [30:1](#) (dedication of house); [106:34–41](#) (the commandment to destroy the Canaanites); [119:97](#) (meditation on the law all the day); [122:1–5](#) (judgment from Jerusalem).
- [Job 31:26–28](#) (worshipping sun, moon).

- [2 Chronicles 19:4–11](#) (judges and Levites); [33:6](#) (children pass through fire).



Josephus

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* [4:8:14–17](#), [33](#), [41](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 117–18, 122–23. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Matthew 7:15–23](#) (false prophets).
- [Acts of the Apostles 7:42–43](#) (Molech).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Peah 8:9](#); [Demai 4:10](#); [Sheviit 10:8](#); [Challah 4:9](#); [Bikkurim 2:10](#); [Beitzah 1:6](#); [Yevamot 15:3](#); [Sotah 6:3](#); [7:2](#); [8](#); [8:1–9:9](#); [Bava Batra 3:4](#); [Sanhedrin 1:3](#), [5](#); [2:4–5](#); [6:4](#); [7:7](#); [10:6](#); [11:2](#), [4–6](#); [Makkot 1:1–9](#); [2:5](#), [8](#); [Chullin 10:1](#); [11:1–2](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 35, 79, 92, 157, 172, 292, 373, 457, 459–64,

564, 583–84, 586–87, 594, 598, 607–12, 614, 616, 784–86. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 144:1–210:3. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:3–108. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 12a, 94b; Peah 54a, 73a; Sheviit 45b, 85a; Terumot 37a, 39a; Maasrot 2a; Maaser Sheni 57b; Challah 46b; Sukkah 28b; Makkot ch. 2. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–3, 6b–7, 9–11, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005–2010.



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 18b, 19b, 22a](#); [Shabbat 19a, 23a, 25b, 33a, 56b, 67b, 75a–b, 84b–85a, 94b, 127b, 129a, 140b](#); [Eruvin 31b, 35b, 37b, 41b](#); [Pesachim 12a, 26a, 33a, 35b, 53a, 55b, 113b](#); [Yoma 22b–23a, 25a, 37a, 60a, 74a, 83a](#); [Sukkah 3a–b, 46a, 51b, 55b–56a](#); [Beitzah 3b, 10b, 12b, 19b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 4b–5a, 6b, 21b, 24b](#),

[25b](#); [Taanit 7a, 31a](#); [Megillah 5a, 20b–21a, 28a, 32a](#);
[Moed Katan 5a, 8a, 20a, 24b](#); [Chagigah 2a, 8b, 16b–17a](#);
[Yevamot 31b, 45b, 63b, 90b, 94a, 99b, 100b, 101b–02a,](#)
[104a](#); [Ketubot 15a, 16b, 17a, 19b, 25a, 28b, 32b–33b,](#)
[37b, 45b, 87b, 103b, 105a–b](#); [Nedarim 31a, 87b–88a](#);
[Nazir 47b](#); [Sotah 2a, 3b, 7b–8a, 17b, 23b, 31b–32a, 35b,](#)
[38a–b, 41b–47b](#); [Gittin 2b, 59b, 71a, 90a](#); [Kiddushin 13b,](#)
[18a, 29b, 32a–b, 37b, 56b–57a, 67b, 69a, 76b](#); [Bava](#)
[Kamma 4b–5a, 24a, 32a–33a, 44b, 66a, 70a–b, 72b, 73b,](#)
[74b, 75b, 82b, 84a, 86a–b, 88a, 89a, 90b, 91b, 105b,](#)
[109b, 110b, 114a, 115a](#); [Bava Metzia 30a](#); [Bava Batra 3b,](#)
[23b, 31b, 56b, 100b, 123b, 127a, 150a, 155b, 160b, 165b](#);
[Sanhedrin 2a, 6b, 7b, 8b–10a, 14a–b, 16a–b, 18b–19b,](#)
[20b–22a, 28a–b, 30a, 32b, 34b, 37b, 40b–41a, 45a–b,](#)
[47b, 49b, 50b, 51b, 52b, 56b, 60a–62a, 64b–65b, 67a,](#)
[68a, 78a, 79a, 84a, 86a–87a, 88a, 89a, 90a, 100b, 112a](#);
[Makkot 2a–13a, 22a, 24a](#); [Shevuot 27b, 30a, 31a, 32a,](#)
[34a, 40a](#); [Avodah Zarah 8b, 18a, 23a, 29b, 43b, 74a](#);
[Horayot 2a, 4a, 6a, 11a–12a](#); [Zevachim 23b, 36a, 46a,](#)
[54b, 70b, 73a, 88b](#); [Menachot 6a, 18b, 34a, 36a, 38a, 67a,](#)
[74a, 90b, 93a, 101b](#); [Chullin 7b, 11a–b, 23b–24a, 37b,](#)
[75b, 79b, 81b–82a, 117a–b, 120b, 130a–33a, 134b–38a](#);
[Bekhorot 11b, 12b, 14b, 17b, 35b, 45b](#); [Arakhin 11a,](#)
[30b](#); [Keritot 3b–4a, 5b–6a, 23b–24a, 25a, 26a](#); [Meilah](#)
[11b](#); [Tamid 28b](#); [Niddah 8b, 19a, 50a, 51a–b, 57a.](#)

Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*.

Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and

Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs.,
2006.



Rashi

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 5:1–15. Land of Israel, 9th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 16–21*. Troyes, France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:181–220. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. 3:31, 39, 41. Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 165, 170–71, 173. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).



Hobbes

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, 3:37, 40, 41, 42; [Review & Conclusion](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 476–77, 506, 518, 543, 548, 586–87, 724. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
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Ki Teitzei

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

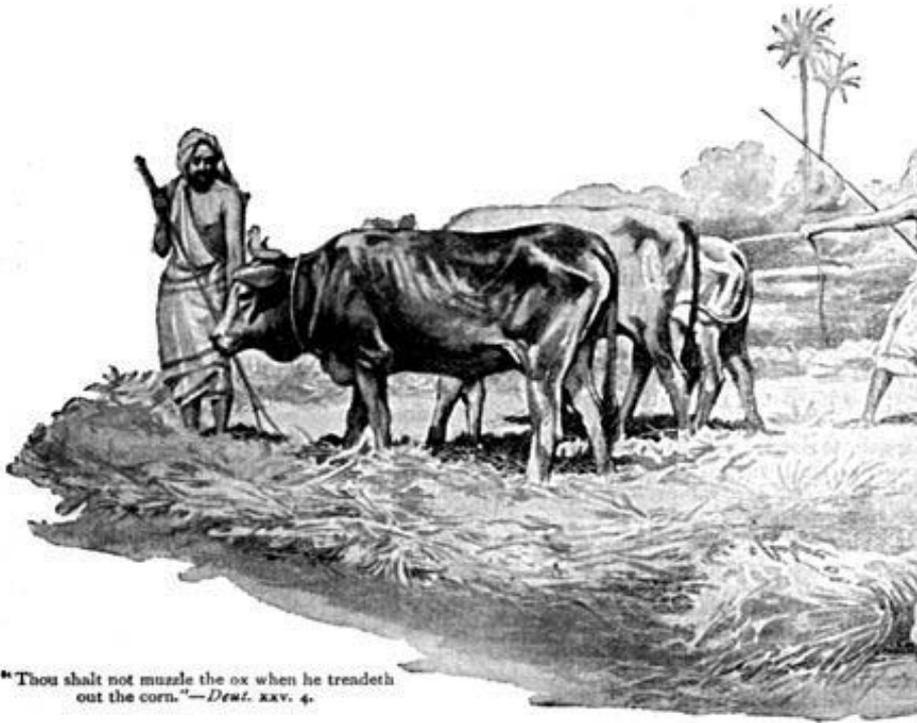
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Ki Teitzei, **Ki Tetzei**, **Ki Tetze**, **Ki Thetze**, **Ki Tese**, **Ki Tetzey**, or **Ki Seitzei** (כִּי תֵצֵא — [Hebrew](#) for “when you go,” the [first words](#) in the parshah) is the 49th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the sixth in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in late August or September.

Jews also read the part of the parshah about [Amalek](#), [Deuteronomy 25:17–19](#), as the [maftir](#) reading on Shabbat Zachor, the [special Sabbath](#) immediately before [Purim](#), which commemorates the story of [Esther](#) and the Jewish people’s victory over [Haman’s](#) plan to kill the Jews, told in the [book of Esther](#). ([Esther 1:1–10:3](#).) [Esther 3:1](#) identifies Haman as an Agagite, and thus a descendant of Amalek. [Numbers 24:7](#) identifies the Agagites with the Amalekites. A [midrash](#) tells that between King Agag’s capture by Saul and his killing by Samuel, Agag fathered a child, from whom Haman in turn descended. ([Seder Eliyahu Rabbah](#) ch. 20; Targum Sheni to Esther 4:13.)

The parshah sets out a series of miscellaneous [laws](#), mostly governing civil and domestic life, including ordinances regarding a beautiful captive of war, [inheritance](#) among the sons of two wives, a wayward son, the corpse of an executed person, found

property, coming upon another in distress, rooftop safety, prohibited mixtures, sexual offenses, membership in the congregation, camp hygiene, runaway slaves, prostitution, [usury](#), vows, [gleaning](#), [kidnapping](#), [repossession](#), prompt payment of wages, [vicarious liability](#), flogging, treatment of domestic animals, [levirate marriage](#), weights and measures, and remembrance of the Amalekites.



“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.”
([Deuteronomy 25:4](#).) (illustration by James Shaw Crompton)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary

[\[edit\]](#) The beautiful captive

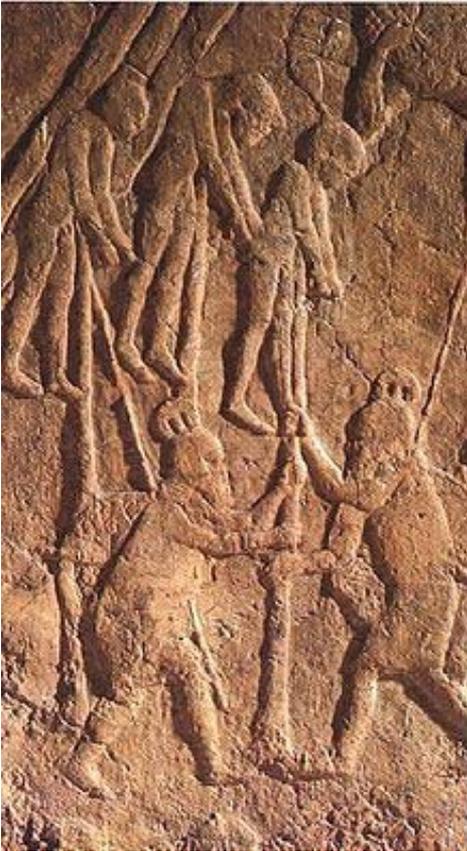
[Moses](#) directed the [Israelites](#) that when [God](#) delivered enemies into their [power](#), the Israelites took captives, an Israelite saw among the captives a [beautiful](#) woman, he [desired](#) her, and

wanted to [marry](#) her, the Israelite was to bring her into his house and have her trim her hair, pare her [nails](#), discard her captive's [garb](#), and spend a month [lamenting](#) her father and mother.

([Deuteronomy 21:10–13](#).) Thereafter, the Israelite could take her as his wife. ([Deuteronomy 21:13](#).) But if he should find that he no longer wanted her, he had to [release](#) her outright, and not [sell](#) her for money as a [slave](#). ([Deuteronomy 21:14](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Inheritance among the sons of two wives

If a man had two wives, one loved and one unloved, both bore him sons, but the unloved one bore him his firstborn son, then when he [willed](#) his [property](#) to his sons, he could not treat the son of the loved wife as firstborn in disregard of the older son of the unloved wife; rather, he was required to accept the firstborn, the son of the unloved one, and allot to him his birthright of a double portion of all that he possessed. ([Deuteronomy 21:15–17](#).)



impalement of [Judeans](#) in a [Neo-Assyrian](#) relief

[\[edit\]](#) The wayward son

If a couple had a wayward and defiant son, who did not heed his father or mother and did not [obey](#) them even after they [disciplined](#) him, then they were to bring him to the [elders](#) of his town and publicly declare their son to be disloyal, defiant, heedless, a [glutton](#), and a [drunkard](#). ([Deuteronomy 21:18–20](#).)

The men of his town were then to [stone him to death](#).

([Deuteronomy 21:21](#).)

[[edit](#)] The corpse of an executed man

If the community [executed](#) a man for a capital offense and [impaled](#) him on a stake, they were not to let his [corpse](#) remain on the stake overnight, but were to [bury](#) him the same day, for an impaled body affronted God. ([Deuteronomy 21:22–23](#).)

[[edit](#)] Found property

If one found another's lost [ox](#), [sheep](#), [ass](#), [garment](#), or any other lost thing, then the finder could not ignore it, but was required to take it back to its [owner](#). ([Deuteronomy 22:1–3](#).) If the owner did not live near the finder or the finder did not know the identity of the owner, then the finder was to bring the thing home and keep it until the owner claimed it. ([Deuteronomy 22:2–3](#).)

If one came upon another's ass or ox fallen on the road, then one could not ignore it, but was required to help the owner to raise it.

([Deuteronomy 22:4](#).)



mother sandpiper and egg in nest

[\[edit\]](#) Ordinances

A woman was not to put on man's apparel, nor a man wear woman's clothing. ([Deuteronomy 22:5.](#))

If one came upon a bird's [nest](#) with the mother bird sitting over [fledglings](#) or [eggs](#), then one could not take the mother together with her young, but was required to let the mother go and take only the young. ([Deuteronomy 22:6–7.](#))

When one [built](#) a new house, one had to make a [parapet](#) for the [roof](#), so that no one should fall from it. ([Deuteronomy 22:8.](#))



tzitzit

One was not to [sow](#) a [vineyard](#) with a second kind of [seed](#), nor use the yield of such vineyard. ([Deuteronomy 22:9.](#)) One was not

to [plow](#) with an ox and an ass together. ([Deuteronomy 22:10.](#))

One was not to wear [cloth](#) combining [wool](#) and [linen](#).

([Deuteronomy 22:11.](#))

One was to make [tassels](#) (*tzitzit*) on the four [corners](#) of the garment with which one covered oneself. ([Deuteronomy 22:12.](#))

[[edit](#)] Sexual offenses

If a man married a woman, cohabited with her, took an aversion to her, and falsely charged her with not having been a [virgin](#) at the time of the marriage, then the woman's parents were to produce the cloth with evidence of the woman's virginity before the town elders at the [town gate](#). ([Deuteronomy 22:13–17.](#)) The elders were then to have the man [flogged](#) and [fine](#) him 100

shekels of silver to be paid to the woman's father. ([Deuteronomy 22:18–19](#).) The woman was to remain the man's wife, and he was never to have the [right](#) to divorce her. ([Deuteronomy 22:19](#).) But if the elders found that woman had not been a virgin, then the woman was to be brought to the entrance of her father's house and stoned to death by the men of her town. ([Deuteronomy 22:20–21](#).)

If a man was found lying with another man's wife, both the man and the woman with whom he lay were to die. ([Deuteronomy 22:22](#).)

If in a city, a man lay with a virgin who was engaged to a man, then the authorities were to take the two of them to the town gate and stone them to death — the girl because she did not cry for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. ([Deuteronomy 22:23–24](#).) But if the man lay with the girl by [force](#) in the open country, only the man was to die, for there was no one to save her. ([Deuteronomy 22:25–27](#).)

If a man seized a virgin who was not engaged and lay with her, then the man was to pay the girl's father 50 shekels of silver, she was to become the man's wife, and he was never to have the right to divorce her. ([Deuteronomy 22:28–29](#).)

No man could marry his father's former wife. ([Deuteronomy 23:1](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Membership in the congregation

God's congregation could not admit into [membership](#) anyone whose [testes](#) were crushed, anyone whose member was cut off, anyone [misbegotten](#), anyone descended within ten [generations](#) from one misbegotten, any [Ammonite](#) or [Moabite](#), or anyone descended within ten generations from an Ammonite or Moabite. ([Deuteronomy 23:2–4](#).) As long as they lived, Israelites were not to concern themselves with the welfare or benefit of Ammonites or Moabites, because they did not meet the Israelites with [food](#) and water after the Israelites left [Egypt](#), and because they hired [Balaam](#) to [curse](#) the Israelites — but God refused to heed Balaam, turning his curse into a [blessing](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:5–7](#).)

The Israelites were not to abhor the [Edomites](#), for they were kinsman, nor Egyptians, for the Israelites were strangers in Egypt. ([Deuteronomy 23:8](#).) Great grandchildren of Edomites or Egyptians could be admitted into the congregation. ([Deuteronomy 23:9](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Camp hygiene

Any Israelite rendered unclean by a [nocturnal emission](#) had to leave the Israelites [military](#) camp, [bathe](#) in water toward evening, and reenter the camp at [sundown](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:11–12](#).) The Israelites were to designate an area outside the camp where they might relieve themselves, and to carry a [spike](#) to dig a hole and cover up their [excrement](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:13–14](#).) As God moved about in their camp to protect them and to deliver their

enemies, the Israelites were to keep their camp [holy](#).
([Deuteronomy 23:15](#).)

[[edit](#)] More ordinances

If a slave sought refuge with the Israelites, they were not to turn the slave over to the slave's [master](#), but were to let the former slave live in any place the former slave might choose among the Israelites' settlements and not ill-treat the former slave.
([Deuteronomy 23:16–17](#).)

Israelites were forbidden to act as harlots, [sodomites](#), or cult [prostitutes](#), and from bringing the [wages](#) of prostitution into the [house of God](#) in fulfillment of any [vow](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:18–19](#).)

Israelites were forbidden to charge [interest](#) on [loans](#) to their countrymen, but they could charge interest on loans to [foreigners](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:20–21](#).)



grapes

Israelites were required promptly to fulfill vows to God, whereas they incurred no guilt if they refrained from vowing.

([Deuteronomy 23:22–24](#).)

A visiting Israelite was allowed to enter another's vineyard and eat [grapes](#) until full, but the visitor was forbidden to put any in a vessel. ([Deuteronomy 23:25](#).) Similarly, a visiting Israelite was allowed to enter another's [field](#) of standing [grain](#) and pluck [ears](#) by hand, but the visitor was forbidden to cut the neighbor's grain with a [sickle](#). ([Deuteronomy 23:25](#).)

A divorced woman who remarried and then lost her second husband to divorce or death was not allowed to remarry her first husband. ([Deuteronomy 24:1–4](#).)

A [newlywed](#) man was exempt from [army](#) duty for one year so as to give [happiness](#) to his wife. ([Deuteronomy 24:5](#).)

Israelites were forbidden to take a handmill or an upper [millstone](#) in [pawn](#), for that would be equivalent to taking someone's livelihood in pawn. ([Deuteronomy 24:6](#).)

One found to have kidnapped a fellow Israelite was to die. ([Deuteronomy 24:7](#).)

In cases of a [skin affection](#), Israelites were to do exactly as the [priests](#) instructed, remembering that God afflicted and then healed [Miriam](#)'s skin after the Israelites left Egypt. ([Deuteronomy 24:8–9](#).)

An Israelite who lent to a fellow Israelite was forbidden to enter the [borrower](#)'s house to seize a pledge, but was required to remain outside while the borrower brought the pledge out to the

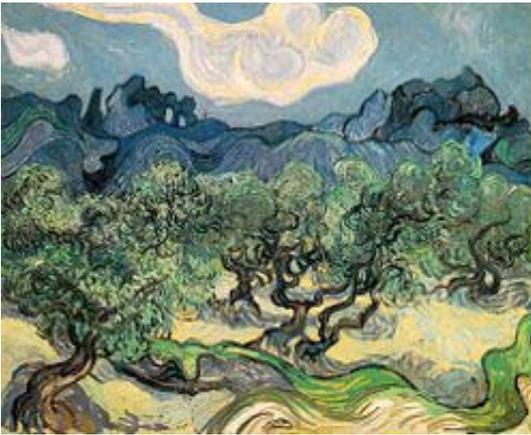
lender. ([Deuteronomy 24:10–11.](#)) If the borrower was needy, the lender was forbidden to [sleep](#) in the pledge, but had to return the pledge to the borrower at sundown, so that the borrower might sleep in the cloth and bless the lender before God. ([Deuteronomy 24:12–13.](#))



The Gleaners (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#) from the 1865 *La Sainte Bible*)

Israelites were forbidden to abuse a needy and destitute [laborer](#), whether an Israelite or a stranger, and were required to pay the laborer's wages on the same day, before the [sun](#) set, as the laborer would urgently depend on the wages. ([Deuteronomy 24:14–15.](#))

Parents were not to be put to death for children, nor were children to be put to death for parents: a person was to be put to death only for the person's own crime. ([Deuteronomy 24:16.](#))



The Olive Trees (1889 painting by [Vincent van Gogh](#))

Israelites were forbidden to subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless, and were forbidden to take a [widow](#)'s garment in pawn, remembering that they were slaves in Egypt and that God redeemed them. ([Deuteronomy 24:17–18.](#)) When Israelites reaped the [harvest](#) in their fields and overlooked a sheaf, they were not to turn back to get it, but were to leave it to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. ([Deuteronomy 24:19.](#)) Similarly, when Israelites beat down the fruit of their [olive](#) trees or gathered the grapes of their vineyards, they were not to go over them again, but were leave what remained for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, remembering that they were slaves in Egypt. ([Deuteronomy 24:20–22.](#))

When one was to be flogged, the magistrate was to have the guilty one lie down and be whipped in the magistrate's presence as warranted, but not more than 40 lashes, so that the guilty one would not be degraded. ([Deuteronomy 25:1–3.](#))

Israelites were forbidden to [muzzle](#) an ox while it was [threshing](#). ([Deuteronomy 25:4](#).)

When [brothers](#) dwelt together and one of them died leaving no son, the surviving brother was to marry the wife of the deceased and perform the [levir's duty](#), and the first son that she bore was to be accounted to the dead brother, that his [name](#) might survive. ([Deuteronomy 25:5–6](#).) But if the surviving brother did not want to marry his brother's widow, then the widow was to appear before the elders at the town gate and declare that the brother refused to perform the levir's duty, the elders were to talk to him, and if he insisted, the widow was to go up to him before the elders, pull the [sandal](#) off his [foot](#), spit in his face, and declare: "Thus shall be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house!" ([Deuteronomy 25:7–9](#).) They shall then call him "the family of the unsandaled one." ([Deuteronomy 25:10](#).)

If two men fought with each other, and to save her husband the wife of one seized the other man's [genitals](#), then her hand was to be cut off. ([Deuteronomy 25:11–12](#).)

Israelites were forbidden to have alternate weights or measures, larger and smaller, but were required to have completely honest weights and measures. ([Deuteronomy 25:13–16](#).)

Israelites were required to remember what the Amalekites did to them on their journey, after they left Egypt, surprising them and cutting down all the stragglers at their rear. ([Deuteronomy 25:17–18](#).) The Israelites were enjoined never to [forget](#) to blot out the [memory](#) of Amalek from under heaven. ([Deuteronomy 25:19](#).)

[[edit](#)] In inner-biblical interpretation

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 24

The [Hebrew Bible](#) reports skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת·צָ) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, מְצֹרָא·צָ·מֶ) at several places, often (and sometimes incorrectly) translated as “leprosy” and “a leper.” In [Exodus 4:6](#), to help Moses to convince others that God had sent him, God instructed Moses to put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, his hand was “leprosy (*m'tzora'at*, מְצֹרָא·צָ), as white as snow.” In [Leviticus 13–14](#), the Torah sets out regulations for skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת) and a person affected by skin disease (*metzora*, מְצֹרָא·צָ·מֶ). In [Numbers 12:10](#), after [Miriam](#) spoke against Moses, God’s cloud removed from the [Tent of Meeting](#) and “Miriam was leprosy (*m'tzora'at*, מְצֹרָא·צָ), as white as snow.” In [Deuteronomy 24:8–9](#), Moses warned the Israelites in the case of skin disease (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת·צָ) diligently to observe all that the priests would teach them, remembering what God did to Miriam. In [2 Kings 5:1–19](#), part of the [haftarah](#) for parshah [Tazria](#), the prophet [Elisha](#) cures [Naaman](#), the commander of the army of the king of [Aram](#), who was a “leper” (*metzora*, מְצֹרָא·צָ·מֶ). In [2 Kings 7:3–20](#), part of the [haftarah](#) for parshah [Metzora](#), the story is told of four “leprosy men” (*m'tzora'im*, מְצֹרָאִים) at the gate during the [Arameans'](#) siege of [Samaria](#). And in [2 Chronicles 26:19](#), after King [Uzziah](#) tried to burn incense in the [Temple in Jerusalem](#), “leprosy (*tzara'at*, תַּצְרַעַת·צָ) broke forth on his forehead.”

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 21

[\[edit\]](#) 21:10–14 — the beautiful captive

The [Gemara](#) taught that [Deuteronomy 21:10–14](#) provided the law of taking a beautiful captive only as an allowance for human passions. The Rabbis taught in a [Baraita](#) that taking a beautiful captive according to the strictures of [Deuteronomy 21:10–14](#) was better than taking beautiful captives without restriction, just as it was better for Jews to eat the meat of a ritually slaughtered ill animal than to eat the meat of an ill animal that had died on its own. The Rabbis interpreted the words “and you see among the captives” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the provisions applied only if the soldier set his eye upon the woman when taking her captive, not later. They interpreted the words “a woman” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the provisions applied even to a woman who was married before having been taken captive. They interpreted the words “and you have a desire” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the provisions applied even if the woman was not beautiful. They interpreted the word “her” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the provisions allowed him to take her alone, not her and her companion. They interpreted the words “and you shall take” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the soldier could have marital rights over her. They interpreted the words “to you to wife” in [Deuteronomy 21:11](#) to mean that the soldier could not take two women, one for himself and another for his father, or one for himself and another for his

son. And they interpreted the words “then you shall bring her home” in [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) to mean that the soldier could not molest her on the battlefield. [Rab](#) said that [Deuteronomy 21:10–14](#) permitted a priest to take a beautiful captive, while [Samuel](#) maintained that it was forbidden. ([Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 21b–22a.](#))

The Gemara taught that the procedure of [Deuteronomy 21:12–13](#) applied only when the captive did not accept the commandments, for if she accepted the commandments, then she could be immersed in a ritual bath (*mikvah*), and she and the soldier could marry immediately. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 47b.](#)) [Rabbi Eliezer](#) interpreted the words “and she shall shave her head and do her nails” in [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) to mean that she was to cut her nails, but [Rabbi Akiba](#) interpreted the words to mean that she was to let them grow. [Rabbi Eliezer](#) reasoned that [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) specified an act with respect to the head and an act with respect to the nails, and as the former meant removal, so should the latter. [Rabbi Akiba](#) reasoned that [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) specified disfigurement for the head, so it must mean disfigurement for the nails, as well. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 48a.](#))

[Rabbi Eliezer](#) interpreted the words “beware of her father and her mother” in [Deuteronomy 21:13](#) to mean her actual father and mother. But [Rabbi Akiba](#) interpreted the words to mean idolatry, citing [Jeremiah 2:27](#). A Baraita taught that “a full month” meant 30 days. But [Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar](#) interpreted [Deuteronomy 21:13](#) to call for 90 days — 30 days for “month,” 30 days for

“full,” and 30 days for “and after that.” thirty days. [Rabina](#) said that one could say that “month” meant 30 days, “full” meant 30 days, and “and after that” meant an equal number (30 plus 30) again, for a total of 120 days. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 48b.](#))

[edit] 21:15–17 — inheritance among the sons of two wives

The [Mishnah](#) and the Talmud interpreted the laws of the firstborn’s inheritance in [Deuteronomy 21:15–17](#) in Mishnah Bava Batra 8:4–5, [Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 122b–34a](#), Mishnah Bekhorot 8:9, and [Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 51b–52b](#). The Mishnah interpreted [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) to teach that a son and a daughter have equal inheritance rights, except that a firstborn son takes a double portion in his father’s estate but does not take a double portion in his mother’s estate. (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:4; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 122b.](#)) The Mishnah taught that they disregarded a father who said, “My firstborn son shall not inherit a double portion,” or “My son shall not inherit with his brothers,” because the father’s stipulation would be contrary to [Deuteronomy 21:17](#). But a father could distribute his property as gifts during his lifetime so that one son received more than another, or so that the firstborn received merely an equal share, so long as the father did not try to make these conveyances as an inheritance upon his death. (Mishnah Bava Batra 8:5; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 126b.](#))

The Gemara recounted a discussion regarding the right of the firstborn in [Deuteronomy 21:17](#). Once [Rabbi Jannai](#) was walking, leaning on the shoulder of Rabbi [Simlai](#) his attendant, and Rabbi

[Judah the Prince](#) came to meet them. Rabbi Judah the Prince asked Rabbi Jannai what the Scriptural basis was for the proposition that a son takes precedence over a daughter in the inheritance of a mother's estate. Rabbi Jannai replied that the plural use of the term “tribes” in the discussion of the inheritance of the daughters of Zelophehad in [Numbers 36:8](#) indicates that the mother's tribe is to be compared to the father's tribe, and as in the case of the father's tribe, a son takes precedence over a daughter, so in the case of the mother's tribe, a son should take precedence over a daughter. Rabbi Judah the Prince challenged Rabbi Jannai, saying that if it this were so, one could say that as in the case of the father's tribe, a firstborn takes a double portion, so in the case of the mother's tribe would a firstborn take a double portion. Rabbi Jannai dismissed the remark of Rabbi Judah the Prince. The Gemara then inquired why it is true that a firstborn son takes a double share in his father's estate but not his mother's. [Abaye](#) replied that [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) says, “of all that he [the father] has,” implying all that “he” (the father) has and not all that “she” (the mother) has. The Gemara asked whether the proposition that a firstborn son takes a double portion only in the estate of his father might apply only in the case where a bachelor married a widow (who had children from her first marriage, and thus the father's firstborn son was not that of the mother). And thus where a bachelor married a virgin (so that the firstborn son of the father would also be the firstborn son of the mother) might the firstborn son also take a double portion in his mother's estate? [Rav Nahman bar Isaac](#) replied that [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) says, “for he [the firstborn son] is the first-

fruits of his [the father's] strength," from which we can infer that the law applies to the first fruits of the father's strength and not the first-fruits of the mother's strength. The Gemara replied that [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) teaches that though a son was born after a miscarriage (and thus did not "open the womb" and is not regarded as a firstborn son for purposes of "sanctification to the Lord" and "redemption from the priest" in [Exodus 13:2](#)) he is nonetheless regarded as the firstborn son for purposes of inheritance. [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) thus implies that only the son for whom the father's heart grieves is included in the law, but a miscarriage, for which the father's heart does not grieve, is excluded. (And thus, since [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) is necessary for this deduction, it could not have been meant for the proposition that the law applies to the first fruits of the father's strength and not of the mother's strength.) But then the Gemara reasoned that if [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) is necessary for excluding miscarriages, then [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) should have read, "for he is the first-fruits of strength," but [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) in fact says, "*his* strength." Thus one may deduce two laws from [Deuteronomy 21:17](#). But the Gemara objected further that still that the words of [Deuteronomy 21:17](#), "the first-fruits of *his* [the father's] strength," not *her* strength, might apply only to the case of a widower (who had children from his first wife) who married a virgin (since the first son from the second marriage would be only the wife's firstborn, not the husband's). But where a bachelor married a virgin (and thus the son would be the firstborn of both the father and the mother), the firstborn son might take a double portion also in his mother's estate. But [Raba](#)

concluded that [Deuteronomy 21:17](#) states, “the right of the firstborn is his [the father’s],” and this indicates that the right of the firstborn applies to a man’s estate and not to a woman’s. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 111a–b.](#))

[edit] 21:18–21 — the wayward son

Chapter 8 of tractate [Sanhedrin](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of the wayward and rebellious son (*ben sorer umoreh*) in [Deuteronomy 21:18–21](#). (Mishnah Sanhedrin 8:1–7; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 68b–75a.](#)) A Baraita taught that there never was a “stubborn and rebellious son” and never would be, and that [Deuteronomy 21:18–21](#) was written merely that we might study it and receive reward for the studying. But [Rabbi Jonathan](#) said that he saw a stubborn and rebellious son and sat on his grave. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 71a.](#))

The Mishnah interpreted the words “a son” in [Deuteronomy 21:18](#) to teach that provision applied to “a son,” but not a daughter, and to “a son,” but not a full-grown man. The Mishnah exempted a minor, because minors did not come within the scope of the commandments. And the Mishnah deduced that a boy became liable to being considered “a stubborn and rebellious son” from the time that he grew two genital pubic hairs until his pubic hair grew around his genitalia. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 8:1; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 68b.](#)) Rav Judah taught in [Rav’s](#) name that [Deuteronomy 21:18](#) implied that the son had to be nearly a man. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 68b.](#))

The Mishnah interpreted the words of [Deuteronomy 21:20](#) to exclude from designation as a “stubborn and rebellious son” a boy who had a parent with any of a number of physical characteristics. The Mishnah interpreted the words “then his father and his mother shall lay hold on him” to exclude a boy if one of his parents had a hand or fingers cut off. The Mishnah interpreted the words “and bring him out” to exclude a boy who had a lame parent. The Mishnah interpreted the words “and they shall say” to exclude a boy who had a parent who could not speak. The Mishnah interpreted the words “this our son” to exclude a boy who had a blind parent. The Mishnah interpreted the words “he will not obey our voice” to exclude a boy who had a deaf parent. (Mishnah Sanhedrin 8:4; [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 45b, 71a.](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 22

The first two chapters of tractate [Bava Metzia](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of lost property in [Deuteronomy 22:1–3](#). (Mishnah Bava Metzia 1:1–2:11; Tosefta Bava Metzia 1:1–2:33; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 2a–33b.](#)) The Mishnah read the emphatic words of [Deuteronomy 22:1](#), “you shall surely return them,” repeating the verb “return” in the Hebrew, to teach that [Deuteronomy 22:1](#) required a person to return a neighbor’s animal again and again, even if the animal kept running away four or five times. (Mishnah Bava Metzia 2:9; [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 30b–31a.](#)) And [Raba](#) taught that [Deuteronomy 22:1](#) required a person to return

the animal even a hundred times. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 31a.](#))

The Gemara read the emphatic words of [Deuteronomy 22:4](#), “you shall surely help . . . to lift,” repeating the verb in the Hebrew, to teach that [Deuteronomy 22:4](#) required a person to lift a neighbor’s animal alone, even if the animal’s owner was not there to help. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 31a.](#))

Chapter 12 of tractate [Chullin](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of sending the mother bird away from the nest (*shiluach hakein*) in [Deuteronomy 22:6–7](#). (Mishnah Chullin 12:1–5; [Babylonian Talmud Chullin 138b–42a.](#)) The Mishnah read [Deuteronomy 22:6–7](#) to require a person to let the mother bird go again and again, even if the mother bird kept coming back to the nest four or five times. (Mishnah Chullin 12:3; [Babylonian Talmud Chullin 141a.](#)) And the Gemara taught that [Deuteronomy 22:6–7](#) required a person to let the mother bird go even a hundred times. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 31a.](#))

Tractate [Kilayim](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of separating diverse species in [Deuteronomy 22:9–11](#). (Mishnah Kilayim 1:1–9:10; Tosefta Kilayim 1:1–5:27; Jerusalem Talmud Kilayim 1a–.)

Rabbi Joshua of Siknin taught in the name of Rabbi Levi that the Evil Inclination criticizes four laws as without logical basis, and Scripture uses the expression “statute” (*chuk*) in connection with each: the laws of (1) a [brother’s wife](#) (in [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#)),

(2) [mingled kinds](#) (in [Leviticus 19:19](#) and [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)),
(3) the [scapegoat](#) (in [Leviticus 16](#)), and (4) the [red cow](#) (in
[Numbers 19](#)). ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:5.)

[Leviticus 18:4](#) calls on the Israelites to obey God’s “statutes” (*bukim*) and “ordinances” (*mishpatim*). The Rabbis in a Baraita taught that the “ordinances” (*mishpatim*) were commandments that logic would have dictated that we follow even had Scripture not commanded them, like the laws concerning idolatry, adultery, bloodshed, robbery, and blasphemy. And “statutes” (*bukim*) were commandments that the Adversary challenges us to violate as beyond reason, like those relating to [shaatnez](#) (in [Leviticus 19:19](#) and [Deuteronomy 22:11](#)), [halizab](#) (in [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#)), purification of the person with [tzaraat](#) (in [Leviticus 14](#)), and the [scapegoat](#) (in [Leviticus 16](#)). So that people do not think these “ordinances” (*mishpatim*) to be empty acts, in [Leviticus 18:4](#), God says, “I am the Lord,” indicating that the Lord made these statutes, and we have no right to question them. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 67b](#).)

Chapter 3 of tractate [Ketubot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of seducers and rapists in [Deuteronomy 22:25–29](#). (Mishnah Ketubot 3:1–4:1; Tosefta Ketubot 3:5–7; [Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 29a–41b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 23

[Rabbi Jose](#) noted that the law of [Deuteronomy 23:8](#) rewarded the Egyptians for their hospitality notwithstanding that [Genesis 47:6](#) indicated that the Egyptians befriended the Israelites only for

their own benefit. Rabbi Jose concluded that if Providence thus rewarded one with mixed motives, Providence will reward even more one who selflessly shows hospitality to a scholar.

([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 63b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that a red cow born by a [caesarean section](#), the hire of a harlot, or the price of a dog was invalid for the purposes of [Numbers 19](#). Rabbi Eliezer ruled it valid, as [Deuteronomy 23:19](#) states, “You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord your God,” and the red cow was not brought into the house. (Mishnah Parah 2:3.)

Tractates [Nedarim](#) and [Shevuot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of vows in [Exodus 20:7](#), [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) and [19:12](#), [Numbers 30:2–17](#), and [Deuteronomy 23:24](#). ([Mishnah Nedarim 1:1–11:11](#); Tosefta Nedarim 1:1–7:8; Jerusalem Talmud Nedarim 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Mishnah Shevuot 1:1–8:6](#); Tosefta Shevuot 1:1–6:7; Jerusalem Talmud Shevuot 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 2a–49b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 24

Tractate [Gittin](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of divorce in [Deuteronomy 24:1](#). (Mishnah Gittin 1:1–9:10; Tosefta Gittin 1:1–7:13; Jerusalem Talmud Gittin 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Gittin 2a–90b.](#))

The Gemara read the emphatic words of [Deuteronomy 24:12–13](#), “you shall surely restore . . . the pledge,” repeating the verb in the Hebrew, to teach that [Deuteronomy 24:12–13](#) required a lender to restore the pledge whether or not the lender took the pledge with the court’s permission. And the Gemara taught that the Torah provided similar injunctions in [Deuteronomy 24:12–13](#) and [Exodus 22:25](#) to teach that a lender had to return a garment worn during the day before sunrise, and return a garment worn during the night before sunset. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzria 31b.](#))

The Mishnah interpreted [Leviticus 19:13](#) and [Deuteronomy 24:14–15](#) to teach that a worker engaged by the day could collect the worker’s wages all of the following night. If engaged by the night, the worker could collect the wages all of the following day. If engaged by the hour, the worker could collect the wages all that day and night. If engaged by the week, month, year, or 7-year period, if the worker’s time expired during the day, the worker could collect the wages all that day. If the worker’s time expired during the night, the worker could collect the wages all that night and the following day. ([Mishnah Bava Metzria 9:11](#); [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzria 110b.](#))

The Mishnah taught that the hire of persons, animals, or utensils were all subject to the law of [Deuteronomy 24:15](#) that “in the same day you shall give him his hire” and the law of [Leviticus 19:13](#) that “the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with you all night until the morning.” The employer became liable only when the worker or vendor demanded payment from the

employer. Otherwise, the employer did not infringe the law. If the employer gave the worker or vendor a draft on a shopkeeper or a money changer, the employer complied with the law. A worker who claimed the wages within the set time could collect payment if the worker merely swore that the employer had not yet paid. But if the set time had passed, the worker's oath was insufficient to collect payment. Yet if the worker had witnesses that the worker had demanded payment (within the set time), the worker could still swear and receive payment. ([Mishnah Bava Metzia 9:12](#); [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 111a](#).)

The Mishnah taught that the employer of a resident alien was subject to the law of [Deuteronomy 24:15](#) that “in the same day you shall give him his hire” (as [Deuteronomy 24:14](#) refers to the stranger), but not to the law of [Leviticus 19:13](#) that “the wages of a hired servant shall not abide with you all night until the morning.” ([Mishnah Bava Metzia 9:12](#); [Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 111a](#).)

The Gemara reconciled apparently discordant verses touching on vicarious responsibility. The Gemara noted that [Deuteronomy 24:16](#) states: “The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin,” but [Exodus 20:4](#) (20:5 in NJPS) says: “visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children.” The Gemara cited a Baraita that interpreted the words “the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them” in [Leviticus 26:39](#) to teach that God punishes children only when they follow their parents' sins. The Gemara then questioned

whether the words “they shall stumble one upon another” in [Leviticus 26:37](#) do not teach that one will stumble through the sin of the other, that all are held responsible for one another. The Gemara answered that the vicarious responsibility of which [Leviticus 26:37](#) speaks is limited to those who have the power to restrain their fellow from evil but do not do so. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 27b.](#))



Gleaners (watercolor circa 1900 by [James Tissot](#))

Tractate [Peah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Jerusalem Talmud interpreted the laws of the harvest of the corner of the field and gleanings to be given to the poor in [Leviticus 19:9–10](#) and [23:22](#), and [Deuteronomy 24:19–21](#). ([Mishnah Peah 1:1–8:9](#); Tosefta Peah 1:1–4:21; Jerusalem Talmud Peah 1a–73b.)

The Mishnah taught that the Torah defines no minimum or maximum for the donation of the corners of one’s field to the poor. ([Mishnah Peah 1:1](#); Tosefta Peah 1:1; Jerusalem Talmud

Peah 1a.) But the Mishnah also taught that one should not make the amount left to the poor less than one-sixtieth of the entire crop. And even though no definite amount is given, the amount given should accord with the size of the field, the number of poor people, and the extent of the yield. ([Mishnah Peah 1:2](#); Jerusalem Talmud Peah 10b.)

Rabbi Eliezer taught that one who cultivates land in which one can plant a quarter *kav* of seed is obligated to give a corner to the poor. [Rabbi Joshua](#) said land that yields two *seah* of grain. [Rabbi Tarfon](#) said land of at least six handbreadths by six handbreadths. [Rabbi Judah ben Betera](#) said land that requires two strokes of a sickle to harvest, and the law is as he spoke. [Rabbi Akiba](#) said that one who cultivates land of any size is obligated to give a corner to the poor and the [first fruits](#). ([Mishnah Peah 3:6](#); Jerusalem Talmud Peah 31a.)

The Mishnah taught that the poor could enter a field to collect three times a day — in the morning, at midday, and in the afternoon. [Rabban Gamliel](#) taught that they said this only so that landowners should not reduce the number of times that the poor could enter. [Rabbi Akiba](#) taught that they said this only so that landowners should not increase the number of times that the poor had to enter. The landowners of Beit Namer used to harvest along a rope and allowed the poor to collect a corner from every row. ([Mishnah Peah 4:5](#); Jerusalem Talmud Peah 36b.)



a chalitzah ceremony (engraving from an edition of Mishnah Yevamot published in [Amsterdam](#) circa 1700)

[[edit](#)] Deuteronomy chapter 25

Tractate [Yevamot](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of levirate marriage in [Deuteronomy 25:5–10](#). ([Mishnah Yevamot 1:1–16:7](#); Tosefta Yevamot 1:1–14:10; Jerusalem Talmud Yevamot 1a–; [Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 2a–122b](#).)

Chapter 3 in tractate [Makkot](#) in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws of punishment by lashes in [Deuteronomy 25:1–3](#). (Mishnah Makkot 3:1–16; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 13a–24b](#).)

The Gemara interpreted the apparent superfluity in [Deuteronomy 25:13–15](#) to teach that both one's wealth and one's necessities depend on one's honesty. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 89a](#).)

Rabbi Judah said that three commandments were given to the Israelites when they entered the land: (1) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) to appoint a king, (2) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 25:19](#) to blot out Amalek, and (3) the commandment of [Deuteronomy 12:10–11](#) to build the [Temple in Jerusalem](#). Rabbi Nehorai, on the other hand, said that [Deuteronomy 17:14–15](#) did not command the Israelites to choose a king, but was spoken only in anticipation of the Israelites' future complaints, as [Deuteronomy 17:14](#) says, “And (you) shall say, ‘I will set a king over me.’” ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 20b.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 27 positive and 47 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To keep the [laws](#) of the captive woman ([Deuteronomy 21:11.](#))
- Not to sell the captive woman into slavery ([Deuteronomy 21:14.](#))
- Not to retain the captive woman for servitude after having relations with her ([Deuteronomy 21:14.](#))
- The [courts](#) must [hang](#) those stoned for [blasphemy](#) or [idolatry](#). ([Deuteronomy 21:22.](#))

- To bury the executed on the day that they die ([Deuteronomy 21:23.](#))
- Not to delay burial overnight ([Deuteronomy 21:23.](#))
- To return a lost object to its owner ([Deuteronomy 22:1.](#))
- Not to turn a [blind](#) eye to a lost object ([Deuteronomy 22:3.](#))
- Not to leave another's beast lying under its burden ([Deuteronomy 22:4.](#))
- To lift up a load for a Jew ([Deuteronomy 22:4.](#))
- Women must not wear men's clothing. ([Deuteronomy 22:5.](#))
- Men must not wear women's clothing. ([Deuteronomy 22:5.](#))
- Not to take the mother bird from her children ([Deuteronomy 22:6.](#))
- To release the mother bird if she was taken from the nest ([Deuteronomy 22:7.](#))
- To build a parapet ([Deuteronomy 22:8.](#))
- Not to leave a stumbling block about ([Deuteronomy 22:8.](#))

- Not to plant grains or greens in a vineyard
([Deuteronomy 22:9.](#))
- Not to eat diverse seeds planted in a vineyard
([Deuteronomy 22:9.](#))
- Not to do [work](#) with two kinds of animals together
([Deuteronomy 22:10.](#))
- Not to wear cloth of wool and linen ([Deuteronomy 22:11.](#))
- To marry a wife by means of [ketubah](#) and kiddushin
([Deuteronomy 22:13.](#))
- The [slanderer](#) must remain married to his wife.
([Deuteronomy 22:19.](#))
- The slanderer must not divorce his wife. ([Deuteronomy 22:19.](#))
- The court must have anyone who merits stoning stoned to death. ([Deuteronomy 22:24.](#))
- Not to [punish](#) anyone compelled to commit a transgression ([Deuteronomy 22:26.](#))
- The [rapist](#) must marry his victim if she chooses.
([Deuteronomy 22:29.](#))
- The rapist is not allowed to divorce his victim.
([Deuteronomy 22:29.](#))

- Not to let a [eunuch](#) marry into the Jewish people ([Deuteronomy 23:2.](#))
- Not to let the child of an [adulterous](#) or [incestuous](#) union (a *mamzer*) marry into the Jewish people ([Deuteronomy 23:3.](#))
- Not to let Moabite and Ammonite men marry into the Jewish people ([Deuteronomy 23:4.](#))
- Not to ever offer peace to Moab or Ammon ([Deuteronomy 23:7.](#))
- Not to exclude a third generation Edomite [convert](#) from marrying into the Jewish people ([Deuteronomy 23:8-9.](#))
- To exclude Egyptian converts from marrying into the Jewish people only for the first two generations ([Deuteronomy 23:8-9.](#))
- A ritually unclean person should not enter the camp of the Levites. ([Deuteronomy 23:11.](#))
- To prepare a place of easement in a camp ([Deuteronomy 23:13.](#))
- To prepare a [boring](#)-stick or [spade](#) for easement in a camp ([Deuteronomy 23:14.](#))
- Not to return a slave who fled into Israel from his master abroad ([Deuteronomy 23:16.](#))

- Not to oppress a slave who fled into Israel from his master abroad ([Deuteronomy 23:17.](#))
- Not to have relations with women not married by means of ketubah and kiddushin ([Deuteronomy 23:18.](#))
- Not to bring the wage of a [harlot](#) or the exchange [price](#) of a dog as a [holy offering](#) ([Deuteronomy 23:19.](#))
- Not to borrow at interest from a Jew ([Deuteronomy 23:20.](#))
- To lend at interest to a non-Jew if the non-Jew needs a loan, but not to a Jew ([Deuteronomy 23:21.](#))
- Not to be tardy with vowed and voluntary offerings ([Deuteronomy 23:22.](#))
- To fulfill whatever goes out from one's [mouth](#) ([Deuteronomy 23:24.](#))
- To allow a hired worker to eat certain foods while under hire ([Deuteronomy 23:25.](#))
- That a hired hand should not raise a sickle to another's standing grain ([Deuteronomy 23:25.](#))
- That a hired hand is forbidden to eat from the employer's crops during work ([Deuteronomy 23:26.](#))
- To issue a divorce by means of a [get document](#) ([Deuteronomy 24:1.](#))

- A man must not remarry his ex-wife after she has married someone else. ([Deuteronomy 24:4.](#))
- Not to demand from the [bridegroom](#) any involvement, communal or military during the first year ([Deuteronomy 24:5.](#))
- To give him who has taken a wife, built a new home, or planted a vineyard a year to rejoice therewith ([Deuteronomy 24:5.](#))
- Not to demand as [collateral utensils](#) needed for preparing food ([Deuteronomy 24:6.](#))
- The [metzora](#) must not remove his signs of impurity. ([Deuteronomy 24:8.](#))
- The creditor must not forcibly take collateral. ([Deuteronomy 24:10.](#))
- Not to delay return of collateral when needed ([Deuteronomy 24:12.](#))
- To return the collateral to the debtor when needed ([Deuteronomy 24:13.](#))
- To pay wages on the day that they were earned ([Deuteronomy 24:15.](#))
- Relatives of the litigants must not [testify](#). ([Deuteronomy 24:16.](#))

- A judge must not pervert a case involving a convert or orphan. ([Deuteronomy 24:17.](#))
- Not to demand collateral from a widow ([Deuteronomy 24:17.](#))
- To leave the forgotten sheaves in the field ([Deuteronomy 24:19.](#))
- Not to retrieve the forgotten sheaves ([Deuteronomy 24:19.](#))
- The precept of whiplashes for the wicked ([Deuteronomy 25:2.](#))
- The court must not exceed the prescribed number of lashes. ([Deuteronomy 25:3.](#))
- Not to muzzle an ox while plowing ([Deuteronomy 25:4.](#))
- The widow must not remarry until the ties with her brother-in-law are removed. ([Deuteronomy 25:5.](#))
- To marry a childless brother's widow (to do *yibum*) ([Deuteronomy 25:5.](#))
- To free a widow from yibum (to do *chalitzah*) ([Deuteronomy 25:9.](#))
- To save someone being pursued by a killer, even by taking the life of the pursuer ([Deuteronomy 25:12.](#))

- To have no [mercy](#) on a pursuer with [intent](#) to kill ([Deuteronomy 25:12.](#))
- Not to possess inaccurate [scales](#) and weights even if they are not for use ([Deuteronomy 25:13.](#))
- To remember what Amalek did to the Jewish people ([Deuteronomy 25:17.](#))
- To wipe out the descendants of Amalek ([Deuteronomy 25:19.](#))
- Not to forget Amalek's atrocities and ambush on the Israelites' journey from Egypt in the [desert](#) ([Deuteronomy 25:19.](#))

(Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:155–413. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6.](#))



[Isaiah](#) (1509 fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 54:1–10](#). The haftarah is the fifth in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

At the formal beginning of the K'riat [Sh'ma prayer service](#), the leader recites the *Barchu*, "Praise Adonai, the Exalted One." The [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 306 connects this practice to [Deuteronomy 32:3](#), where Moses says, "I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God." ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadash: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 28. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), [Sephardi Jews](#) each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah Ki Teitzei, Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Saba. Saba, in Hebrew, literally means "army." It is appropriate here, because the parshah commences with the discussion of what to do in certain cases of war with the army.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 14:7](#) (Amalekites); [29:30–31](#) (two wives, one loved and one unloved); [36:12](#) (Amalek); [36:16](#) (Amalek); [38:1–26](#) (levirate marriage).
- [Exodus 17:8–16](#) (Amalek); [20:4](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin), [20:7](#) (vows); [22:25](#) (restoring a pledged garment); [28:29–42](#) (the priests' linen vestments); [34:7](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [39:2–29](#) (making the priests' linen vestments).
- [Leviticus 5:1–10](#) (vows); [6:3](#) (priest wearing linen); [16:4–33](#) (high priest wearing linen); [19:12](#) (vows); [19:13](#) (paying what is due by sundown); [19:36](#) (just balances, weights, and measures).
- [Numbers 14:18](#) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [30:2–17](#) (vows).
- [Deuteronomy 5:8](#) (5:9 in NJPS) (punishing children for fathers' sin); [24:16](#) (*no* capital punishment of children for fathers' sin).
- [1 Samuel 2:18](#) (priest wearing linen); [22:18](#) (priests wearing linen).
- [2 Samuel 6:14](#) ([David](#) wearing linen in worship).
- [1 Kings 1:15–31](#) (favoring the son of the favored wife over the firstborn in inheritance).

- [Jeremiah 22:13–14](#) (labor without compensation); [31:28–29](#), (31:29–30 in NJPS) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin).
- [Ezekiel 9:2–10:76](#) (holy man clad in linen); [18:1–4](#) (*not* punishing children for fathers' sin); [18:5–7](#) (the just restore pledges); [44:17–18](#) (priests wearing linen).
- [Ruth 4:1–13](#) (levirate marriage).
- [Esther 3:1](#) (Agagite read as Amalekite via [Numbers 24:7](#)).
- [Daniel 10:5](#) (holy man clad in linen); [12:6–7](#) (holy man clad in linen).
- [Psalms 15:5](#) (lending without interest); [36:2](#) (the wicked do not fear God); [45:11](#) (daughter, forget your father's house); [61:9](#) (performing vows); [66:13](#) (performing vows); [106:31](#) (counted for righteousness); [145:9](#) (God's mercies over all God's works).
- [1 Chronicles 15:27](#) (David and Levites wearing linen in worship).
- [2 Chronicles 5:12](#) (Levites wearing linen in worship).

[edit] Ancient

- Law Code of [Gortyn](#). Columns 7–8. [Crete](#), circa 480–450 BCE. Reprinted in, e.g., Adonis S. Vasilakis. *The Great*

Inscription of the Law Code of Gortyn. Heraklion, Greece:
Mystis O.E. (marriage of an heiress).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic



Josephus

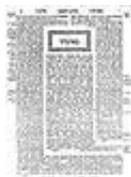
- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:9, 11, 20–21, 23–27, 29, 38–44. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 116–24. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Gaius Julius Hyginus](#). *Fabulae* 95. 1st–2nd century CE. (reporting the myth of how [Odysseus](#) (Ulysses) plowed with ox and horse together to show himself insane).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Peah 1:1–8:9](#); Kilayim 1:1–9:10; Sheviit 10:2; Terumot 8:1; 9:3; Shekalim 1:1; Megillah 3:4; [Yevamot 1:1–16:7](#); Ketubot 3:1–4:1, 3; [Nedarim 1:1–11:11](#); Sotah 6:3; 7:2, 4; 8:4; Gittin 1:1–9:10; Bava Kamma 5:7; 8:1; Bava Metzia 1:1–2:11; [9:11–13](#); [Sanhedrin 1:1–3](#); [2:1](#); 6:4; 7:9; 8:1–7; 11:1; Makkot 3:1–16; [Shevuot 1:1–8:6](#); Chullin

12:1–5; Bekhorot 8:7; Arakhin 3:1, 4–5; Temurah 6:3–4; Yadayim 4:4. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 14–36, 49–68, 91, 110, 113, 251, 321, 337–78, 381–85, 406–30, 457, 461, 466–87, 515, 520, 528–34, 555, 583, 585, 595, 599–602, 607, 616–39, 786–87, 806, 812–13, 834, 1129. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 211:1–296:6. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:111–266. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 54b, 59b; Peah 1a–73b; Demai 14a; Kilayim 1a–84b; Terumot 2a, 8a, 12a, 32a; Maasrot 19a–20a; Challah 8b, 16a; Orlah 20a; Bikkurim 6b; Yevamot 1a–; Nedarim 1a–; Gittin 1a–; Shevuot 1a–. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 2–5, 7, 9, 11–12. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2006–2010.



Talmud

- Babylonian Talmud: [Berakhot 7a, 19b, 21b–22a, 25a–b, 28a, 33b, 35a, 55b, 63b](#); [Shabbat 15a, 23a, 25b, 27a, 29b, 32a, 50b, 54a, 56a, 66a, 132b–33a, 136a, 139a, 144b, 150a](#); [Eruvin 13b, 15b](#); [Pesachim 3a, 25a–b, 26b, 31b, 41b, 68a, 72b, 90a, 98a, 116b](#); [Yoma 13b, 36a, 67b, 74b, 81a, 82a](#); [Sukkah 9a, 24b, 29a](#); [Beitzah 3b, 8b, 14b, 19b, 24b, 36b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 4a, 5b–6b](#); [Taanit 6b](#); [Megillah 3b, 6b–7b, 8a, 18a, 25a, 29a](#); [Moed Katan 2a–b, 4b, 8b, 9b, 14b, 18b, 21a, 25b](#); [Chagigah 2b, 3b–4a, 15a, 16b](#); [Yevamot 2a–122b](#); [Ketubot 2b, 5a, 6b, 7b, 9a, 10a–11b, 22a, 29a–41b, 42b–43a, 44a–47a, 48b–49a, 51b, 53b–54a, 66a, 72a, 74a, 77a–b, 80a, 82a–b](#); [Nedarim 2a–91b](#); [Nazir 2a, 23b, 30b, 37a, 41b, 58a, 59a, 66a](#); [Sotah 2b, 3b, 5b, 9a, 16a, 18b, 20b–21b, 23a–25a, 26b, 31b, 33a, 35b, 43a–45a](#); [Gittin 2a–90b](#); [Kiddushin 2a–b, 3b–5a, 6a, 7a, 8b, 9a–10a, 11b, 13b–14a, 21b, 23a, 24b, 29b, 33b–34a, 40a, 41a, 44a, 51a, 56b, 63a–64a, 65b, 67a–69a, 70a, 72b, 74a, 75a, 76a–77a, 78a–b](#); [Bava Kamma 4b–5a, 8a, 15b, 25a, 27a, 28a–b, 38b, 42a, 43a, 46a, 51a, 54a–b, 57a, 65b, 70b, 80b, 81b–82a, 83b–84a, 86b–87a, 88a, 92b, 100a, 110b, 113b](#); [Bava Metzia 2a–33b, 48a, 54a, 56b, 60b–61a, 66a, 70b, 75b, 82a, 87b, 88b–89a, 90a, 91a–92a, 102a, 110b–11b, 113a, 114a–15a](#); [Bava Batra 2b, 11a, 12b, 16b, 19b, 21b, 36a, 45b, 55a, 72b, 74a, 82b, 88b–89a, 108b, 110b, 111b, 113b, 116b, 119b, 122b–23a, 124a–b, 126b–27b, 130a–b, 134a, 142b, 144b, 155b–56a, 168a, 175b](#); [Sanhedrin 2a,](#)

[7b](#), [8b–9a](#), [10a](#), [18a–19a](#), [21a](#), [27b–28a](#), [31b](#), [33b](#), [34b](#),
[35b](#), [36b](#), [41a](#), [44a](#), [45a–47b](#), [49a–50b](#), [51b](#), [53a](#), [54b](#),
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[105b–06a](#), [107a](#); [Makkot 2a–b](#), [4b–5b](#), [8b](#), [10b](#), [13a–24b](#);
[Shevuot 2a–49b](#); [Avodah Zarah 17a](#), [20a](#), [26b](#), [37a](#), [46b](#),
[54a](#), [62b](#); [Horayot 10b](#), [12b](#); [Zevachim 2a](#), [4b](#), [7b](#), [18b](#),
[24b](#), [27b](#), [29a](#), [72a](#), [88a](#); [Menachot 2a](#), [5b–6a](#), [10a](#), [15b](#),
[32a–b](#), [39a–41a](#), [43a–44a](#), [50a](#), [58a–b](#), [69b](#), [90b](#), [101a](#),
[103a](#); [Chullin 2a](#), [11a](#), [26b](#), [48a](#), [62b](#), [68a](#), [74b](#), [78b](#), [83b](#),
[87a](#), [109b](#), [115a–16a](#), [120a–b](#), [130b–31b](#), [136a–b](#), [138b–](#)
[42a](#); [Bekhorot 13a](#), [17a](#), [19b](#), [46a–b](#), [47b](#), [49b](#), [52a–b](#),
[56a–57a](#); [Arakhin 3b](#), [6a](#), [7a](#), [13b](#), [14b–15a](#), [19b](#), [25b](#);
[Temurah 4b–5a](#), [6a](#), [29b–30b](#), [33b](#); [Keritot 2a](#), [3a](#), [14b–](#)
[15a](#), [17b](#), [21a–b](#); [Meilah 13a](#), [18a](#); [Niddah 23b](#), [26a](#), [32a](#),
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- [Rashi. Commentary. Deuteronomy 21–25. Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah*:

With Rasbi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:221–65. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).

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Mendelssohn

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [Review & Conclusion](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 724. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
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[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
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- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
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- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)

- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](#)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](#)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](#)
- [Sephardic Institute](#)
- [Shiur.com](#)
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](#)
- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)
- [Torah from Dixie](#)
- [Torah.org](#)
- [TorahVort.com](#)
- [Union for Reform Judaism](#)
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- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](#)

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<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Exodus</u></p>	<p>Shemot · Va'eira · Bo · Beshalach · Yitro · Mishpatim · Terumah · Tetzaveh · Ki Tisa · Vayakhel · Pekudei</p>
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Categories: [Weekly Torah readings](#) | [Book of Deuteronomy](#)

Ki Tavo

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Ki Tavo, **Ki Thavo**, **Ki Tabo**, **Ki Thabo**, or **Ki Savo** (כִּי-תָבוֹא) — [Hebrew](#) for “when you enter,” the second and third words, and the [first distinctive words](#), in the parshah) is the 50th [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the seventh in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 26:1–29:8](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in September.



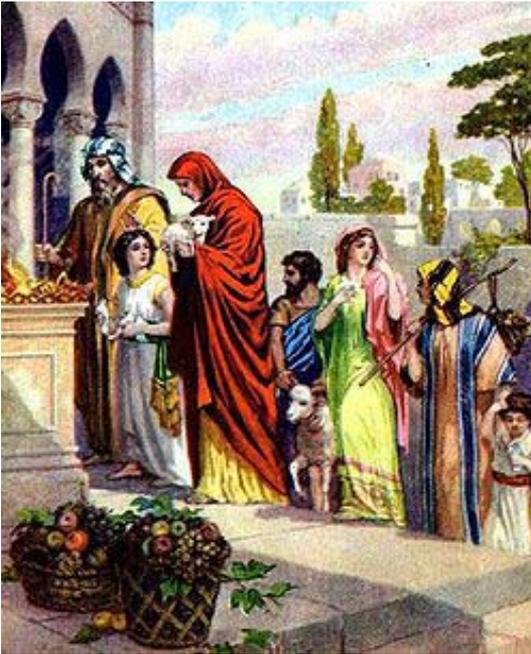
offering of [first fruits](#) (illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



offerings of [thanksgiving](#) (illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[[edit](#)] First fruits

[Moses](#) directed the [Israelites](#) that when they entered the [land](#) that [God](#) was [giving](#) them, they were to take some of every first [fruit](#) of the [soil](#) that they [harvested](#), put it in a [basket](#), and take it to [the place where God would choose to establish God's name](#).

([Deuteronomy 26:1–2](#).) There they were to go to the [priest](#) in charge and acknowledge that they had entered the land that God swore to their [fathers](#). ([Deuteronomy 26:3](#).) The priest was to set the basket down in front of the [altar](#). ([Deuteronomy 26:4](#).) They were then to recite:

"A wandering [Aramean](#) was my father, and he went down into [Egypt](#), and sojourned there, few in number; and he became there a [nation](#), great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians dealt ill with us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard [bondage](#). And we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our [voice](#), and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression. And the Lord [brought us forth out of Egypt](#) with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders. And He has brought us into this place, and has given us this land, a land flowing with [milk](#) and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the land, that You, O Lord, have given me." ([Deuteronomy 26:5–10](#).)

They were to leave the basket before the altar, [bow](#) low to God, and then feast on and [enjoy](#), together with the [Levite](#) and the stranger, the bounty that God had given them. ([Deuteronomy 26:10–11.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Tithes

When they had given [the tenth part](#) of their yield to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the [widow](#), in the third year, the year of the tithe, they were to declare before God:

“I have put away the hallowed things out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to Your commandment that You have commanded me; I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten them. I have not [eaten](#) thereof in my [mourning](#), neither have I put away thereof, being unclean, nor given thereof for [the dead](#); I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, I have done according to all that You have commanded me. Look from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the land that You have given us, as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.” ([Deuteronomy 26:12–15.](#))



a large stone inscribed with the law code of [Hammurabi](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Observing the law

Moses exhorted the Israelites to observe these [laws](#) faithfully with all their [heart](#) and [soul](#), noting that they had affirmed that the Lord was their God, that they would [walk](#) in God's ways, that they would observe God's laws, and that they would [obey](#) God. ([Deuteronomy 26:16–17](#).) And God affirmed that the Israelites were God's treasured people, and that God would set them high above all the nations in fame and renown and glory, and that they would be a [holy](#) people to God. ([Deuteronomy 26:18–19](#).)

Moses and the elders charged the people that as soon as they had crossed the [Jordan River](#), they were to set up large [stones](#) on [Mount Ebal](#), coat them with [plaster](#), and inscribe on them all the words of the Torah most distinctly. ([Deuteronomy 27:1–4](#).)

There they were also to build an altar to God made of unhewn stones on which no [iron tool](#) had struck, and they were to offer on it [burnt offerings](#) to God and offerings of well-being and rejoice. ([Deuteronomy 27:5–7.](#))

Moses and the priests told all Israel to hear: They had become the people of God, and should heed God and observe God's commandments. ([Deuteronomy 27:9–10.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Blessings and curses**

Moses charged the people that after they had crossed the Jordan, the tribes of [Simeon](#), [Levi](#), [Judah](#), [Issachar](#), [Joseph](#), and [Benjamin](#) were to stand on [Mount Gerizim](#) when the blessings were spoken, and the tribes of [Reuben](#), [Gad](#), [Asher](#), [Zebulun](#), [Dan](#), and [Naphthali](#) were to stand on Mount Ebal when the curses were spoken. ([Deuteronomy 27:11–13.](#)) The Levites were then loudly to curse anyone who: made a sculptured image, insulted father or mother, moved a fellow countryman's landmark, misdirected a blind person, subverted the rights of the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, lay with his father's wife, lay with any beast, lay with his sister, lay with his mother-in-law, struck down his fellow countryman in secret, accepted a bribe in the case of the murder of an innocent person, or otherwise would not observe the commandments; and for each curse all the people were to say, "Amen." ([Deuteronomy 27:14–26.](#))



panorama showing [Mount Gerizim](#) on the left, [Mount Ebal](#) on the right, and modern [Nablus](#) (ancient [Shechem](#)) between (photographed by and copyright Uwe A; for licensing information, double-click on the picture)

On the other hand, if they obeyed God and observed faithfully all the commandments, then God would set them high above all the nations of the earth, bless them in the city and the [country](#), bless the issue of their [wombs](#), the produce of their soil, and the fertility of their [herds](#) and flocks, bless their basket and their [kneading bowl](#), bless them in their comings and goings, [rout](#) their enemies, bless them upon their [barns](#) and all their undertakings, bless them in the land, establish them as God's holy people, give them abounding prosperity, provide [rain](#) in season, and make them the head and not the tail. ([Deuteronomy 28:1–14.](#))

But if they did not obey God and observe faithfully the commandments, then God would curse them in the city and the country, curse their basket and kneading bowl, curse the issue of

their womb, the produce of their soil, and the fertility of their herds and flocks, curse them in their comings and goings, loose on them calamity, panic, and frustration in all their enterprises, make [pestilence](#) cling to them, strike them with [tuberculosis](#), [fever](#), [inflammation](#), scorching [heat](#), [drought](#), [blight](#), and [mildew](#), turn the [skies](#) to [copper](#) and the earth to iron, make the rain into [dust](#), rout them before their enemies, strike them with the Egyptian inflammation, [hemorrhoids](#), boil-scars, [itch](#), [madness](#), blindness, and dismay. ([Deuteronomy 28:15–29](#).) If they paid the [bride price](#) for a wife, another man would enjoy her; if they built a house, they would not live in it; if they planted a [vineyard](#), they would not harvest it. ([Deuteronomy 28:30](#).)



Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem (painting by [Francesco Hayez](#))



The Captivity of [Judah](#) (illustration from a Bible card published 1904 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

Their [oxen](#) would be slaughtered before their eyes, but they would not eat of it; their [ass](#) would be seized and not returned; their flock would be delivered to their enemies; their sons and daughters would be delivered to another people; a people they did not know would eat up the produce of their soil and all their gains; they would be abused and downtrodden continually, until they were driven mad; God would afflict them at the [knees](#) and [thighs](#) with a severe inflammation; God would drive them to an unknown nation where they would serve other gods, of [wood](#)

and stone; and they would be a consternation, a [proverb](#), and a byword among all the peoples. ([Deuteronomy 28:31–37.](#)) [Locusts](#) would consume their [seed](#), [worms](#) would devour their vineyards, the [olives](#) would drop off their olive trees, their sons and daughters would go into captivity, the [cricket](#) would take over all the trees and produce of their land, the stranger in their midst would rise above them, the stranger would be their creditor, and the stranger would be the head and they the tail. ([Deuteronomy 28:38–44.](#)) Because they would not serve God in joy over abundance, they would have to serve in hunger and thirst, [naked](#) and lacking everything, the enemies whom God would let loose against them. ([Deuteronomy 28:47–48.](#)) God would bring against them a ruthless nation from afar, whose [language](#) they would not understand, to devour their cattle and produce of their soil and to shut them up in their towns until every mighty wall in which they trusted had come down. ([Deuteronomy 28:49–52.](#)) And when they were shut up under [siege](#), they would eat the flesh of their sons and daughters. ([Deuteronomy 28:52–57.](#)) God would inflict extraordinary plagues and diseases on them until they would have a scant few left, for as God once delighted in making them prosperous and many, so would God delight in causing them to perish and diminish. ([Deuteronomy 28:58–63.](#)) God would scatter them among all the peoples from one end of the earth to the other, but even among those nations they would find no place to rest. ([Deuteronomy 28:64–65.](#)) In the morning they would say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening they would say, “If only it were morning!” ([Deuteronomy 28:67.](#)) God would send

them back to Egypt in [galleys](#) and they would offer themselves for sale as [slaves](#), but none would [buy](#). ([Deuteronomy 28:68](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Exhortation to obedience

Moses reminded the Israelites that they had seen all that God did to [Pharaoh](#) and Egypt, yet they did not yet [understand](#). ([Deuteronomy 29:1–3](#).) Moses led them through the [wilderness](#) 40 years, their [clothes](#) and [sandals](#) did not wear out, and they survived without [bread](#) to eat and [wine](#) to [drink](#) so that they might know that the Lord was their God. ([Deuteronomy 29:4–5](#).) They defeated [King Sihon](#) of [Heshbon](#) and King [Og](#) of [Bashan](#), took their land, and gave it to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-[tribe of Manasseh](#). ([Deuteronomy 29:6–7](#).) Therefore Moses urged them to observe faithfully all the commandments, that they might succeed in all that they undertook. ([Deuteronomy 29:8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Key words

Words used frequently in the parshah include:

- all — 58 times ([Deuteronomy 26:2](#), [12](#), [13](#), [14](#), [16](#) (2 times), [18](#), [19](#); [27:1](#), [3](#), [8](#), [9](#), [14](#), [15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [19](#), [20](#), [21](#), [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), [26](#) (2 times); [28:1](#) (2 times), [2](#), [8](#), [10](#), [12](#), [15](#) (2 times), [20](#), [25](#), [26](#), [32](#), [33](#), [37](#), [40](#), [42](#), [45](#), [47](#), [48](#), [52](#) (4 times), [55](#), [57](#), [58](#), [60](#), [64](#); [29:2](#) (4 times).)
- command, commanded, commandments — 25 times ([Deuteronomy 26:13](#) (3 times), [14](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [27:1](#) (3

times), [4](#), [10](#) (2 times); [28:1](#) (2 times), [8](#), [9](#), [13](#) (2 times),
[14](#), [15](#) (2 times), [45](#) (2 times); [29:1](#).)

- people — 23 times ([Deuteronomy 26:15, 18, 19; 27:1, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 28:9, 10, 32, 64](#).)
- curse, curses, cursed, cursing — 22 times ([Deuteronomy 27:13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 28:15, 16](#) (2 times), [17, 18, 19](#) (2 times), [20, 45](#).)
- say, saying — 21 times ([Deuteronomy 26:3, 5, 13; 27:1, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26; 28:67](#) (2 times).)
- fruit — 15 times ([Deuteronomy 26:2; 28:4](#) (3 times), [11](#) (3 times), [18](#) (2 times), [33, 40, 42, 51](#) (2 times), [53](#).)
- amen — 12 times ([Deuteronomy 27:15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26](#).)
- bless, blessed, blessing, blessings — 12 times ([Deuteronomy 26:15; 27:12; 28:2, 3](#) (2 times), [4, 5, 6](#) (2 times), [8](#) (2 times), [12](#).)
- given — 12 times ([Deuteronomy 26:9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15; 28:31, 32, 52, 53; 29:4](#).)
- eye, eyes — 10 times ([Deuteronomy 28:31, 32, 34, 54, 56, 65, 67; 29:2, 3, 4](#).)

- voice — 10 times ([Deuteronomy 26:7, 14, 17; 27:10, 14; 28:1, 2, 15, 45, 62.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 26

[\[edit\]](#) Shavuot

[Deuteronomy 26:1–11](#) set out the ceremony for the bringing of the first fruits. [Exodus 34:22](#), in turn, associates the Festival of [Shavuot](#) with the first-fruits (בִּכּוּרֵי, *bikurei*) of the wheat harvest. (See also [Exodus 23:16](#); [Leviticus 23:17](#); [Numbers 28:26](#).)

In the [Hebrew Bible](#), Shavuot is called:

- The Feast of Weeks (חַג שֵׁבַע עֻז, *Chag Shavuot*) ([Exodus 34:22](#); [Deuteronomy 16:10](#); see also [2 Chronicles 8:13](#) (חַג הַשִּׁבְעָה, *Chag haShavuot*));
- The Day of the First-fruits (יוֹם הַבִּכּוּרִים, *Yom haBikurim*) ([Numbers 28:26](#));
- The Feast of Harvest (חַג הַקַּצִּיר, *Chag haKatzir*) ([Exodus 23:16](#)); and
- A holy convocation (מִקְרָא קֹדֶשׁ, *mikrah kodesh*) ([Leviticus 23:21](#); [Numbers 28:26](#))

To arrive at the correct date, [Leviticus 23:15](#) instructs counting seven weeks from the day after the day of rest of Passover, the day that they brought the sheaf of barley for waving. Similarly,

[Deuteronomy 16:9](#) directs counting seven weeks from when they first put the sickle to the standing barley.

[Leviticus 23:16–19](#) sets out a course of offerings for the fiftieth day, including a meal-offering of two loaves made from fine flour from the first-fruits of the harvest; burnt-offerings of seven lambs, one bullock, and two rams; a sin-offering of a goat; and a peace-offering of two lambs. Similarly, [Numbers 28:26–30](#) sets out a course of offerings including a meal-offering; burnt-offerings of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs; and one goat to make atonement. [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) directs a freewill-offering in relation to God’s blessing.

[Leviticus 23:21](#) and [Numbers 28:26](#) ordain a holy convocation in which the Israelites were not to work.

[2 Chronicles 8:13](#) reports that Solomon offered burnt-offerings on the Feast of Weeks.



Boy with a Basket of Fruit (painting by [Caravaggio](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 26

Tractate [Bikkurim](#) in the [Mishnah](#), [Tosefta](#), and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of the first fruits in [Exodus 23:19](#), [Numbers 18:13](#), and [Deuteronomy 12:17–18](#) and [26:1–11](#). (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Tosefta Bikkurim 1:1–2:16; Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 1a–26b.)

The Mishnah taught that to set aside first fruits, a landowner would go down into the field, see a fruit that ripened, tie a reed-rope around it, and say, “These are first fruits.” But [Rabbi Simeon](#) said that even if the landowner did this, the landowner still had to designate the fruits as first fruits again after they had been picked. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:1.)

The Mishnah interpreted the words “the first-fruits of *your* land” in [Exodus 23:19](#) to mean that a person could not bring first fruits unless all the produce came from that person’s land. The Mishnah thus taught that people who planted trees but bent their branches into or over another’s property could not bring first fruits from those trees. And for the same reason, the Mishnah taught that tenants, lessees, occupiers of confiscated property, or robbers could not bring first fruits. (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:1–2.)



The [Seven Species](#)

The Mishnah taught that first fruits were brought only from the [Seven Species](#) (*Shiv'at Ha-Minim*) that [Deuteronomy 8:8](#) noted to praise the Land of Israel: [wheat](#), [barley](#), [grapes](#), [figs](#), [pomegranates](#), [olive oil](#), and [date honey](#). But first fruits could not be brought from dates grown on hills, or from valley-fruits, or from olives that were not of the choice kind. The Mishnah deduced from the words “the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of your labors, which you sow in the field” in [Exodus 23:16](#) that first fruits were not to be brought before [Shavuot](#). The Mishnah reported that the men of Mount [Zeboim](#) brought their first fruits before Shavuot, but the priests did not accept them, because of what is written in [Exodus 23:16](#). (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:3.)



Fruit Basket (painting by [Balthasar van der Ast](#))

The inhabitants of the district assembled in a city of the district and spent the night in the town square. Early in the morning, their leader said: “Let us rise and go up to [Zion](#), to the house of the Lord our God.” (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:2.) Those who lived near Jerusalem brought fresh figs and grapes, and those who lived far away brought dried figs and raisins. Leading the pilgrimage procession was an ox with horns overlaid with gold wearing a crown of olive branches. The sounds of the flute announced the pilgrims’ coming until they neared Jerusalem, when they sent messengers ahead and arranged their first fruits for presentation. A delegation of the Temple’s leaders and treasurers came out to meet them, varying in relation to the procession. Jerusalem’s artisans would stand and greet them, saying: “People of such and such a place, we welcome you.” (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:3.) They played the flute until they reached the [Temple Mount](#). On the Temple Mount, even [King Agrippa](#) would carry the basket of first fruits on his shoulder and walk to the Temple Court. As the

procession approached the Temple Court, Levites would sing the words of [Psalm 30:2](#): “I will extol You, O Lord, for You have raised me up, and have not suffered my enemies to rejoice over me.” (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:4.)

The pilgrims offered turtledoves that had been tied to the basket as burnt offerings. And they gave what they held in their hands to the priests. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:5.) While the pilgrims still held the basket on their shoulders, they would recite [Deuteronomy 26:3–10](#). Rabbi Judah said that they read only through

[Deuteronomy 26:5](#), “A wandering Aramean was my father.”

When they reached these words, the pilgrims took the baskets off their shoulders and held them by their edges. The priests would put their hands beneath the baskets and wave them while the pilgrims recited from “A wandering Aramean was my father” through the end of the passage. The pilgrims would then deposit their baskets by the side of the altar, bow, and leave. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:6.)

The [Gemara](#) cited two textual proofs for the instruction of Mishnah Bikkurim 2:4 that one waived the first fruits. [Rabbi Judah](#) interpreted the words “you shall set it down” in [Deuteronomy 26:10](#) to refer to the waving. The Gemara explained that these words could not refer literally to setting the basket down, because [Deuteronomy 26:4](#) already accounted for setting the basket down. Alternatively, Rabbi [Eliezer ben Jacob](#) deduced the requirement to waive the first fruits from the word “hand” occurring in both [Deuteronomy 26:4](#) and in the case of the peace-offering in [Leviticus 7:30](#), which says, “His own hands

shall bring the offering unto the Lord.” The Gemara concluded that just as [Deuteronomy 26:4](#) explicitly directs the priest to take the basket and wave it, so in [Leviticus 7:30](#), the priest was to take the offering and wave it, even though [Leviticus 7:30](#) refers only to the donor. And just as [Leviticus 7:30](#) explicitly directs the donor to waves the offering, so in [Deuteronomy 26:4](#), the donor was to wave the basket. The Gemara explained that it was possible for both the priest and the donor to perform the waving because the priest placed his hand under the hand of the donor and they waved the basket together. ([Babylonian Talmud Sukkah 47b.](#))

Originally, all who knew how to recite would recite, while those unable to do so would repeat after the priest. But when the number of pilgrims declined, it was decided that all pilgrims would repeat the words after the priest. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:7.)

The Mishnah taught that [converts to Judaism](#) would bring the first fruits but not recite, as they could not say the words of [Deuteronomy 26:3](#), “which the Lord swore to *our fathers*, to give us.” (Mishnah Bikkurim 1:3.) But it was taught in a [Baraita](#) in the name of Rabbi Judah that even converts both brought first fruits and recited, for when God changed Abram’s name to [Abraham](#) in [Genesis 17:3–5](#), God made Abraham “the father of a multitude of nations,” meaning that Abraham would become the spiritual father of all who would accept the true belief in God. (Jerusalem Talmud Bikkurim 5b.)

The rich brought their first fruits in baskets overlaid with silver or gold, while the poor used wicker baskets. Pilgrims would give

both the first fruits and the baskets to the priest. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:8.)

Rabbi Simeon ben Nanos said that the pilgrims could decorate their first fruits with produce other than the seven species, but Rabbi [Akiba](#) said that they could decorate only with produce of the seven kinds. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:9.) Rabbi Simeon taught that there were three elements to the first fruits: the first fruits themselves, the additions to the first fruits, and the ornamentations of the first fruits. The additions to the first fruits had to be like the first fruits, but the ornamental fruit could be of another kind. The additions to the first fruits could only be eaten in Levitical purity, and were exempt from the law of doubts as to tithing (dema'i), but the fruits used for ornamentations were subject to the law of doubts as to tithing. (Mishnah Bikkurim 3:10.)

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with "milk and honey," as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3](#), [Leviticus 20:24](#), [Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3, 11:9, 26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. [Resh Lakish](#) said that he saw the flow of the milk and

honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. Rabbah bar Bar Hana said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 27

Rabbi Judah expounded the words of [Deuteronomy 27:9](#), “Attend and hear, O Israel: *This day* you have become a people unto the Lord your God.” Rabbi Judah asked whether it was on *that day* that the Torah was given to Israel; was *that day* not at the end of the 40 years of the wandering in the Wilderness? Rabbi Judah explained that the words “this day” served to teach that every day the Torah is as beloved to those who study it as on the day when God gave it at Mount Sinai. The Gemara explained that the word “attend” (תִּשְׁמְעוּ, *hasket*) in [Deuteronomy 27:9](#) teaches that students should form groups (*aso keitot*) to study the Torah, as one can acquire knowledge of the Torah only in association with others, and this is in accord with what Rabbi Jose ben Hanina said when he interpreted the words of [Jeremiah 50:36](#), “A sword is upon the boasters (בַּדִּים, *baddim*) and they shall become fools,” to mean that a sword is upon the scholars who sit separately (*bad bebad*) to study the Torah. The Gemara offered another explanation of the word “attend” (תִּשְׁמְעוּ, *hasket*) in [Deuteronomy 27:9](#) to mean, “be silent” (*bas*) listening to the lesson, and then “analyze” (*katet*), as [Raba](#) taught that a person

should always first learn Torah, and then scrutinize it.

([Babylonian Talmud Berachot 63b.](#))



Mount Gerizim

Our Rabbis asked in a Baraita why [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) says, “You shall set the blessing upon Mount Gerizim and the curse upon mount Ebal.” [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) cannot say so merely to teach where the Israelites were to say the blessings and curses, as [Deuteronomy 27:12–13](#) already says, “These shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people . . . and these shall stand upon Mount Ebal for the curse.” Rather, the Rabbis taught that the purpose of [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) was to indicate that the blessings must precede the curses. It is possible to think that all the blessings must precede all the curses; therefore the text states “blessing” and “curse” in the singular, and thus teaches that one

blessing precedes one curse, alternating blessings and curses, and all the blessings do not precede all the curses. A further purpose of [Deuteronomy 11:29](#) is to draw a comparison between blessings and curses: As the curse was pronounced by the Levites, so the blessing had to be pronounced by the Levites. As the curse was uttered in a loud voice, so the blessing had to be uttered in a loud voice. As the curse was said in Hebrew, so the blessing had to be said in Hebrew. As the curses were in general and particular terms, so must the blessings had to be in general and particular terms. And as with the curse both parties respond “Amen,” so with the blessing both parties respond “Amen.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 37b.](#))

The Mishnah told how the Levites pronounced the blessings and curses. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan and came to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, six tribes ascended Mount Gerizim and six tribes ascended Mount Ebal. The priests and Levites with the [Ark of the Covenant](#) stationed themselves below in the center. The priests surrounded the Ark, the Levites surrounded the priests, and all the Israelites stood on this side and that of the Levites, as [Joshua 8:33](#) says, “And all Israel, and their elders and officers, and their judges stood on this side the ark and on that side.” The Levites turned their faces towards Mount Gerizim and opened with the blessing: “Blessed be the man who does not make a graven or molten image,” and all the Israelites responded, “Amen.” Then the Levites turned their faces towards Mount Ebal and opened with the curse of [Deuteronomy 27:15](#): “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten

image,” and all the Israelites responded, “Amen.” So they continued until they had completed all the blessings and curses. (Mishnah Sotah 7:5; [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 32a](#).)

Rabbi Judah ben Nahmani, the interpreter of [Simeon ben Lakish](#), taught that the whole section of the blessings and curses refers to adultery. [Deuteronomy 27:15](#) says, “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image.” Is it enough merely to curse such a person in this world? Rather, Rabbi Judah ben Nahmani taught that [Deuteronomy 27:15](#) alludes to one who commits adultery and has a son who goes to live among idolaters and worships idols; cursed be the father and mother of this man, as they were the cause of his sinning. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 37b](#).)

A [midrash](#) noted that almost everywhere, Scripture mentions a father's honor before the mother's honor. (E.g., [Exodus 20:11](#) (20:12 in NJSP), [Deuteronomy 5:15](#) (5:16 in NJPS), [27:16](#).) But [Leviticus 19:3](#) mentions the mother first to teach that one should honor both parents equally. ([Genesis Rabbah](#) 1:15.)

Rabbi Aha said in the name of Rabbi Tanhum that if a person studies Torah and teaches it, observes and performs its precepts, but has the means to support needy scholars and fails to do so, then that person comes within the words of [Deuteronomy 27:26](#): “Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law.” But if a person studies and does not teach or observe or perform the precepts, and does not have the means to support needy scholars and yet does so by self-denial, then that person comes within the category of “Blessed be he who confirms the words of this law,”

for every “cursed” implies a “blessed.” ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 7:19.) Similarly, a midrash taught that had [Deuteronomy 27:26](#) read, “Cursed be he who does not *learn* the words of the law,” then Israel would not have been able to survive, but [Deuteronomy 27:26](#) reads, “who does not *confirm* the words of this law,” and so the Hebrew implies that one may avoid the curse through the maintenance of Torah students and colleges. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 25:1.)

A midrash taught that there is nothing greater before God than the “amen” that Israel answers. Rabbi Judah ben Sima taught that the word “amen” contains three kinds of solemn declarations: oath, consent, and confirmation. [Numbers 5:21–22](#) demonstrates oath when it says, “Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear . . . and the woman shall say: ‘Amen, Amen.’”

[Deuteronomy 27:26](#) demonstrates consent when it says “And all the people shall say: ‘Amen.’” And [1 Kings 1:36](#) demonstrates confirmation when it says, “And [Benaiah](#) the son of [Jehoiada](#) answered the king, and said: ‘Amen; so say the Lord.’”

([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 7:1; see also [Babylonian Talmud Shevuot 36a](#) (similar teaching attributed to Rabbi Jose ben Hanina).)

The Mishnah told that after they had completed all the blessings and curses, the Israelites brought the stones that Moses directed them to set up in [Deuteronomy 27:2–4](#), built the altar and plastered it with plaster, and inscribed on it all the words of the Torah in 70 languages, as [Deuteronomy 27:8](#) says, “very plainly.”

Then they took the stones and spent the night in their place. (Mishnah Sotah 7:5; [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 32a–b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 28

A midrash interpreted [Deuteronomy 28:1](#) to teach that Moses told Israel to be diligent to listen to the words of the Torah, because whoever listens to the words of the Torah is exalted in both this world and the world to come. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:1.)

Reading the words “to observe to do all His commandments” in [Deuteronomy 28:1](#), Rabbi Simeon ben [Halaftha](#) taught that one who learns the words of the Torah and does not fulfill them receives punishment more severe than does the one who has not learned at all. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:3.)

A midrash expounded on why Israel was, in the words of [Jeremiah 11:16](#), like “a leafy olive tree.” In one explanation, the midrash taught that just as oil floats to the top even after it has been mixed with every kind of liquid, so Israel, as long as it performs the will of God, will be set on high by God, as it says in [Deuteronomy 28:1](#). ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 36:1; see also Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:3.)

Reading [Deuteronomy 28:1–2](#), “And it shall come to pass, if you hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord . . . all these blessings shall come upon you, and overtake you,” and [Proverbs 8:35](#), “whoever finds Me finds life, and obtains favor of the Lord,” a midrash taught that God tells Jews that not merely do they receive the Divine Presence in the [synagogue](#), but they also leave it laden with blessings. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 7:2.)



Pharaoh's army drowns in the sea (fresco by [Angelo Bronzino](#))

The Mishnah taught that when they flogged a person, a reader would read [Deuteronomy 28:58ff](#), beginning “If you will not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book . . . ,” then [Deuteronomy 29:8](#), “Observe therefore the words of this covenant,” and then [Psalm 78:38](#), “But He, being full of compassion, forgives iniquity.” (Mishnah Makkot 3:14; [Babylonian Talmud Makkot 22b](#).)

[Rabbi Johanan](#) taught that God does not rejoice in the downfall of the wicked. Rabbi Johanan interpreted the words *zēb el zēb* in the phrase “And one did not come near the other all the night” in [Exodus 14:20](#) to teach that when the Egyptians were drowning in the sea, the ministering angels wanted to sing a song of rejoicing, as [Isaiah 6:3](#) associates the words *zēb el zēb* with angelic singing. But God rebuked them: “The work of my hands is being drowned in the sea, and you want to sing songs?” Rabbi Eleazar

replied that a close reading of [Deuteronomy 28:63](#) shows that God does not rejoice personally, but does make others rejoice. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 10b.](#))

In [Deuteronomy 28:67](#), the heart fears. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the Hebrew Bible. The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12.](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6 HE](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), cavils ([Deuteronomy 29:18](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks

from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 1:36.)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 29

Rabbi Eleazar interpreted the words, “Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and make them,” in [Deuteronomy 29:8](#) to teach that Scripture regards one who teaches Torah to a neighbor’s child as though he himself had created the words of the Torah, as it is written. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 99b](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are 3 positive and 3 negative [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To make the declaration on bringing the first fruits ([Deuteronomy 26:5](#).)
- To make the tithe declaration ([Deuteronomy 26:13](#).)
- Not to eat the second tithe while unclean, even in [Jerusalem](#), until it has been redeemed ([Deuteronomy 26:14](#).)
- Not to eat the second tithe while mourning ([Deuteronomy 26:14](#).)

- Not to spend redemption money of the second tithe for anything but food and drink ([Deuteronomy 26:14.](#))
- To imitate God's good and upright ways ([Deuteronomy 28:9.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah, Positive Commandments 8, 131, 132; Negative Commandments 150, 151, 152.](#) Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:11–12, 139–40; 2:141–43. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4.](#) *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvot] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:414–31. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6.](#))



[Isaiah](#)

[[edit](#)] Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 60:1–22](#). The haftarah is the sixth in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to [Rosh Hashanah](#).

[[edit](#)] In the liturgy

The [Passover Haggadah](#), in the *magid* section of the [Seder](#), quotes and interprets [Deuteronomy 26:5–8](#). (Menachem Davis. *The Interlinear Haggadah: The Passover Haggadah, with an Interlinear Translation, Instructions and Comments*, 42–50. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2005. [ISBN 1-57819-064-9](#). Joseph Tabory. *JPS Commentary on the Haggadah: Historical Introduction, Translation, and Commentary*, 89–95. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2008. [ISBN 978-0-8276-0858-0](#).)



A page from a 14th century German Haggadah

The Haggadah interprets the report of [Deuteronomy 26:5](#), often translated as “a wandering [Aramean](#) was my father,” to mean instead that [Laban](#) the Aramean tried to destroy [Jacob](#). (Davis, at 42–43; Tabory, at 89.) Next, the Haggadah cites [Genesis 47:4](#), [Deuteronomy 10:22](#), [Exodus 1:7](#), and [Ezekiel 16:6–7](#) to elucidate [Deuteronomy 26:5](#). (Davis, at 43–45; Tabory, at 90–91.) The

Haggadah quotes [Genesis 47:4](#) for the proposition that the Israelites had sojourned in Egypt. (Davis, at 43; Tabory, at 90.) The Haggadah quotes [Deuteronomy 10:22](#) for the proposition that the Israelites started few in number. (Davis, at 44; Tabory, at 90.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:7](#) for the proposition that the Israelites had become “great” and “mighty.” (Davis, at 44; Tabory, at 91.) And the Haggadah quotes [Ezekiel 16:6–7](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:5](#) that the Israelites had nonetheless become “numerous.” (Davis, at 44–45; Tabory, at 91.)

Next, the Haggadah cites [Exodus 1:10–13](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:6](#) that “the Egyptians dealt ill with us [the Israelites], and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage.” (Davis, at 45–46; Tabory, at 91–92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:10](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians attributed evil intentions to the Israelites or dealt ill with them. (Davis, at 45; Tabory, at 91.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:11](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites. (Davis, at 45; Tabory, at 92.) And the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:13](#) for the proposition that the Egyptians imposed hard labor on the Israelites. (Davis, at 46; Tabory, at 92.)



A page from the Kaufmann Haggadah

Next, the Haggadah cites [Exodus 2:23–25](#), [Exodus 1:22](#), and [Exodus 3:9](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:7](#) that “we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, and our toil, and our oppression.” (Davis, at 46–47; Tabory, at 92–93.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:23](#) for the proposition that the Israelites cried to God. (Davis, at 46; Tabory, at 92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:24](#) for the proposition that God heard the Israelites’ voice. (Davis, at 46–47; Tabory, at 92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 2:25](#) for the proposition that God saw the Israelites’ affliction, interpreting that affliction as the suspension of family life. (Davis, at 47; Tabory, at 92.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 1:22](#) to explain the Israelites’ travail, interpreting that travail as the loss of the baby boys. (Davis, at 47; Tabory, at 93.) And the Haggadah quotes [Exodus 3:9](#) to explain the Israelites’ oppression, interpreting that oppression as pressure or persecution. (Davis, at 47; Tabory, at 93.)

Next, the Haggadah cites [Exodus 12:12](#), [Exodus 9:3](#), [1 Chronicles 21:16](#), [Deuteronomy 4:34](#), [Exodus 4:17](#), and [Joel 3:3](#) to elucidate the report in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#) that “the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders.” (Davis, at 48–50; Tabory, at 93–94.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 12:12](#) for the proposition that God took the Israelites out of Egypt, not through an [angel](#), not through a [seraph](#), not through an agent, but on God’s own. (Davis, at 48–49; Tabory, at 93–94.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 9:3](#) to elucidate the term “a mighty hand” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “mighty hand” to mean the plague of pestilence on the Egyptian livestock. (Davis, at 49; Tabory, at 94.) The Haggadah quotes [1 Chronicles 21:16](#) to elucidate the term “an outstretched arm” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “outstretched arm” to mean the sword. (Davis, at 49; Tabory, at 94.) The Haggadah quotes [Deuteronomy 4:34](#) to elucidate the term “great terribleness” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “great terribleness” to mean the revelation of the [Shekhinah](#) or Divine Presence. (Davis, at 49–50; Tabory, at 94.) The Haggadah quotes [Exodus 4:17](#) to elucidate the term “signs” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “sign” to mean the staff of Moses. (Davis, at 50; Tabory, at 94.) And the Haggadah quotes [Joel 3:3](#) to elucidate the term “wonders” in [Deuteronomy 26:8](#), interpreting the “wonders” to mean the blood. (Davis, at 50; Tabory, at 94.)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:



[Esarhaddon](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Ancient

- [Vassal treaties](#) of [Esarhaddon](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Leviticus 26:3–38](#) (blessings and curses).
- [Joshua 24:2–13](#) (recited history of Israel).
- [2 Kings 6:25–30](#) (cannibalism).
- [Isaiah 9:19](#) (cannibalism).
- [Jeremiah 19:9](#) (parents eating children).
- [Ezekiel 5:10](#) (parents eating children); [6:5](#) (unburied carcasses).
- [Zechariah 11:9](#) (cannibalism).
- [Psalms 1:1–6](#) (blessings and curses); [13:3](#) (heart); [19:9](#) (heart); [78:24](#) (God provided food); [146:8](#) (eyes).

- [Lamentations 4:10](#) (mothers eating children).
- [Nehemiah 9:5–37](#) (recited history of Israel).



[Philo](#)

[[edit](#)] Early nonrabbinic

- [The Temple Scroll](#) 18–19. [Dead Sea scroll](#)
11QT=11Q19,20. Land of Israel, 2nd Century B.C.E.
Reprinted in [Géza Vermes](#). *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 190, 195. New York: Penguin Press, 1997. [ISBN 0-7139-9131-3](#).
- [Philo](#). [Allegorical Interpretation](#) 3:11:36, 35:107; [On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile](#) 8:24, 24:84, 29:99; [On the Unchangableness of God](#) 34:156; [Who Is the Heir of Divine Things?](#) 3:10, 15:76, 51:250; [On Flight and Finding](#) 22:123; [On Dreams, That They Are God-Sent](#) 1:34:193; 2:40:263, 41:272; [The Special Laws](#) 2:34–36; [On the Virtues](#) 8:47, 21:106; [On Rewards and Punishments](#) 21:127, 22:131; [Flaccus](#) 20:167. [Alexandria](#), Egypt, early 1st century CE.
Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [Charles Duke Yonge](#), 54, 62, 134, 140–41, 171, 276, 282, 297,

332, 382, 407, 588–89, 644, 650, 676, 739. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1993. [ISBN 0-943575-93-1](#).



Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *The Wars of the Jews*, [6:3:3–5](#). Circa 75 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 737–38. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).
- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* [4:8:18](#), [22](#), [31](#), [44](#). Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 118–19, 121, 124. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#) Maasrot 1:1–5:8; Maaser Sheni 1:1–5:15; Bikkurim 1:1–3:12; Makkot 3:14. Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 297:1–303:11 Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:269–285. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 54b; Peah 31b, 47b, 69b, 72a; Sheviit 33a; Maasrot 26a, 27b; Maaser Sheni 12b, 13b, 52b, 56b–57a, 58a; Orlah 20a; Bikkurim 1a–26b; Sukkah 28b. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 2–3, 6a, 9–10, 12, 22. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 5a, 6a, 15b, 24a, 35b, 40a–b, 56a, 57a, 63b](#); [Shabbat 25a, 55b, 138b](#); [Eruvin 55b](#); [Pesachim 24a, 36a–b, 49b, 70b, 109a, 116a](#); [Yoma 5b, 13b, 52b, 74b](#); [Sukkah 40b, 46b, 47b](#); [Beitzah 35b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 12b, 15a](#); [Taanit 2a, 3b, 8b–9b](#); [Megillah 10b–11a, 16b, 20b, 24b, 25b](#); [Moed Katan 15b](#); [Chagigah 3a, 4b, 7a, 12b, 18b](#); [Yevamot 63b, 73a–74b, 103a](#); [Nedarim 22a, 36b, 41a, 84b](#); [Sotah 17a, 32a–33b, 36a, 37a–38a](#),

[39b](#), [47a](#), [48a](#), [49a](#); [Gittin 47b](#), [56a](#), [57b–58a](#), [81a](#);
[Kiddushin 2b](#), [26a](#), [66b](#); [Bava Kamma 32b](#), [82a](#), [116b](#);
[Bava Metzia 11a–b](#), [52b](#), [90a](#), [96a](#), [107a](#); [Bava Batra 25b](#),
[26b–27a](#), [81a–82a](#), [89a](#), [136b](#); [Sanhedrin 7a](#), [11b](#), [28b](#),
[39b](#), [44a](#); [Makkot 7b](#), [13b](#), [16b–17b](#), [18b–19b](#), [22b](#), [24a](#);
[Shevuot 35a](#), [36a](#), [39a](#); [Avodah Zarah 5b](#), [19b](#), [52b](#), [55a](#);
[Horayot 12a](#); [Zevachim 16a](#), [50a](#), [54b](#), [60b](#), [61b](#), [99b](#),
[101a](#); [Menachot 35b](#), [61a–b](#), [82a](#), [84b](#), [103b](#); [Chullin 16a](#),
[18a](#), [89a](#), [120b–21a](#), [131a–b](#), [136a](#); [Bekhorot 41a](#);
[Arakhin 11a](#); [Temurah 3b](#), [10a](#), [21a](#); [Keritot 11a](#); [Niddah](#)
[51b](#). Babylonia, 6th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud*
Bavli. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim
Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn:
Mesorah Pubs., 2006.



[Rashi](#)

[[edit](#)] **Medieval**

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 7:1–7. Land of Israel, 9th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 26–29*. Troyes, France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:267–302. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari. 2:55; 3:11*. Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 116–17, 144, 148. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).



[Maimonides](#)

- [Maimonides](#). *Mishneh Torah, Intro.:26*. Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180.
- Maimonides. Letter to Obadiah the Proselyte. Spain, 12th century. Reprinted in, e.g., *A Treasury of Jewish Letters: Letters from the Famous and the Humble*. Edited by Franz Kobler, 1:194–96. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1953.

[edit] Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, 3:42. England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 547–48. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 788. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92, 122–30. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- [Jacob Milgrom](#). “First fruits, OT.” In *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*. Supp. vol., 336–37. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1976. [ISBN 0-687-19269-2](#).
- Marc Gellman. “God’s Mailbox.” In *God’s Mailbox: More Stories About Stories in the Bible*, 99–104. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1996. [ISBN 0-688-13169-7](#).
- Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 238–77, 486–97. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Curses.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 108. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 245–46. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

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- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
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- MyJewishLearning.com
- [Ohr Sameach](http://OhrSameach.com)
- [Orthodox Union](http://OrthodoxUnion.org)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](http://OzTorah.com)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](http://OzVeShalom.com)
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- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](http://RabbiShlomoRiskin.com)
- [Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld](http://RabbiShmuelHerzfeld.com)
- [Reconstructionist Judaism](http://ReconstructionistJudaism.org)
- [Sephardic Institute](http://SephardicInstitute.com)
- Shiur.com
- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](http://613.org)
- [Tanach Study Center](http://TanachStudyCenter.com)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](http://Teach613.org)
- [Torah from Dixie](http://TorahFromDixie.com)
- Torah.org
- TorahVort.com
- [Union for Reform Judaism](http://UnionForReformJudaism.org)

- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](#)
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Nitzavim

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Nitzavim, **Nitsavim**, **Nitzabim**, **Netzavim**, or **Nesabim**

(נִצְּבִים — [Hebrew](#) for “ones standing,” the second word, and the first distinctive word, in the parshah) is the 51st [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the eighth in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 29:9–30:20](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in September or early October. Parshah Nitzavim always falls on the [Sabbath](#) immediately before [Rosh Hashanah](#).

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In some leap years (for example, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019), parshah Nitzavim is read separately. In common years (for example, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2017), parshah Nitzavim is combined with the next parshah, [Vayelech](#), to help achieve the number of weekly readings needed. The two Torah portions are combined except when two Sabbaths fall between Rosh Hashanah and [Sukkot](#) and neither Sabbath coincides with a [Holy Day](#). ([W. Gunther Plaut](#). *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 1553. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).)

In the standard [Reform](#) prayerbook for the High Holy Days (*machzor*), parts of the parshah, [Deuteronomy 29:9–14](#) and [30:11–](#)

[20](#), are the Torah readings for the morning [Yom Kippur](#) service, in lieu of the traditional reading of [Leviticus 16](#). (*Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe*. Edited by Chaim Stern, 342–45. New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, Revised ed. 1996. [ISBN 0-88123-069-3](#).)

In the parshah, [Moses](#) told the [Israelites](#) that all the people stood before [God](#) to enter into the [covenant](#), violation of which would bring on every [curse](#), but if they returned to God and heeded God's [commandments](#), then God would take them back in love and bring them together again from the ends of the world. For this Instruction is not beyond reach, and Moses put before the Israelites life and death, [blessing](#) and curse, and exhorted them to choose life by loving God and heeding the commandments.



“For this commandment . . . is not in heaven, that you should say: ‘Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us . . . ?’”

[\(Deuteronomy 30:11–12.\)](#)

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[[edit](#)] Summary

[[edit](#)] The covenant

Moses told the Israelites that all the people stood that day before God to enter into the covenant whereby God might establish Israel as God's people and be their God, as God promised them and as God swore to [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and [Jacob](#). ([Deuteronomy 29:9–12.](#)) Moses made the covenant both with those who were standing there that day and with those who were not there that day. ([Deuteronomy 29:13–14.](#)) Moses reminded the Israelites that they had dwelt in the land of [Egypt](#) and had passed through various other nations and had seen the detestable [idols](#) of [wood](#), [stone](#), [silver](#), and [gold](#) that those other nations kept. ([Deuteronomy 29:15–16.](#)) Moses speculated that perchance there were among the Israelites some whose [hearts](#) were even then turning away from God to go [worship](#) the gods of those nations, who might think themselves immune, thinking that they would be safe though they followed their own willful hearts to the ruin of all. ([Deuteronomy 29:17–18.](#)) But God would never forgive them; rather God's [anger](#) would rage against them until every curse

recorded in the [Torah](#) would come down upon them and God had blotted out their [names](#) from under heaven. ([Deuteronomy 29:19–20.](#)) And later [generations](#) and other nations would ask why God had done that to those people, and they would be told that it was because they forsook the covenant that God made with them and turned to the service of other gods. ([Deuteronomy 29:21–25.](#)) So God grew incensed at that land and brought upon it all the curses recorded in the Torah, uprooted them from their [soil](#) in anger, and cast them into another land, as would still be the case. ([Deuteronomy 29:26–27.](#)) Concealed acts concerned God; but with overt acts, it was for the Israelites ever to apply all the provisions of the Torah. ([Deuteronomy 29:28.](#))



“For this commandment . . . is not . . . beyond the sea, that you should say: ‘Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us . . . ?’” ([Deuteronomy 30:11–13](#).)

[edit] Repentance

After all these curses had befallen them, if they took them to heart in their exile, and they returned to God, and they heeded God’s commandments with all their hearts and [souls](#), then God would restore their fortunes, take them back in love, and bring them together again from the ends of the world to the [land](#) that their [fathers](#) possessed, and God would make them more prosperous and numerous than their fathers. ([Deuteronomy 30:1–5](#).) Then God would open their hearts to love God with all their hearts and souls, in order that they might live.

([Deuteronomy 30:6](#).) God would then inflict all those curses on the enemies who persecuted the Israelites, and would bless the Israelites with abounding prosperity, fertility, and productivity. ([Deuteronomy 30:7–9](#).) For God would again delight in their wellbeing, as God had in that of their fathers, since they would be heeding God and keeping the commandments once they had returned to God with all their hearts and souls. ([Deuteronomy 30:9–10](#).)

[edit] The law’s accessibility

Moses said that surely, this Instruction which he enjoined upon them was not too baffling, beyond reach, in the heavens, or beyond the [sea](#); rather it was very close to them, in their [mouths](#)

and hearts. ([Deuteronomy 30:11–14](#).) Moses said that he set before them the choice between [life](#) and prosperity on the one hand and [death](#) and adversity on the other. ([Deuteronomy 30:15](#).) Moses commanded them to love God, to walk in God’s ways, and to keep God’s commandments, that they might thrive and increase, and that God might bless them in the land. ([Deuteronomy 30:16](#).) But if their hearts turned away and they gave no heed, and were lured into the worship of other gods, Moses warned that they would certainly perish and not long endure in the land. ([Deuteronomy 30:17–18](#).) Moses called heaven and earth to witness that he had put before the Israelites life and death, blessing and curse. ([Deuteronomy 30:19](#).) He exhorted them to choose life by loving God, heeding the commandments, and holding fast to God, so that they might have life and long endure on the land that God swore to their ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ([Deuteronomy 30:19–20](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) **Key words**

Words used frequently in the parshah include:

- God, gods — 27 times ([Deuteronomy 29:9](#), [11](#) (2 times), [12](#), [14](#), [17](#) (2 times), [24](#), [25](#) (2 times), [28](#); [30:1](#), [2](#), [3](#) (2 times), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#) (2 times), [7](#), [9](#), [10](#) (2 times), [16](#) (2 times), [17](#), [20](#).)
- day, days — 16 times ([Deuteronomy 29:9](#), [11](#), [12](#), [14](#) (2 times), [17](#), [27](#); [30:2](#), [8](#), [11](#), [15](#), [16](#), [18](#) (2 times), [19](#), [20](#).)

- land — 14 times ([Deuteronomy 29:15, 21](#) (2 times), [22, 23, 24, 26, 27](#) (2 times), [30:5, 9, 16, 18, 20.](#))
- heart — 10 times ([Deuteronomy 29:17, 18](#) (2 times), [30:2, 6](#) (3 times), [10, 14, 17.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 29

In [Deuteronomy 29:9–10](#), Moses cast the net broadly to include in the covenant all in the Israelite camp, including “your stranger” and those in the servant classes of “the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water.” In [Joshua 9:3–15](#), the [Gibeonites](#) tricked [Joshua](#) into believing that they were not among the local inhabitants whom God had instructed the Israelites to eliminate. In recompense, in [Joshua 9:21](#), the Israelite chieftains decreed that they should become “hewers of wood and drawers of water to all the congregation,” and in [Joshua 9:27](#), “Joshua made them that day hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord.” Even so, [2 Samuel 21:2](#) reports that later in the time of [David](#), “the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites.”

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 30

Moses calls heaven and earth to serve as witnesses against Israel in [Deuteronomy 4:26, 30:19, 31:28](#), and [32:1](#). Similarly, [Psalm 50:4–5](#) reports that God “summoned the heavens above, and the

earth, for the trial of His people,” saying “Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice!” [Psalm 50:6](#) continues: “Then the heavens proclaimed His righteousness, for He is a God who judges.”



King David (statue in the [Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore](#))

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 29

The [Gemara](#) deduced from the separate mention of “all the men of Israel,” “your stranger,” and “the hewer of your wood to the drawer of your water” in [Deuteronomy 29:9–10](#) that Moses meant to decree that the hewers of wood and the drawers of water (whom the Gemara deduced from [Joshua 9:27](#) were

Gibeonites) were to be considered neither Israelites nor converts in that generation. The Gemara further deduced that in [Joshua 9:27](#), Joshua extended that decree of separation for the period during which the Sanctuary existed, and in [2 Samuel 21:2](#), David extended the decree for all generations. ([Babylonian Talmud Yevamot 79a.](#))

The Gemara interpreted the words “not with you alone do I make this covenant” in [Deuteronomy 29:13](#) to teach that Moses adjured the Israelites to agree with the covenant not just as they understood it themselves, but also as Moses understood it, and as God understands it. ([Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 25a](#), [Shevuot 29a, 39a.](#))

In response to a question from Rav Aha son of [Rava](#), [Rav Ashi](#) taught that although later converts to Judaism may not have been literally present at [Mount Sinai](#), [Deuteronomy 29:13–14](#) indicated that their [angelic](#) advocates were present when it said: “Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him that stands here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day.” ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 146a.](#))

The [Tosefta](#) deduced from [Deuteronomy 29:13–14](#) that the conditions that the Rabbis deduced from the Torah for administering oaths will also apply to future generations and converts. (Tosefta Sotah 7:5.)

In [Deuteronomy 29:18](#), the heart cavils. A midrash catalogued the wide range of additional capabilities of the heart reported in the

[Hebrew Bible](#). The heart speaks ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), sees ([Ecclesiastes 1:16](#)), hears ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), walks ([2 Kings 5:26](#)), falls ([1 Samuel 17:32](#)), stands ([Ezekiel 22:14](#)), rejoices ([Psalm 16:9](#)), cries ([Lamentations 2:18](#)), is comforted ([Isaiah 40:2](#)), is troubled ([Deuteronomy 15:10](#)), becomes hardened ([Exodus 9:12.](#)), grows faint ([Deuteronomy 20:3](#)), grieves ([Genesis 6:6](#)), fears ([Deuteronomy 28:67](#)), can be broken ([Psalm 51:19](#)), becomes proud ([Deuteronomy 8:14](#)), rebels ([Jeremiah 5:23](#)), invents ([1 Kings 12:33](#)), overflows ([Psalm 45:2](#)), devises ([Proverbs 19:21](#)), desires ([Psalm 21:3](#)), goes astray ([Proverbs 7:25](#)), lusts ([Numbers 15:39](#)), is refreshed ([Genesis 18:5](#)), can be stolen ([Genesis 31:20](#)), is humbled ([Leviticus 26:41](#)), is enticed ([Genesis 34:3](#)), errs ([Isaiah 21:4](#)), trembles ([1 Samuel 4:13](#)), is awakened ([Song of Songs 5:2](#)), loves ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), hates ([Leviticus 19:17](#)), envies ([Proverbs 23:17](#)), is searched ([Jeremiah 17:10](#)), is rent ([Joel 2:13](#)), meditates ([Psalm 49:4](#)), is like a fire ([Jeremiah 20:9](#)), is like a stone ([Ezekiel 36:26](#)), turns in repentance ([2 Kings 23:25](#)), becomes hot ([Deuteronomy 19:6](#)), dies ([1 Samuel 25:37](#)), melts ([Joshua 7:5](#)), takes in words ([Deuteronomy 6:6](#)), is susceptible to fear ([Jeremiah 32:40](#)), gives thanks ([Psalm 111:1](#)), covets ([Proverbs 6:25](#)), becomes hard ([Proverbs 28:14](#)), makes merry ([Judges 16:25](#)), acts deceitfully ([Proverbs 12:20](#)), speaks from out of itself ([1 Samuel 1:13](#)), loves bribes ([Jeremiah 22:17](#)), writes words ([Proverbs 3:3](#)), plans ([Proverbs 6:18](#)), receives commandments ([Proverbs 10:8](#)), acts with pride ([Obadiah 1:3](#)), makes arrangements ([Proverbs 16:1](#)), and aggrandizes itself ([2 Chronicles 25:19](#)). ([Ecclesiastes Rabbah 1:36.](#))

[Rab Judah](#) taught in [Rab's](#) name that the words, “that he bless himself in his heart, saying: ‘I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart — that the watered be swept away with the dry’; the Lord will not be willing to pardon him,” in [Deuteronomy 29:18–19](#) apply to one who marries his daughter to an old man, or takes a mature wife for his infant son, or returns a lost article to an idolater. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 76b.](#))

Rabbi [Haninah](#) (or some say Rabbi [Joshua ben Levi](#)) deduced from the words “the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt” in [Deuteronomy 29:19](#) that all the land of Israel was burned, and thus even wicked people buried in the land of Israel before that time will merit to be resurrected, because the burning of the land will have executed on them the punishment that justice demanded. A [Baraita](#) taught in the name of Rabbi Judah that the land of Israel burned for seven years. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Kilayim 81a.)



Rabbi Akiba (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua Haggadah](#))

Explaining an assertion by [Rabbi Jose](#), [Rabbi Johanan](#) deduced from the parallel use of word “covenant” in [Deuteronomy 29:24](#) and [Daniel 9:27](#) that the land sown with “brimstone and salt” foretold in [Deuteronomy 29:21–24](#) was the same seven years of barren soil inflicted by Israel’s enemy in [Daniel 9:27](#). ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 54a](#).)

Rabbi [Akiba](#) interpreted the words “and [He] cast them into another land, as it is this day” in [Deuteronomy 29:27](#) to teach that the [Ten Lost Tribes](#) of Israel were destined not to return. But Rabbi Eliezer interpreted the allusion to “day” in [Deuteronomy 29:27](#) differently, teaching that just as the day darkens and then becomes light again, so even though it went dark for the Ten

Tribes, it will become light for them again. ([Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 110b.](#))

Two [Tannaim](#) disputed why dots appear in the [Masoretic Text](#) over the words “to us and to our children forever” (לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ, (עַד) in [Deuteronomy 29:28](#). Rabbi Judah said that dots appear to teach that God would not punish the Israelite community as a whole for transgressions committed in secret until the Israelites had crossed the [Jordan River](#). Rabbi Nehemiah questioned, however, whether God ever punished the Israelite community for transgressions committed in secret, noting that [Deuteronomy 29:28](#) said, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God . . . forever.” Rabbi Nehemiah taught that God did not punish the Israelite community for secret transgressions at any time, and God did not punish the Israelite community as a whole for open transgressions until they had crossed the Jordan. ([Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 43b.](#))

And a midrash offered alternative explanations of why there are points over the words “to us and to our children” (לָנוּ וּלְבָנֵינוּ, *lanu ulebaneinu*) and over the first letter (עַד, *ayin*) of the word “to” (עַד, *ad*) in [Deuteronomy 29:28](#). One explanation: God told the Israelites that they had performed the precepts that had been revealed, and God, on God’s part, would make known to them the things that were secret. Another explanation: [Ezra](#) (whom some consider the author of these diacritical points, although others regard them as having come from Sinai) reasoned that if [Elijah](#) came and asked Ezra why he had written these words, Ezra could answer that he had already placed points over them. And if

Elijah told Ezra that he had done well in writing them, then Ezra would erase the points over them. (If Elijah said that the words should not have been written, Ezra could answer that he had dotted them so that people could understand that they were to be disregarded. If Elijah approved of the words, then Ezra could erase the dots.) ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 3:13.)

[edit] Deuteronomy chapter 30

A [midrash](#) interpreted [Deuteronomy 30:1–6](#) to teach that if the Israelites repented while they were in exile, then God would gather them back together, as [Deuteronomy 30:1–6](#) says, “And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse . . . and [you] shall return . . . and hearken to His voice . . . the Lord your God will bring you into the land . . . and the Lord your God will circumcise your heart.” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 7:10.)

Rabbi [Simon ben Yohai](#) deduced from the words “the Lord your God will return [with] your captivity” in [Deuteronomy 30:3](#) that the [Shechinah](#) went with the Israelites to every place to which they were exiled, and will be with them when they are redeemed in the future. By way of explanation, the Baraita noted that [Deuteronomy 30:3](#) did not say “and [God] shall bring back” but “and [God] shall return,” teaching that God will return with the Israelites from their places of exile. Rabbi Simon concluded that [Deuteronomy 30:3](#) thus showed how beloved the Children of Israel are in God’s sight. ([Babylonian Talmud Megillah 29a.](#))

Rabbi Jose bar Haninah deduced from [Deuteronomy 30:5](#) that when the Jews arrived back in the land of Israel in the time of Ezra, they once again became obligated to obey commandments like tithes (*maasros*). Rabbi Jose bar Haninah reasoned that the words, “And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it,” in [Deuteronomy 30:5](#) showed that the Jews’ possession of the land in the time of Ezra was comparable to their possession of it in the time of Joshua. And thus just as Jews in the time of Joshua were obliged to tithe, so Jews in the time of Ezra were obliged to tithe. And the Gemara interpreted the words, “He will do you good, and make you greater than you fathers,” in [Deuteronomy 30:5](#) to teach that the Jews of the time of Ezra were still able to enter the land of Israel as their ancestors had, even though the Jews of the time of Ezra bore the yoke of foreign government on their shoulders and their ancestors had not. (Jerusalem Talmud Sheviit 42b–43a.)

A midrash taught that fools enter the synagogue, and seeing people occupying themselves with the law, ask how a person learns the law. They answer that first a person reads from children’s materials, then from the Torah, then from the prophets (*Nevi'im*), and then from the writings (*Ketuvim*). Then the person learns the Talmud, then the law (*halakha*), and then the midrash (*haggadol*). Hearing this, fools ask themselves when they can learn all that, and turn to leave. Rabbi Jannai compared this to a loaf suspended in the air. The fool exclaims that no one can bring it down. But the wise person says that someone put it there and

takes a ladder or stick and brings it down. So fools complain that they are unable to read all the law. But wise people learn a chapter every day until they read all the law. God said in [Deuteronomy 30:11](#), “it is not too hard for you,” but if you find it too hard, it is your own fault, because you do not study it. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 8:3.)



a carob tree

A Baraita taught that one day, Rabbi Eliezer employed every imaginable argument for the proposition that a particular type of oven was not susceptible to ritual impurity, but the Sages did not accept his arguments. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the law agrees with me, then let this [carob tree](#) prove it,” and the carob tree moved 100 [cubits](#) (and others say 400 cubits) out of its place. But the Sages said that no proof can be brought from a carob tree. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let this stream of water prove it,” and the stream of water flowed backwards. But the Sages said that no proof can be brought from a stream of water. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the

Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let the walls of this house of study prove it,” and the walls leaned over as if to fall. But [Rabbi Joshua](#) rebuked the walls, telling them not to interfere with scholars engaged in a halachic dispute. In honor of Rabbi Joshua, the walls did not fall, but in honor of Rabbi Eliezer, the walls did not stand upright, either. Then Rabbi Eliezer told the Sages, “If the halachah agrees with me, let Heaven prove it,” and a Heavenly Voice cried out: “Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer, for in all matters the halachah agrees with him!” But Rabbi Joshua rose and exclaimed in the words of [Deuteronomy 30:12](#): “It is not in heaven.” Rabbi Jeremiah explained that God had given the Torah at Mount Sinai; Jews pay no attention to Heavenly Voices, for God wrote in [Exodus 23:2](#): “After the majority must one incline.” Later, [Rabbi Nathan](#) met Elijah and asked him what God did when Rabbi Joshua rose in opposition to the Heavenly Voice. Elijah replied that God laughed with joy, saying, “My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me!” ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Metzia 59b](#).)

[Rav Hisda](#) taught that one should use mnemonic devices to learn the Torah. And the Gemara taught that this agrees with Abdimi bar Hama bar Dosa, who interpreted [Deuteronomy 30:12](#) to mean that if it were “in heaven,” one would have to go up after it, and if it were “beyond the sea,” one would have to go overseas after it. Rather, people can learn the Torah using the tools that they find where they are. [Raba](#) (or some say Rabbi Johanan) interpreted “it is not in heaven” to mean that the Torah is not to be found among those who believe that their insight towers as

high as the heavens. And Raba interpreted “neither is it beyond the sea” to mean that it is not to be found among those whose self-esteem expands as the sea. Rabbi Johanan (or some say Raba) interpreted “it is not in heaven” to mean that the Torah is not to be found among the arrogant. And Rabbi Johanan interpreted “neither is it beyond the sea” to mean that it is not to be found among traveling merchants and business people. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54b–55a](#).)

A midrash interpreted the words “For this commandment . . . is not in heaven” in [Deuteronomy 30:11–12](#) to teach that Jews should not look for another Moses to come and bring another Torah from heaven, for no part of the Torah remained in heaven. Rabbi Hanina interpreted the words “For this commandment . . . is not in heaven” in [Deuteronomy 30:11–12](#) to teach that God gave the Torah with all its characteristic teachings of meekness, righteousness, and uprightness, and also its reward. Samuel interpreted the words “For this commandment . . . is not in heaven” in [Deuteronomy 30:11–12](#) to teach that the Torah is not to be found among astrologers who gaze at the heavens. When people countered that Samuel himself was an astrologer and also a great Torah scholar, he replied that he engaged in astrology only when he was free from studying the Torah — when he was in the bath. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah 8:6](#).)

[Rabbi Ammi](#) expounded on the words, “For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them [words of the wise] within you; let them be established altogether upon your lips,” in [Proverbs 22:18](#). He explained that the words of the Torah are “pleasant” when one

keeps them within oneself, and one does that when the words are “established altogether upon your lips.” Rabbi Isaac said that this may be derived from the words of [Deuteronomy 30:14](#): “But the word is very near to you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it,” for “it is very near to you” when it is “in your mouth and in your heart” to do it. Thus, reading the Torah aloud helps one to keep its precepts in one’s heart, and thus to carry them out. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54a](#).)

The Gemara taught that the words “if your heart turns away . . . you will not hear” in [Deuteronomy 30:17](#) can describe Torah study. If one listens to the old, and reviews what one has already learned, then one will perceive new understanding. But if one turns away and does not review what one has learned, then one may not perceive the opportunity for new learning. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 40a](#).)

Rabbi Haggai taught that not only had God in [Deuteronomy 11:26](#) set two paths before the Israelites, “a blessing and a curse,” but God did not administer justice to them according to the strict letter of the law, but allowed them mercy so that they might (in the words of [Deuteronomy 30:19](#)) “choose life.” (Deuteronomy Rabbah 4:3.)



detail of fish (wall painting from the Egyptian Tomb of [Menna](#) circa 1422–1411 B.C.E.)

[Rabbi Ishmael](#) deduced from the words “choose life” in [Deuteronomy 30:19](#) that one can learn a trade to earn a livelihood, notwithstanding the admonition of [Joshua 1:8](#) that “you shall contemplate [the Torah] day and night.” (Jerusalem Talmud Peah 5b.)

Rab Judah interpreted the words “for that is your life and the length of your days” in [Deuteronomy 30:20](#) to teach that refusing to read when one is given a Torah scroll to read is one of three things that shorten a person’s days and years (along with refusing to say grace when one is given a cup of benediction and assuming airs of authority). ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 55a.](#))

The Rabbis taught that once the [Roman](#) government forbade Jews to study the Torah. Pappus ben Judah found Rabbi Akiba

publicly gathering people to study Torah and asked Akiba whether he did not fear the government. Akiba replied with a parable: A fox was once walking alongside of a river, and he saw fish swimming from one place to another. The fox asked the fish from what they fled. The fish replied that they fled from the nets cast by men. The fox invited the fish to come up onto the dry land, so that they could live together as the fox's ancestors had lived with the fish's ancestors. The fish replied that for an animal described as the cleverest of animals, the fox was rather foolish. For if the fish were afraid in the element in which they live, how much more would they fear in the element in which they would die. Akiba said that it was the same with Jews. If such was the Jews' condition when they sat and studied Torah, of which [Deuteronomy 30:20](#) says, "that is your life and the length of your days," how much worse off would Jews be if they neglected the Torah! ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61b.](#))

A Baraita was taught in the Academy of Eliyahu: A certain scholar diligently studied Bible and Mishnah, and greatly served scholars, but nonetheless died young. His wife carried his [tefillin](#) to the [synagogues](#) and schoolhouses and asked if [Deuteronomy 30:20](#) says, "for that is your life, and the length of your days," why her husband nonetheless died young. No one could answer her. On one occasion, Eliyahu asked her how he was to her during her days of white garments — the seven days after her menstrual period — and she reported that they ate, drank, and slept together without clothing. Eliyahu explained that God must have slain him because he did not sufficiently respect the

separation that [Leviticus 18:19](#) requires. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 13a–b.](#))

[[edit](#)] Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah. Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:430–33. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6](#).) [Nachmanides](#), however, reading [Deuteronomy 30:11](#), suggests that [Deuteronomy 30:2](#) contains a commandment of [repentance](#) (*teshuvah*). (Nachmanides. *Commentary on the Torah*. 13th century. Reprinted in *Ramban (Nachmanides): Commentary on the Torah*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 340, 342–43. New York: Shilo Publishing, 1976.)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

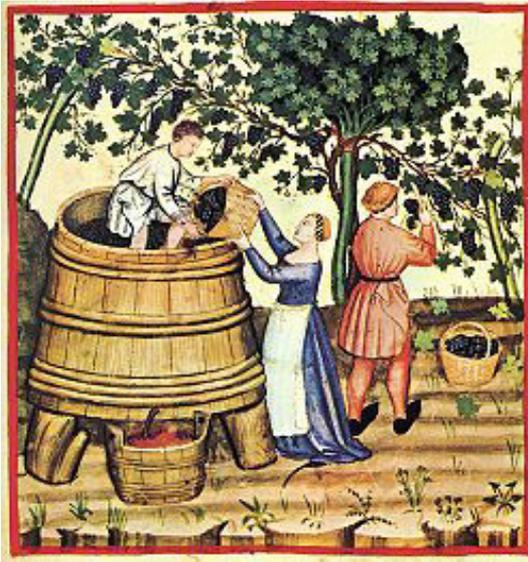


[Isaiah](#) (1509 [Sistine Chapel](#) fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 61:10–63:9](#). The haftarah is the seventh and concluding installment in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to Rosh Hashanah.

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

The prophet rejoiced in God, who had clothed him with salvation, covered him with victory, as a bridegroom dons a priestly diadem, as a bride adorns herself with jewels. ([Isaiah 61:10](#).) For as the earth brings forth vegetation, so God will cause victory and glory to sprout before the nations. ([Isaiah 61:11](#).)



treading grapes (illustration from the 14th Century book [*Tacuinum Sanitatis*](#))

For [Zion](#)'s sake, the prophet would not hold his peace, until Jerusalem's triumph would burn brightly for the nations to see, and Zion would be called by a new name given by God. ([Isaiah 62:1–2.](#)) Zion would be a crown of beauty in God's hand, and no more would she be called Forsaken or Desolate, but she would be called Delight and Espoused, for God would rejoice over her as a bridegroom over his bride. ([Isaiah 62:3–5.](#))

The prophet set lookouts on Jerusalem's walls, until God would make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. ([Isaiah 62:6–7.](#)) God has sworn no more to give Israel's corn to her enemies, nor her wine to strangers, but those who harvested shall eat, and those who

gathered shall drink, in the courts of God's sanctuary. ([Isaiah 62:8–9.](#))

The prophet said clear the way, for God proclaimed to Zion that her salvation was coming. ([Isaiah 62:10–11.](#)) And they shall call the Israelites the holy people, and Jerusalem shall be called Sought out, not Forsaken. ([Isaiah 62:12.](#))

The prophet asked Who came in crimson garments from [Edom](#), mighty to save, and why God's apparel was red like one who trod in the wine vat. ([Isaiah 63:1–2.](#)) God said that God had trodden the winepress in anger alone, and trampled in fury, for the day of vengeance was in God's heart, and God's year of redemption had come. ([Isaiah 63:3–4.](#)) God looked and found none to help to uphold God's will, so God trod down the peoples in anger, and poured out their blood. ([Isaiah 63:5–6.](#))

The prophet spoke of God's mercies and praises, of God's great goodness toward Israel, which God bestowed with compassion. ([Isaiah 63:7.](#)) For God said, "Surely, they are My people," and so God was their Savior. ([Isaiah 63:8.](#)) In all their affliction God was afflicted, and God's angel saved them; in love and pity God redeemed them, and God bore them and carried them all the days of old. ([Isaiah 63:9.](#))

[[edit](#)] Connection to the Special Sabbath

Concluding the series of consolation after Tisha B'Av, and leading up to the [Days of Awe](#), the haftarah features God's salvation ([Isaiah 61:10; 62:1, 11; 63:5](#)), redemption ([Isaiah 62:12;](#)

[63:4, 9](#)), mercies ([Isaiah 63:7](#) (2 times)), and compassion ([Isaiah 63:7](#)).

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

The standard [Conservative](#) prayerbook quotes [Deuteronomy 29:28](#) and [30:11–14](#) as readings to accompany the second blessing before the *Shema*. (*Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 29. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2007. [ISBN 0-916219-13-5](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Joshua 9:21, 27](#) (hewers of wood and drawers of water).
- [Psalms 11:6](#) (God punishing the wicked); [14:1](#) (fool who “in his heart” imagines escaping God); [27:1](#) (God as life-giver); [52:7](#) (God rooting out evil); [66:9](#) (God as life-giver); [74:1](#) (God’s anger); [79:5](#) (God’s jealousy as fire); [106:45](#) (God will return); [126:1–4](#) (God restores); [147:2](#) (God gathers exiles).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:3](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*.

Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 605. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).

- [Tosefta](#): Sotah 7:3–5; Avodah Zarah 6:13. Land of Israel, circa 300 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:861–62; 2:1285. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 304:1–305:3. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:289–294. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Peah 5b; Kilayim 81a; Sheviit 42b; Beitzah 25a. Land of Israel, circa 400 CE. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 3, 5, 6b, 23. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2006–2010.
- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 55a](#), [61b](#); [Shabbat 13a](#), [146a](#); [Eruvin 54a–55a](#); [Pesachim 49b](#); [Yoma 54a](#); [Sukkah](#)

[46b](#); [Megillah 29a](#); [Yevamot 79a](#), [82b](#); [Ketubot 111b](#); [Nedarim 25a](#), [62a](#); [Gittin 23b](#); [Kiddushin 40a](#); [Bava Metzia 59b](#); [Sanhedrin 43b](#), [76b](#), [99b](#), [110b](#); [Makkot 22b](#); [Shevuot 29a](#), [39a](#); [Avodah Zarah 51b](#); [Arakhin 32b](#); [Temurah 16a](#); [Niddah 46b](#). Babylonia, 6th century.
Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic



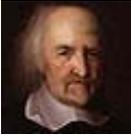
Rashi

- [Qur'an 54:17](#). Arabia, 7th century.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 8:1–7. Land of Israel, 9th century.
Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Deuteronomy 29–30](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and*

Elucidated. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:303–18. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).



Hobbes

- [Judah Halevi](#). *Kuzari*. 2:34. Toledo, Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 108. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Modern

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- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 20, 369–74, 385–91. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.



Hirsch

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It Mean? Humans received a God-given freedom to
choose between a lifestyle that fosters life on this planet
or that leads to death for the earth and its inhabitants. In
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you and your descendants may live.”” [Bible Review](#). 8 (5) (Oct. 1992).



Steinsaltz

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- Alan Lew. *This Is Real and You Are Completely Unprepared: The Days of Awe as a Journey of Transformation*, 65, 82–85, 152–54, 164. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 2003. [ISBN 0-316-73908-1](#).
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[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)
- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)

- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
- [Orthodox Union](#)
- [OzTorah, Torah from Australia](#)
- [Oz Ve Shalom — Netivot Shalom](#)
- [Pardes from Jerusalem](#)
- [RabbiShimon.com](#)
- [Rabbi Shlomo Riskin](#)
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- [Reconstructionist Judaism](#)
- [Sephardic Institute](#)
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- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](#)
- [Tanach Study Center](#)
- [Teach613.org, Torah Education at Cherry Hill](#)

- [Torah from Dixie](#)
- [Torah.org](#)
- [TorahVort.com](#)
- [Union for Reform Judaism](#)
- [United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth](#)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism](#)
- [What's Bothering Rashi?](#)

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Vayelech

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Vayelech, **Vayeilech**, **VaYelech**, **Va-yelech**, **Vayelekh**, **Va-yelekh**, or **Vayeleh** (וַיֵּלֶךְ — [Hebrew](#) for "then he went out", the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the 52nd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the ninth in the book of [Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 31:1–30](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) generally read it in September or early October. With just 30 verses, it is the shortest parshah.

The [lunisolar Hebrew calendar](#) contains up to 55 [weeks](#), the exact number varying between 50 in common years and 54 or 55 in leap years. In some leap years (for example, 2012, 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2019), parshah Vayelech is read separately. In common years (for example, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2017), parshah Vayelech is combined with the previous parshah, [Nitzavim](#), to help achieve the number of weekly readings needed, and the combined portion is then read on the [Sabbath](#) immediately before [Rosh Hashanah](#). The two Torah portions are combined except when two Sabbaths fall between Rosh Hashanah and [Sukkot](#) and neither Sabbath coincides with a [Holy Day](#). ([W. Gunther Plaut](#), *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*, 1553. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981. [ISBN 0-8074-0055-6](#).)

In the parshah, [Moses](#) tells the [Israelites](#) to be strong and courageous, as [God](#) and [Joshua](#) would soon lead them into the

[Promised Land](#). Moses commanded the Israelites to read the [law](#) to all the people every seven years. God told Moses that his death was approaching, that the people would break the [covenant](#), and that God would thus hide God's [face](#) from them, so Moses should therefore write a song to serve as a witness for God against the Israelites.



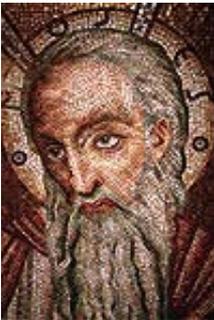
Moses Speaks to the Children of Israel (illustration from Hartwell James's *The Boys of the Bible*)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



Moses (mosaic in the [Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis](#))

[\[edit\]](#) "Be strong and courageous"

Moses told the Israelites that he was 120 years old that day, could no longer go out and come in, and God had told him that he was not to go over the [Jordan River](#). ([Deuteronomy 31:1–2](#).) God would go over before them and destroy the nations ahead of them as God had destroyed [Sihon](#) and [Og](#), the [kings](#) of the [Amorites](#), [Joshua](#) would go over before them, and the Israelites would dispossess those nations according to the [commandments](#) that Moses had commanded them. ([Deuteronomy 31:3–5](#).) Moses exhorted the Israelites to be strong and courageous, for God

would go with them and would not forsake them. ([Deuteronomy 31:6](#).) And in the sight of the people, Moses told Joshua to be strong and courageous, for he would go with the people into the land that God had sworn to their fathers and cause them to inherit it, and God would go before him, be with him, and not forsake him. ([Deuteronomy 31:7–8](#).)



Ark of the Covenant (bas-relief at the Cathedral of [Auch](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Reading the law

Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the [priests](#), the sons of [Levi](#), who bore the [Ark of the Covenant](#) and to all the [elders](#) of Israel, commanding them to read it before all Israel at the end of every seven years during [Sukkot](#), when all Israel was to appear in [the place that God would choose](#). ([Deuteronomy 31:9–11](#).)

Moses told them to assemble all the people — [men](#), [women](#), children, and strangers — that they might [hear](#), [learn](#), [fear](#) God, and observe the law as long as the Israelites lived in the land that

they were going over the Jordan to possess. ([Deuteronomy 31:12–13.](#))



Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

[[edit](#)] Writing the law

God told Moses that as the day of his death was approaching, he should call Joshua, and they should present themselves in the [tent of meeting](#) so that God might bless Joshua. ([Deuteronomy 31:14.](#)) God appeared in a pillar of [cloud](#) over the door of the Tent and told Moses that he was about to die, the people would rise up and break the covenant, God's anger would be kindled against them, God would forsake them and hide God's face from them, and many evils would come upon them. ([Deuteronomy 31:15–18.](#)) God directed Moses therefore to write a song and teach it to the Israelites so that the song might serve as a witness for God against the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 31:19.](#)) For when

God will have brought the Israelites into the land flowing with [milk](#) and honey, they will have eaten their fill, grown fat, turned to other gods, and broken the covenant, then when many evils will have come upon them, this song would testify before them as a witness. ([Deuteronomy 31:20–21.](#))

So Moses wrote the song that day and taught it to the Israelites. ([Deuteronomy 31:22.](#)) And God charged Joshua to be strong and courageous, for he would bring the Israelites into the land that God had sworn to them, and God would be with him.

([Deuteronomy 31:23.](#)) And when Moses had finished writing the law in a book, Moses commanded the [Levites](#) who bore the Ark of the Covenant to take the book and put it by the side of the Ark so that it might serve as a witness against the people.

([Deuteronomy 31:24–26.](#)) For Moses said that he knew that even that day, the people had been rebelling against God, so how much more would they after his death? ([Deuteronomy 31:27.](#))

Moses called the elders and officers to assemble, so that he might call heaven and earth to witness against them. ([Deuteronomy](#)

[31:28.](#)) For Moses said that he knew that after his death, the Israelites would deal corruptly and turn away from the commandments, and evil would befall them because they would do that which was evil in the sight of God. ([Deuteronomy 31:29.](#))

And Moses spoke to all the assembly of Israel the words of the song. ([Deuteronomy 31:30.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Key words**

Words used frequently in the parshah include:

- Moses — 11 times ([Deuteronomy 31:1](#), [7](#), [9](#), [10](#), [14](#) (2 times), [16](#), [22](#), [24](#), [25](#), [30](#).)
- go — 10 times ([Deuteronomy 31:2](#) (2 times), [3](#) (2 times), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [13](#), [16](#) (2 times).)
- Israel — 10 times ([Deuteronomy 31:1](#), [7](#), [9](#), [11](#) (2 times), [19](#) (2 times), [22](#), [23](#), [30](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 31

Moses calls heaven and earth to serve as witnesses against Israel in [Deuteronomy 4:26](#), [30:19](#), [31:28](#), and [32:1](#). Similarly, [Psalm 50:4–5](#) reports that God “summoned the heavens above, and the earth, for the trial of His people,” saying “Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice!” [Psalm 50:6](#) continues: “Then the heavens proclaimed His righteousness, for He is a God who judges.”

Expressions like "hide My countenance" in [Deuteronomy 31:17–18](#) and [32:20](#) also appear in [Isaiah 8:17](#), [Ezekiel 39:29](#), [Micah 3:4](#), [Psalms 13:2](#), [27:9](#), [30:8](#), [51:11](#), [69:17](#), [89:47](#), [102:3](#), [104:29](#), and [143:7](#), and [Job 13:24](#).

[\[edit\]](#) In early nonrabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 31

[Josephus](#) reports that even slaves attended the public reading of the Torah. (*Antiquities* 4:8:12.)



Moses Names Joshua To Succeed Him (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) 31:1–9 — "Be strong and courageous"

The [Gemara](#) interpreted Moses's words "I am a hundred and twenty years old *this day*" in [Deuteronomy 31:2](#) to signify that Moses spoke on his birthday, and that he thus died on his birthday. Citing the words "the number of your days I will fulfill" in [Exodus 23:26](#), the Gemara concluded that God completes the years of the righteous to the day, concluding their lives on their birthdays. ([Babylonian Talmud Rosh Hashanah 11a.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) 31:10–13 — reading the law

The [Mishnah](#) taught that the Israelites would postpone the great assembly required by [Deuteronomy 31:10–12](#) if observing it conflicted with the Sabbath. ([Mishnah Megillah 1:3](#); [Babylonian Talmud Megillah 5a.](#))

The Gemara noted that the command in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) for all Israelites to assemble applied to women (as does the command in [Exodus 12:18](#) to eat [matzah](#) on the first night of [Passover](#)), even though the general rule (stated in [Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin 34a](#)) is that women are exempt from time-bound positive commandments. The Gemara cited these exceptions to support Rabbi [Johanan's](#) assertion that one may not draw inferences from general rules, for they often have exceptions. ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 27a.](#))

Rabbi Johanan ben Beroka and Rabbi [Eleazar Hisma](#) reported that Rabbi [Eleazar ben Azariah](#) interpreted the words "Assemble

the people, the men and the women and the little ones,” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) to teach that the men came to learn, the women came to hear, and the little children came to give a reward to those who brought them. ([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 3a.](#))

The Gemara deduced from the parallel use of the word “appear” in [Exodus 23:14](#) and [Deuteronomy 16:15](#) (regarding appearance offerings) on the one hand, and in [Deuteronomy 31:10–12](#) (regarding the great assembly) on the other hand, that the criteria for who participated in the great assembly also applied to limit who needed to bring appearance offerings. A [Baraita](#) deduced from the words “that they may hear” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [deaf](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. And the Baraita deduced from the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) that a [mute](#) person was not required to appear at the assembly. But the Gemara questioned the conclusion that one who cannot talk cannot learn, recounting the story of two mute grandsons (or others say nephews) of Rabbi Johanan ben Gudgada who lived in [Rabbi](#)’s neighborhood. Rabbi prayed for them, and they were healed. And it turned out that notwithstanding their speech impediment, they had learned [halachah](#), [Sifra](#), [Sifre](#), and the whole Talmud. [Mar Zutra](#) and [Rav Ashi](#) read the words “that they may learn” in [Deuteronomy 31:12](#) to mean “that they may teach,” and thus to exclude people who could not speak from the obligation to appear at the assembly. Rabbi Tanhum deduced from the words “in their ears” (using the plural for “ears”) at the end of [Deuteronomy 31:11](#) that one who

was deaf in one ear was exempt from appearing at the assembly.
([Babylonian Talmud Chagigah 3a.](#))



coin minted by Herod Agrippa I

The Mishnah explained how the Jews of the [Second Temple](#) era interpreted the requirement of [Deuteronomy 31:10–13](#) that the king read the Torah to the people. At the conclusion of the first day of [Sukkot](#) immediately after the conclusion of the seventh year in the cycle, they erected a wooden dais in the Temple court, upon which the king sat. The [synagogue](#) attendant took a Torah [scroll](#) and handed it to the synagogue president, who handed it to the [High Priest's](#) deputy, who handed it to the High Priest, who handed it to the king. The king stood and received it, and then read sitting. King [Agrippa](#) stood and received it and read standing, and the sages praised him for doing so. When Agrippa reached the commandment of [Deuteronomy 17:15](#) that “you may not put a foreigner over you” as king, his eyes ran with tears, but they said to him, “Don’t fear, Agrippa, you are our brother, you are our brother!” The king would read from [Deuteronomy 1:1](#) up through the [shema](#) ([Deuteronomy 6:4–9](#)), and then [Deuteronomy 11:13–21](#), the portion regarding tithes ([Deuteronomy 14:22–29](#)),

the portion of the king ([Deuteronomy 17:14–20](#)), and the blessings and curses ([Deuteronomy 27–28](#)). The king would recite the same blessings as the High Priest, except that the king would substitute a blessing for the [festivals](#) instead of one for the forgiveness of sin. ([Mishnah Sotah 7:8](#); [Babylonian Talmud Sotah 41a.](#))

A Baraita deduced from the parallel use of the words “at the end” in [Deuteronomy 14:28](#) (regarding [tithes](#)) and [31:10](#) (regarding the great assembly) that just as the Torah required the great assembly to be done at a festival ([Deuteronomy 31:10](#)), the Torah also required tithes to be removed at the time of a festival. ([Jerusalem Talmud](#) Maaser Sheni 53a.)

Tractate [Sheviit](#) in the Mishnah, [Tosefta](#), and [Jerusalem Talmud](#) interpreted the laws of the Sabbatical year in [Exodus 23:10–11](#), [Leviticus 25:1–34](#), and [Deuteronomy 15:1–18](#), and [31:10–13](#). (Mishnah Sheviit 1:1–10:9; Tosefta Sheviit 1:1–8:11; Jerusalem Talmud Sheviit 1a–87b.) Rabbi Isaac taught that the words of [Psalm 103:20](#), “mighty in strength that fulfill His word,” speak of those who observe the Sabbatical year (mentioned in [Deuteronomy 31:10](#)). Rabbi Isaac said that we often find that a person fulfills a precept for a day, a week, or a month, but it is remarkable to find one who does so for an entire year. Rabbi Isaac asked whether one could find a mightier person than one who sees his field untilled, see his vineyard untilled, and yet pays his taxes and does not complain. And Rabbi Isaac noted that [Psalm 103:20](#) uses the words “that fulfill His *word (dabar)*,” and [Deuteronomy 15:2](#) says regarding observance of the Sabbatical

year, “And this is the *manner (dabar)* of the release,” and argued that “*dabar*” means the observance of the Sabbatical year in both places. ([Leviticus Rabbah](#) 1:1.)

Tractate [Beitzah](#) in the Mishnah, Tosefta, Jerusalem Talmud, and Babylonian Talmud interpreted the laws common to all of the festivals in [Exodus 12:3–27, 43–49; 13:6–10; 23:16; 34:18–23; Leviticus 16; 23:4–43; Numbers 9:1–14; 28:16–30:1; and Deuteronomy 16:1–17; 31:10–13.](#) ([Mishnah Beitzah](#) 1:1–5:7; Tosefta Yom Tov (Beitzah) 1:1–4:11; Jerusalem Talmud Beitzah 1a–49b; [Babylonian Talmud Beitzah](#) 2a–40b.)



Moses and Joshua in the Tabernacle (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[[edit](#)] 31:14–30 — writing the law

[Rabbi Jannai](#) taught that when Moses learned that he was to die on that day, he wrote 13 scrolls of the law — 12 for the 12 tribes, and one which he placed in the ark — so that if anyone should seek to forge anything in a scroll, they could refer back to the scroll in the ark. Moses thought that he could busy himself with the Torah — the whole of which is life — and then the sun would set and the decree for his death would lapse. God signaled to the sun, but the sun refused to obey God, saying that it would not set and leave Moses alive in the world. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 9:9.)



Rabbi Akiba (illustration from the 1568 [Mantua](#) Haggadah)

Interpreting the words "call Joshua" in [Deuteronomy 31:14](#), a midrash taught that Moses asked God to let Joshua take over his office and nonetheless allow Moses continue to live. God consented on the condition that Moses treat Joshua as Joshua had treated Moses. So Moses rose early and went to Joshua's house. Moses called Joshua his teacher, and they set out walking with Moses on Joshua's left, like a disciple. When they entered the tent of meeting, the pillar of cloud came down and separated them. When the pillar of cloud departed, Moses asked Joshua what was revealed to him. Joshua asked Moses whether Joshua ever found out what God said to Moses. At that moment, Moses bitterly exclaimed that it would be better to die a hundred times than to experience envy, even once. (Deuteronomy Rabbah 9:9.)

[Rabbi Akiba](#) deduced from the words "and teach it to the children of Israel" in [Deuteronomy 31:19](#) that a teacher must go on teaching a pupil until the pupil has mastered the lesson. And Rabbi Akiba deduced from the words "put it in their mouths" immediately following in [Deuteronomy 31:19](#) that the teacher must go on teaching until the student can state the lesson fluently. And Rabbi Akiba deduced from the words "now these are the ordinances that you shall put before them" in [Exodus 21:1](#) that the teacher must wherever possible explain to the student the reasons behind the commandments. [Rav Hisda](#) cited the words "put it in their mouths" in [Deuteronomy 31:19](#) for the proposition that the Torah can be acquired only with the aid of mnemonic devices, reading "put it" (*shimab*) as "its [mnemonic] symbol" (*simnah*). ([Babylonian Talmud Eruvin 54b](#).)

The Gemara reported a number of Rabbis' reports of how the Land of Israel did indeed flow with "milk and honey," as described in [Exodus 3:8](#) and [17, 13:5](#), and [33:3](#), [Leviticus 20:24](#), [Numbers 13:27](#) and [14:8](#), and [Deuteronomy 6:3](#), [11:9](#), [26:9](#) and [15, 27:3](#), and [31:20](#). Once when Rami bar Ezekiel visited [Bnei Brak](#), he saw goats grazing under fig trees while honey was flowing from the figs, and milk dripped from the goats mingling with the fig honey, causing him to remark that it was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. Rabbi Jacob ben Dostai said that it is about three miles from [Lod](#) to [Ono](#), and once he rose up early in the morning and waded all that way up to his ankles in fig honey. Resh Lakish said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey of [Sepphoris](#) extend over an area of sixteen miles by sixteen miles. [Rabbah bar bar Hana](#) said that he saw the flow of the milk and honey in all the Land of Israel and the total area was equal to an area of twenty-two [parasangs](#) by six parasangs. ([Babylonian Talmud Ketubot 111b–12a](#).)

The Rabbis cited the prophecy of [Deuteronomy 31:20](#) that "they shall have eaten their fill and grown fat, and turned to other gods" to support the popular saying that filling one's stomach ranks among evil things. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 32a](#).)

Rabbi [Simeon ben Yohai](#) interpreted the words "it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" in [Deuteronomy 31:21](#) to teach that Israel will never forget the Torah. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 138b](#).)

Where did the Israelites keep the scroll of the law that [Deuteronomy 31:9](#) and [26](#) reported that Moses wrote? [Rabbi](#)

[Meir](#) taught that the Israelites kept the scroll *inside* the Ark of the Covenant. Rabbi Meir deduced this from the redundant exclusionary words, “There was *nothing* in the Ark *save*,” in [1 Kings 8:9](#). Rabbi Meir interpreted the double exclusion as a double negative, intimating that something else was *included* in the Ark, namely, the scroll of the law. But Rabbi Judah interpreted the words, “Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant,” in [Deuteronomy 31:26](#) to teach that the scroll of the law was placed *by the side* of the Ark. Rabbi Judah taught that the Israelites kept the scroll on top of the chest in which the [Philistines](#) sent a present to God (as reported in [1 Samuel 6:8](#)). Rabbi Judah interpreted the redundant exclusionary words, “There was *nothing* in the Ark *save*,” in [1 Kings 8:9](#) to intimate that the fragments of the first broken tablets were also deposited inside the Ark along with the second set of tablets of the law. ([Babylonian Talmud Bava Batra 14a–b](#).)

The [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) counted 10 songs in the [Tanakh](#): (1) the one that the Israelites recited at the first Passover in Egypt, as [Isaiah 30:29](#) says, “You shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hallowed”; (2) the [Song of the sea](#) in [Exodus 15](#); (3) the one that the Israelites sang at the well in the wilderness, as [Numbers 21:17](#) reports, “Then sang Israel this song: ‘Spring up, O well’”; (4) the one that Moses spoke in his last days, as [Deuteronomy 31:30](#) reports, “Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song”; (5) the one that Joshua recited, as [Joshua 10:12](#) reports, “Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the [Amorites](#)”;

(6) the one that [Deborah](#) and [Barak](#) sang, as [Judges 5:1](#) reports, “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of [Abinoam](#)”; (7) the one that [David](#) spoke, as [2 Samuel 22:1](#) reports, “David spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of [Saul](#)”; (8) the one that [Solomon](#) recited, as [Psalm 30:1](#) reports, “a song at the Dedication of the [House of David](#)”; (9) the one that [Jehoshaphat](#) recited, as [2 Chronicles 20:21](#) reports: “when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing to the Lord, and praise in the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for His mercy endures for ever’”; and (10) the song that will be sung in the time to come, as [Isaiah 42:10](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth,” and [Psalm 149:1](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.” (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Shirata 1:5.)



Sefer Torah

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are two positive [commandments](#) in the parshah.

- To assemble the people to hear Torah after the end of the Sabbatical year ([Deuteronomy 31:12.](#))
- For every Jew to write a Torah scroll ([Deuteronomy 31:19.](#))

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah, Positive Commandments 16](#) and [17](#). [Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 1:23–25. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:430–43. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah



[Isaiah](#) (1509 [Sistine Chapel](#) fresco by [Michelangelo](#))

When parshah Vayelech is read separately, the [haftarah](#) for the parshah is [Isaiah 55:6–56:8](#).

When parshah Vayelech coincides with the [special Sabbath](#) Shabbat Shuvah (the Sabbath before [Yom Kippur](#), as it does in 2012), the haftarah is [Hosea 14:2–10](#), [Micah 7:18–20](#), and [Joel 2:15–27](#).

When parshah Vayelech is combined with parshah Netzavim (as it is in 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014, and 2017), the haftarah is the haftarah for Netzavim, [Isaiah 61:10–63:9](#). That haftarah is the seventh and concluding installment in the cycle of seven haftarot of consolation after [Tisha B'Av](#), leading up to Rosh Hashanah.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Jeremiah 30:1–3](#) (God's instruction to write).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic



Josephus

- [Assumption of Moses](#) 1st Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*. Edited by [James H.](#)

[Charlesworth](#), 919–26. New York: [Anchor Bible](#), 1983. ISBN 0-385-09630-5.

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:12, 44. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 117, 123–24. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. ISBN 0-913573-86-8.

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah](#): [Beitzah 1:1–5:7](#); [Megillah 1:3](#); [Sotah 7:8](#). Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 317, 459. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. ISBN 0-300-05022-4.



Talmud

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Sheviit 1a–87b; Terumot 7b; Maaser Sheni 53a; Beitzah 1a–49b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 6a–7, 10, 23. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2006–2010.

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Shabbat 138b](#); [Eruvin 27a, 54b](#); [Yoma 5b, 52b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 11a, 12b](#); [Megillah 5a](#); [Moed Katan 2b, 17a, 28a](#); [Chagigah 3a, 5a–b](#); [Ketubot 111b–12a](#); [Nedarim 38a](#); [Sotah 13b, 41a](#); [Gittin 59b–60a](#); [Kiddushin 34a–b, 38a](#); [Bava Batra 14a–15a](#); [Sanhedrin 8a, 21b, 90b](#); [Chullin 139b](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[\[edit\]](#) Medieval



Maimonides

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 9:1–9. Land of Israel, 9th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Deuteronomy 31](#). [Troyes](#), France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg,

5:319–28. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).

- [Maimonides](#). *Mishneh Torah*, [Intro.:2](#). Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180.
- [Zohar 3:283a–86a](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[\[edit\]](#) Modern



Hirsch

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [2:26](#); [3:33](#), [42](#); [4:46](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 319, 418, 548, 687. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0-14-043195-0](#).
- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 444–46. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.

- [Emily Dickinson](#). *Poem 168 (If the foolish, call them "flowers" —)*. Circa 1860. *Poem 597 (It always felt to me — a wrong)*. Circa 1862. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 79–80, 293–94. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960. [ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).
- Morris Adler. *The World of the Talmud*, 37. B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1958. Reprinted Kessinger Publishing, 2007. [ISBN 0-548-08000-3](#).



Dickinson

- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Philip Sigal. [“Responsum on the Status of Women: With Special Attention to the Questions of Shaliab Tzibbur, Edut and Gittin.”](#) New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1984. OH 53:4.1984. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1980–1990: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by David J. Fine, 11, 15, 21, 32, 35. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2005. [ISBN 0-916219-27-5](#). (implications of the commandment for women to

assemble for women's rights to participate equally in Jewish public worship).

- [Joel Roth](#). “The Status of Daughters of *Kobanim* and *Leviticus* for Aliyot.” New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1989. OH 135:3.1989a. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1980–1990: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by David J. Fine, 49, 51. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2005. [ISBN 0-916219-27-5](#). (the implications for aliyot of the report that “Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi”).
- [Lawrence H. Schiffman](#). “The New Halakhic Letter (4QMMT) and the Origins of the Dead Sea Sect.” [Biblical Archaeologist](#). 53 (2) (June 1990): 64–73.
- Aaron Demsky. “Who Returned First — Ezra or Nehemiah?” [Bible Review](#). 12 (2) (Apr. 1996).
- Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 289–98, 498–507. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).
- Baruch J. Schwartz. “What Really Happened at Mount Sinai? Four biblical answers to one question.” [Bible Review](#). 13 (5) (Oct. 1997).

- William H.C. Propp. “Why Moses Could Not Enter The Promised Land.” *Bible Review*. 14 (3) (June 1998).
- Michael M. Cohen. “Insight: Did Moses Enter the Promised Land?” *Bible Review*. 15 (6) (Dec. 1999).
- Suzanne A. Brody. “Changing of the Guard.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 110. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- [Academy for Jewish Religion, New York](#)
- [Aish.com](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)

- [Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles](#)
- [Bar-Ilan University](#)
- [Chabad.org](#)
- [Department for Jewish Zionist Education](#)
- [eparsha.com](#)
- [Jewish Theological Seminary](#)
- [MyJewishLearning.com](#)
- [Ohr Sameach](#)
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- [613.org Jewish Torah Audio](#)

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- [Torah from Dixie](#)
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Haazinu

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Haazinu, **Ha'azinu**, or **Ha'Azinu** (הֶאָזִינוּ — [Hebrew](#) for "listen" when directed to more than one person, the [first word](#) in the parshah) is the 53rd [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the 10th in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 32:1–52](#). [Jews](#) in the [Diaspora](#) read it on a [Sabbath](#) between the [holy days](#) of [Rosh Hashanah](#) and [Sukkot](#), generally in September or October.

The parshah sets out the [Song of Moses](#) — an indictment of the [Israelites](#)' sins, a prophecy of their punishment, and a promise of [God's](#) ultimate redemption of them.

The bulk of the parshah, the song of [Deuteronomy 32:1–43](#), appears in the Torah scroll in a distinctive two-column format, reflecting the poetic structure of the text, where in each line, an opening [colon](#) is matched by a second, parallel thought unit.

וּתְשַׁמְעוּ הָאָרֶץ אֲמַרְי פִּי
תִזְכַּר כִּשְׁלֹל אֲמַרְדָּתִי
וּכְרַב־יָבִים עָלַי עֲשֵׂב
הָבוּ גִדְלֹךְ לֹאֲכֹלֶינִי
כִּי כָל דַּרְכֵי מִשְׁפָּטִי
צְדִיקַת וַיִּשְׂרֵה הָיָה.

הֶאָזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְרָה
יַעֲרֹף כַּמַּטֵּר לִקְוֹזִי
כַּשֶּׁעִירִם עָלַי דֹּשָׁן
כִּי שֵׁם יְהוָה אֶקְרָא
הַצֹּר תַּמִּים פִּעְלֹן
אֵל אֲמוֹנָה וְאִין עֹל



the beginning of parshah Haazinu, [Deuteronomy 32:1–4](#), as it appears in a Torah scroll

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



“My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew.” ([Deuteronomy 32:2](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Indictment

[Moses](#) called on heaven and earth to [hear](#) his [words](#), and asked that his [speech](#) be like [rain](#) and [dew](#) for the [grass](#). ([Deuteronomy 32:1–2](#).) Moses proclaimed that God was [perfect](#) in deed, [just](#), faithful, [true](#), and upright. ([Deuteronomy 32:3–4](#).) God’s [children](#) were unworthy, a crooked [generation](#) that played God [false](#), ill requiring the [Creator](#). ([Deuteronomy 32:5–6](#).) Moses exhorted the Israelites to remember that in ages past, God assigned the [nations](#) their homes and their due, but chose the Israelites as God’s own people. ([Deuteronomy 32:7–9](#).) God found the

Israelites in the [desert](#), watched over them, guarded them, like an [eagle](#) who rouses his nestlings, gliding down to his young, God spread God's wings and took Israel, bearing Israel along on God's [pinions](#), God alone guided Israel. ([Deuteronomy 32:10–12.](#)) God set the Israelites atop the [highlands](#) to feast on the yield of the earth and fed them [honey](#), [oil](#), [curds](#), [milk](#), [lamb](#), [wheat](#), and [wine](#). ([Deuteronomy 32:13–14.](#)) So Israel grew [fat](#) and kicked and forsook God, incensed God with alien things, and [sacrificed](#) to [demons](#) and no-gods. ([Deuteronomy 32:15–18.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Punishment**

God saw, was vexed, and hid God's countenance from them, to see how they would fare. ([Deuteronomy 32:19–20.](#)) For they were a treacherous breed, children with no loyalty, who incensed God with no-gods, vexed God with their [idols](#); thus God would incense them with a no-folk and vex them with a nation of fools. ([Deuteronomy 32:20–21.](#)) A fire flared in God's wrath and burned down to the base of the hills. ([Deuteronomy 32:22.](#)) God would sweep misfortunes on them, use God's arrows on them — famine, plague, pestilence, and fanged beasts — and with the sword would deal death and terror to young and old alike. ([Deuteronomy 32:23–25.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) **Punishment restrained**

God might have reduced them to nothing, made their memory cease among men, except for fear of the taunts of their enemies, who might misjudge and conclude that their own hand had

prevailed and not God's. ([Deuteronomy 32:26–27.](#)) For Israel's enemies were a folk void of sense, lacking in discernment. ([Deuteronomy 32:28.](#)) Were they wise, they would think about this, and gain insight into their future, for they would recognize that one could not have routed a thousand unless God had sold them. ([Deuteronomy 32:29–31.](#)) They were like [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) and their wine was the venom of [asps](#). ([Deuteronomy 32:32–33.](#)) God stored it away to be the basis for God's vengeance and recompense when they should trip, for their day of disaster was near. ([Deuteronomy 32:34–35.](#)) God would vindicate God's people and take revenge for God's servants, when their might was gone. ([Deuteronomy 32:36.](#)) God would ask where the enemies' gods were — they who ate the fat of their offerings and drank their libation wine — let them rise up to help! ([Deuteronomy 32:37–38.](#)) There was no god beside God, who dealt death and gave life, wounded and healed. ([Deuteronomy 32:39.](#)) God swore that when God would whet God's flashing blade, and lay hand on judgment, God would wreak vengeance on God's foes. ([Deuteronomy 32:40–41.](#)) God would make God's arrows drunk with [blood](#), as God's sword devoured flesh, blood of the slain and the captive from the long-haired enemy chiefs. ([Deuteronomy 32:42.](#)) God would avenge the blood of God's servants, wreak vengeance on God's foes, and cleanse the [land](#) of God's people. ([Deuteronomy 32:43.](#))



view of the [Dead Sea](#) from [Mount Nebo](#)

[[edit](#)] Parting words

Moses came, together with [Joshua](#), and recited all this [poem](#) to the people. ([Deuteronomy 32:44](#).) And when Moses finished reciting, he told them to take his warnings to heart and enjoin them upon their children, for it was not a trifling thing but their very life at stake. ([Deuteronomy 32:45–47](#).) That day God told Moses to ascend [Mount Nebo](#) and view the land of [Canaan](#), for he was to die on the mountain, as his brother [Aaron](#) had died on [Mount Hor](#), for they both broke faith with God when they struck the rock to produce water in the [wilderness of Zin](#), failing to uphold God’s sanctity among the Israelite people. ([Deuteronomy 32:48–52](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-Biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 32

Moses calls heaven and earth to serve as witnesses against Israel in [Deuteronomy 4:26](#), [30:19](#), [31:28](#), and [32:1](#). Similarly, [Psalm 50:4–5](#) reports that God “summoned the heavens above, and the earth, for the trial of His people,” saying “Bring in My devotees, who made a covenant with Me over sacrifice!” [Psalm 50:6](#) continues: “Then the heavens proclaimed His righteousness, for He is a God who judges.” And in [Isaiah 1:2](#), the prophet similarly begins his vision, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken."

In [Deuteronomy 32:4](#), [32:15](#), [32:18](#), and [32:30–31](#), Moses calls God a "Rock." The Psalmist does so as well in [Psalm 19:15](#) and [Psalm 95:1](#). [Psalm 18:3](#) analogizes God's role as a Rock to a "fortress" and a "high tower."

Deuteronomy compares God's relationship with Israel to that of a parent and child in [Deuteronomy 1:31](#), [8:5](#), and [32:5](#). For similar comparisons, see [Exodus 4:22–23](#), [Isaiah 1:2](#), and [Hosea 11:1](#).

In [Deuteronomy 32:10](#), God finds Israel in the wilderness, much as in [Hosea 9:10](#), God says, "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first season."

[Psalm 91](#) interprets the role of God as an eagle expressed in [Deuteronomy 32:11](#). [Psalm 91:4](#) explains, “He will cover you

with His pinions, and under His wings shall you take refuge,” and [Psalm 91:5](#) explains, “You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day.”

[[edit](#)] In classical rabbinic interpretation

The [Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael](#) counted 10 songs in the [Hebrew Bible](#): (1) the one that the Israelites recited at the first [Passover](#) in [Egypt](#), as [Isaiah 30:29](#) says, “You shall have a song as in the night when a feast is hallowed”; (2) the [Song of the sea](#) in [Exodus 15](#); (3) the one that the Israelites sang at the well in the wilderness, as [Numbers 21:17](#) reports, “Then sang Israel this song: ‘Spring up, O well’”; (4) the one that Moses spoke in his last days, as [Deuteronomy 31:30](#) reports, “Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song”; (5) the one that Joshua recited, as [Joshua 10:12](#) reports, “Then spoke Joshua to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the [Amorites](#)”; (6) the one that [Deborah](#) and [Barak](#) sang, as [Judges 5:1](#) reports, “Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of [Abinoam](#)”; (7) the one that [David](#) spoke, as [2 Samuel 22:1](#) reports, “David spoke to the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of [Saul](#)”; (8) the one that [Solomon](#) recited, as [Psalm 30:1](#) reports, “a song at the Dedication of the [House of David](#)”; (9) the one that [Jehoshaphat](#) recited, as [2 Chronicles 20:21](#) reports: “when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing to the Lord, and praise in the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for

His mercy endures for ever”]; and (10) the song that will be sung in the time to come, as [Isaiah 42:10](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth,” and [Psalm 149:1](#) says, “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints.” (Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael Shirata 1:5.)

The [Gemara](#) instructs that when writing a Torah scroll, a scribe needs to write the song of [Deuteronomy 32:1–43](#) in a special two-column form, with extra spaces. (See the image at the top of this article.) If a scribe writes the song as plain text, then the scroll is invalid. ([Babylonian Talmud Shabbat 103b.](#))

Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) asked why Moses called upon both the heavens and the earth in [Deuteronomy 32:1](#). Rabbi Samuel compared Moses to a general who held office in two provinces and was about to hold a feast. He needed to invite people from both provinces, so that neither would feel offended for having been overlooked. Moses was born on earth, but became great in heaven. ([Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 10:4.)

The [Sifre](#) taught that Israel would come before God and acknowledge that heaven and earth, the witnesses that God designated in [Deuteronomy 32:1](#), were present to testify against her, but God would say that God would remove them, as [Isaiah 65:17](#) reports that God would "create a new heaven and a new earth." Israel would say to God that her bad name endured, but God would say that God would remove her bad name as well, as [Isaiah 62:2](#) reports that Israel "shall be called by a new name." Israel would ask God whether God had not prohibited her reconciliation with God when [Jeremiah 3:1](#) says, "If a man put

away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return to her again?" But God would reply in the words of [Hosea 11:9](#), "I am God, and not man." (And thus God would forgive Israel and restore her original relationship with God.) (Sifre to Deuteronomy 306:2–3.)

Rav Judah and [Rava](#) inferred from [Deuteronomy 32:2](#) the great value of rain. Rava also inferred from the comparison in [Deuteronomy 32:2](#) of Torah to both rain and dew that Torah can affect a worthy scholar as beneficially as dew, and an unworthy one like a crushing rainstorm. ([Babylonian Talmud Taanit 7a](#).)

Rabbi [Abbahu](#) cited [Deuteronomy 32:3](#) to support the proposition of [Mishnah Berakhot 7:1](#) that three who have eaten together publicly should say the Grace after Meals ([Birkeat Hamazon](#)) together as well. In [Deuteronomy 32:3](#), Moses says, "When I (who am one) proclaim the name of the Lord, you (in the plural, who are thus at least two more) ascribe greatness to our God." Thus by using the plural to for "you," Moses implies that at least three are present, and should ascribe greatness to God. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 45a](#).)

[Rabbi Jose](#) found support in the words "ascribe greatness to our God" in [Deuteronomy 32:3](#) for the proposition that when standing in the house of assembly saying, "Blessed is the Lord who is to be blessed," people are to respond, "Blessed is the Lord who is to be blessed forever and ever." Rabbi Jose also found support in those words for the proposition that Grace after Meals is said only when three are present; that one must say "[Amen](#)" after the one who says the blessing; that one must say, "Blessed is

the Name of the Glory of His Kingdom forever and ever”; and that when people say, “May His great name be blessed,” one must answer, “Forever and ever and ever.” (Sifre 306:30.)

Rabbi [Hanina bar Papa](#) taught that to enjoy this world without reciting a [blessing](#) is tantamount to robbing God, as [Proverbs 28:24](#) says, “Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, ‘It is no transgression,’ is the companion of a destroyer,” and [Deuteronomy 32:6](#) says of God, “Is not He your father Who has gotten you?” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 35b.](#))

The Gemara read the word “Rock” in [Deuteronomy 32:18](#) to refer to God, and the Gemara employed that interpretation with others to support Abba Benjamin’s assertion that when two people enter a [synagogue](#) to pray, and one of them finishes first and leaves without waiting for the other, God disregards the prayer of the one who left. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 5b.](#))

Rabbi Judah ben Simon expounded on God’s words in [Deuteronomy 32:20](#), “I will hide My face from them.” Rabbi Judah ben Simon compared Israel to a king’s son who went into the marketplace and struck people but was not struck in return (because of his being the king’s son). He insulted but was not insulted. He went up to his father arrogantly. But the father asked the son whether he thought that he was respected on his own account, when the son was respected only on account of the respect that was due to the father. So the father renounced the son, and as a result, no one took any notice of him. So when Israel went out of Egypt, the fear of them fell upon all the nations, as [Exodus 15:14–16](#) reported, “The peoples have heard,

they tremble; pangs have taken hold on the inhabitants of Philistia. Then were the chiefs of Edom frightened; the mighty men of Moab, trembling takes hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan are melted away. Terror and dread falls upon them.” But when Israel transgressed and sinned, God asked Israel whether it thought that it was respected on its own account, when it was respected only on account of the respect that was due to God. So God turned away from them a little, and the [Amalekites](#) came and attacked Israel, as [Exodus 17:8](#) reports, “Then Amalek came, and fought with Israel in Rephidim,” and then the [Canaanites](#) came and fought with Israel, as [Numbers 21:1](#) reports, “And the Canaanite, the king of [Arad](#), who dwelt in the South, heard tell that Israel came by the way of Atharim; and he fought against Israel.” God told the Israelites that they had no genuine faith, as [Deuteronomy 32:20](#) says, “they are a very disobedient generation, children in whom is no faith.” God concluded that the Israelites were rebellious, but to destroy them was impossible, to take them back to Egypt was impossible, and God could not change them for another people. So God concluded to chastise and try them with suffering. ([Ruth Rabbah](#) Prologue 4.)

The Gemara read the word *reshet* (“fiery bolt”) in [Deuteronomy 32:24](#) to refer to [demons](#), and the Gemara employed that interpretation with others to support Rabbi Isaac’s assertion that reciting the [Shema](#) in bed keeps demons away. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 5a.](#))

[Rav Hisda](#) taught that one walking in a dirty alleyway should not recite the Shema, and one reciting the Shema who comes upon a dirty alleyway should stop reciting. Of one who would not stop reciting, Rav [Adda bar Ahavah](#) quoted [Numbers 15:31](#) to say: “he has despised the word of the Lord.” And of one who does stop reciting, Rabbi Abbahu taught that [Deuteronomy 32:47](#) says: “through this word you shall prolong your days.” ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 24b.](#))



David and [Bathsbeba](#), by [Bernardino Mei](#), mid-17th century

The Sifre taught that God told Moses in [Deuteronomy 32:50](#) that Moses would die “as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people,” because when Moses saw the merciful manner of Aaron’s death, as reported in [Numbers 20:23–28](#), Moses concluded that he would want to die the same way. The Sifre taught that God told Aaron to go in a cave, to climb onto a bier, to spread his hands, to spread his legs, to close his mouth, and to close his eyes, and then Aaron died. And at

that moment, Moses concluded that one would be happy to die that way. (Sifre to Deuteronomy 339:3.)

The Gemara implied that the sin of Moses in striking the rock at [Meribah](#) compared favorably to the sin of David. The Gemara reported that Moses and David were two good leaders of Israel. Moses begged God that his sin be recorded, as it is in [Numbers 20:12](#), [20:23–24](#), and [27:13–14](#), and [Deuteronomy 32:51](#). David, however, begged that his sin be blotted out, as [Psalm 32:1](#) says, “Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.” The Gemara compared the cases of Moses and David to the cases of two women whom the court sentenced to be lashed. One had committed an indecent act, while the other had eaten unripe figs of the seventh year in violation of [Leviticus 25:6](#). The woman who had eaten unripe figs begged the court to make known for what offense she was being flogged, lest people say that she was being punished for the same sin as the other woman. The court thus made known her sin, and the Torah repeatedly records the sin of Moses. ([Babylonian Talmud Yoma 86b](#).)

[edit] In medieval rabbinic interpretation

[Saadiah Gaon](#) interpreted heaven and earth in [Deuteronomy 32:1](#) to mean the [angels](#) and the people of the earth. ([Ibn Ezra](#) on 32:1.)

[Rashi](#) explained that Moses called upon heaven and earth to serve as witnesses in [Deuteronomy 32:1](#) in case Israel denied accepting the covenant, because Moses knew that he was mortal and would soon die, but heaven and earth will endure forever. ([Rashi on 32:1](#);

see also Ibn Ezra and [Nachmanides](#) on 32:1.) Furthermore, said Rashi, if Israel acted meritoriously, then the witnesses would be able to reward them, as the earth would yield its produce and the heavens would give its dew. ([Zechariah 8:12](#).) And if Israel acted sinfully, then the hand of the witnesses would be the first to inflict punishment (carrying out the injunction of [Deuteronomy 17:7](#)), as God would close off heaven's rain, and the soil would not yield its produce. ([Deuteronomy 11:17](#).) ([Rashi on 32:1](#).)

Rashi interpreted [Deuteronomy 32:2](#) to refer to Torah, which, like rain, provides life to the world. Rashi interpreted the request of Moses in [Deuteronomy 32:2](#) for his speech to rain down “as the dew,” “as the rain,” to mean that it should come in small droplets. Rashi interpreted that Moses wanted to teach the children of Israel slowly, the knowledge "raining" down on the people in small portions, for if they were to be subject to all knowledge coming down at once, they would be overwhelmed and thus wiped out. ([Rashi on 32:2](#).)

[[edit](#)] In modern interpretation



the deluge (1869 painting by Wassilij Petrovich Wereschtschagin)

Harold Fisch described the witness function of the song as "a kind of time bomb; it awaits it's hour and then springs forward into harsh remembrance." (*Poetry with a Purpose: Biblical Poetics and Interpretation*, 51. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1988. [ISBN 025334557X](#).)

A [midrash](#) interpreted the report of [Deuteronomy 32:8](#) that God "fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel's number" (*l'mispar b'nei Yisrael*) to teach that before the days of [Abraham](#), God dealt harshly with the world: The sins of [Noah](#)'s generation resulted in the flood; the generation that built the [Tower of Babel](#) was dispersed throughout the globe, prompting the proliferation of languages; the sins of [Sodom and Gomorrah](#) were answered with fire and brimstone. According to the midrash, when Abraham came into the world, God ceased the cataclysmic

punishments and set the punishments of other peoples in relationship to Israel's presence in the world. This midrash conveys that the Israelites' presence somehow lessened God's anger, bringing greater stability to the world. The midrash teaches that Jews, then, have a unique ability and responsibility to bring peace and stability to the world. (myjewishlearning.com)

[Nahama Leibowitz](#) noted that [Deuteronomy 32:27](#) contains a “very daring anthropomorphism indeed, attributing to God the sentiment of fear.” (*Studies in Devarim: Deuteronomy*, 328.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

[Maimonides](#) cites the parshah for one negative [commandment](#):

- Not to drink wine of libation to idolatry ([Deuteronomy 32:38](#).)

(Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah](#), [Negative Commandment 194](#). Cairo, Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2:189–91. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#).)

According to [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), however, there are no commandments in the parshah. (*Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:443. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6](#).)

And according to others, the parshah contains a commandment to listen, hear, and learn one's ancestral history, as [Deuteronomy 32:7–9](#) instructs one to "ask your father and he will tell you."



David between Wisdom and Prophecy (illustration from the 10th century [Paris Psalter](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is the song of David, [2 Samuel 22:1–51](#). Both the parshah and the haftarah set out the song of a great leader. Both the parshah (in [Deuteronomy 32:4](#) and [18](#)) and the haftarah (in [2 Samuel 22:1](#) and [2](#)) refer to God as a Rock.

[\[edit\]](#) In the liturgy

Moses' characterization of God as “the Rock” in [Deuteronomy 32:4](#) is reflected in [Psalm 95:1](#), which is in turn the first of the six Psalms recited at the beginning of the Kabbalat Shabbat [prayer service](#), as well as in [Psalm 92:16](#), which is recited later in the Kabbalat Shabbat service after the [Lekhah Dodi](#) liturgical poem. ([Reuven Hammer](#). *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 15, 23. New York: The [Rabbinical Assembly](#), 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

Many Jews recite the words, “as an eagle that stirs up her nest, hovers over her young,” from [Deuteronomy 32:11](#) as part of the declaration of intent before donning the [tallit](#). (Menachem Davis, *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation*, 5. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Numbers 20:10–13](#); [27:12–14](#).
- [Deuteronomy 3:26–27](#); [4:26](#); [30:19](#); [31:28](#).
- [2 Samuel 22:3](#); [22:15](#); [22:31](#).
- [Isaiah 50:10-11](#).
- [Psalm 50:4–6](#); [91](#); [95:1](#) (God as “the Rock”).

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Dead Sea scrolls](#) 4QDeutj, 4QDeut^a



Josephus

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:44, 47. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 123–25. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[edit] Classical rabbinic

- [Tosefta](#) Shabbat 8:24–25; Sotah 4:8. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 1:385, 848. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 306:1–341:1. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:295–397. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).
- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 72b, 84b; Peah 5a, 7b, 48b; Kilayim 82a; Sheviit 5b; Maaser Sheni 49b. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 2–3, 5–6a, 10. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006–2009.

- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 1:14; 5:5; 12:1; 13:14; 15:7; 22:2; 44:21; 53:15; 65:15; 68:12; 96:5. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 2:10; 4:1; 18:5; 22:8; 23:5, 12. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 5a–b, 45a, 56b](#); [Shabbat 103b](#); [Pesachim 111b](#); [Yoma 37a](#); [Taanit 7a, 11a](#); [Chagigah 12b](#); [Yevamot 63b](#); [Ketubot 8b, 111b](#); [Baba Kama 50a, 60b](#); [Bava Batra 25a](#); [Sanhedrin 91b, 97a](#); [Avodah Zarah 29b](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[[edit](#)] Medieval

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 1:5; 3:5; 5:4; 8:2; 10:1–4; 11:5, 10. Land of Israel, 9th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 1:12; 3:8; 5:12, 14; 13:2; 15:12, 16; 21:3; 23:2, 8; 24:1; 29:7; 30:1, 11, 21; 32:7; 42:1; 51:7. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Rashi

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary*. [Deuteronomy 32](#). Troyes, France, late 11th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:329–69. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).

- [Judah Halevi. *Kuzari*. 2:16; 3:11; 4:3. Toledo](#), Spain, 1130–1140. Reprinted in, e.g., Jehuda Halevi. *Kuzari: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Intro. by Henry Slonimsky, 92, 149, 201. New York: Schocken, 1964. [ISBN 0-8052-0075-4](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 2:6; 8:4; 9:1, 7, 11, 14, 49; 10:2; 12:11; 13:14; 14:12; 16:5, 24; 17:5; 20:1, 19, 21. 12th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Esther Rabbah](#) 1:6; 5:1; 7:13.



Zohar

- [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 1:11; 8:7.
- [Ruth Rabbah](#): prologue 3, 4.
- [Lamentations Rabbah](#): prologue 24, 25, 34; 1:33, 55; 2:4.
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 2:15; 3:13, 17, 19; 9:5
- [Zohar](#) 1:6a, 22b, 26a, 53a, 87b, 96b, 138b, 139b, 143b, 160a, 161b, 163a, 164a, 177a, 189b, 192a; 2:5b, 26b, 64a,

64b, 80b, 83b, 86a, 95b, 96a, 108b, 125a, 144a, 155b, 157a, 162b, 210a; 3:60b, 78b, 126a, 210b, 263a, 268a, [286a–299b](#). Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.

[[edit](#)] Modern



Dickinson

- [Samson Raphael Hirsch](#). *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*. Translated by Isidore Grunfeld, 444–45. London: Soncino Press, 1962. Reprinted 2002 [ISBN 0-900689-40-4](#). Originally published as *Horeb, Versuche über Jissroel's Pflichten in der Zerstreuung*. Germany, 1837.
- [Emily Dickinson](#). *Poem 112 (Where bells no more affright the morn —)*. Circa 1859. *Poem 168 (If the foolish, call them "flowers" —)*. Circa 1860. *Poem 597 (It always felt to me — a wrong)*. Circa 1862. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 53, 79–80, 293–94. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960. [ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).

- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- [Nahama Leibowitz](#). *Studies in Devarim: Deuteronomy*, 327–69. Jerusalem: World Zionist Org.: 1980. [ISBN 0-686-76264-9](#).
- [Elliot N. Dorff](#). “[A Jewish Approach to End-Stage Medical Care](#).” New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1990. YD 339:1.1990b. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1980–1990: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by David J. Fine, 519, 531–32, 564. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2005. [ISBN 0-916219-27-5](#). (implications of God’s ownership of the universe on the duty to maintain life and health).
- Avram Israel Reisner. “[Joint Aliyot](#).” New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1992. OH 136.1992. Reprinted in *Responsa: 1991–2000: The Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement*. Edited by Kassel Abelson and David J. Fine, 21, 23–24. New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2002. [ISBN 0-916219-19-4](#). (implications of the command to “exalt our God” for joint or single blessings).
- Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 298–317, 508–18. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).

- Suzanne A. Brody. “Witness.” In *Dancing in the White Spaces: The Yearly Torah Cycle and More Poems*, 111. Shelbyville, Kentucky: Wasteland Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-60047-112-9](#).
- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 266. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).

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V'Zot HaBerachah

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V'Zot HaBerachah, **VeZot Haberakha**, or **Zos Habrocho**

(וְזֹאת הַבְּרָכָה — [Hebrew](#) for "and this is the [blessing](#)," the [first words](#) in the parshah) is the 54th and last [weekly Torah portion](#) (*parshah*) in the annual [Jewish](#) cycle of [Torah reading](#) and the 11th and last in the [book of Deuteronomy](#). It constitutes [Deuteronomy 33:1–34:12](#). [Jews](#) generally read it in September or October on the [Simchat Torah](#) festival. Immediately after reading parshah V'Zot HaBerachah, Jews also read the beginning of the Torah, [Genesis 1:1–2:3](#) (the beginning of parshah [Bereishit](#)), as the second Torah reading for Simchat Torah.

The parshah sets out the farewell blessing of [Moses](#) for the [12 Tribes of Israel](#) and then the [death](#) of Moses.



Deuteronomy 32:50–33:29 in the [Aleppo Codex](#)

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[\[edit\]](#) Summary



“The Lord . . . came from the myriads holy, at His right hand was a fiery law to them.” ([Deuteronomy 33:2.](#))

[\[edit\]](#) The blessing of Moses

Before he died, Moses, the [man of God](#), bade the [Israelites](#) farewell with this blessing: [God](#) came from [Sinai](#), shone on them from [Seir](#), appeared from [Paran](#), and approached from Ribbothkodesh, [lightning](#) flashing from God’s [right](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:1–2.](#)) God [loved](#) the people, holding their hallowed in God’s [hand](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:3.](#)) The people followed in God’s steps,

accepting God's [Torah](#) as the [heritage](#) of the congregation of [Jacob](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:3–4](#).) God became [King](#) in [Jeshurun](#) when the [chiefs](#) of the [tribes](#) of [Israel](#) assembled. ([Deuteronomy 33:5](#).)

Moses prayed that the [Tribe of Reuben](#) survive, though its numbers were few. ([Deuteronomy 33:6](#).)

Moses asked God to [hear](#) the [voice](#) of the [Tribe of Judah](#), restore it, and help it against its foes. ([Deuteronomy 33:7](#).)

Moses prayed that God would be with the [Levites](#), who held God's [Urim and Thummim](#), whom God tested at [Massah](#) and [Meribah](#), who disregarded [family](#) ties to carry out God's will, who would teach God's [laws](#) to Israel, and who would offer God's [incense](#) and [offerings](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:8–10](#).) Moses asked God to bless their substance, favor their undertakings, and smite their enemies. ([Deuteronomy 33:8–11](#).)

Moses said that God loved and always protected the [Tribe of Benjamin](#), who rested [securely](#) beside God, between God's [shoulders](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:8–12](#).)



“Zebulun . . . and Issachar . . . shall suck the abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand.”

Moses called on God to bless the [Tribe of Joseph](#) with [dew](#), the yield of the [sun](#), crops in season, the bounty of the [hills](#), and the favor of the Presence in the [burning bush](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:13–16](#).) Moses likened the tribe to a firstling [bull](#), with [horns](#) like a wild ox, who gores the peoples from one end of the [earth](#) to the other. ([Deuteronomy 33:17](#).)

Moses exhorted the [Tribe of Zebulun](#) to rejoice on its [journeys](#), and the [Tribe of Issachar](#) in its [tents](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:18](#).) They invited their kin to the [mountain](#) where they offered sacrifices of success; they drew from the riches of the [sea](#) and the hidden hoards of the [sand](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:19](#).)



“Gad . . . dwells like a lion.” ([Deuteronomy 33:20](#).) (brick panel from the Procession Way of [Babylon](#), now at the [Louvre](#))

Moses blessed the God who enlarged the [Tribe of Gad](#), who was poised like a [lion](#), who chose the best, the portion of the revered chieftain, who executed God’s judgments for Israel. ([Deuteronomy 33:20–21](#).)

Moses called the [Tribe of Dan](#) a lion's whelp that leapt from [Bashan](#). ([Deuteronomy 33:22](#).)

Moses told the [Tribe of Naphtali](#), sated with favor and blessed by God, to take possession on the west and south. ([Deuteronomy 33:23](#).)

Moses prayed that the [Tribe of Asher](#) be the favorite among the tribes, dip its [feet](#) in [oil](#), and have [door bolts](#) of [iron](#) and [copper](#) and [security](#) all its days. ([Deuteronomy 33:24–25](#).)

Moses said that there was none like God, riding through the heavens to help, an everlasting refuge and support, Who drove out the enemy. ([Deuteronomy 33:26–27](#).) Thus Israel dwelt untroubled in [safety](#) in a [land](#) of [grain](#) and [wine](#) under heaven's dripping dew. ([Deuteronomy 33:28](#).) Who was like Israel, a people delivered by God, God's protecting [Shield](#) and [Sword](#) triumphant over Israel's cringing enemies. ([Deuteronomy 33:29](#).)





The Death of Moses (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)



The Death of Moses (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[[edit](#)] The death of Moses

Moses went up from the [steppes](#) of [Moab](#) to [Mount Nebo](#), and God showed him the whole land. ([Deuteronomy 34:1–3](#).) God told Moses that this was the land that God had [sworn](#) to assign to the descendants of [Abraham](#), [Isaac](#), and Jacob. ([Deuteronomy 34:4](#).)

So Moses the servant of God died there, in the land of Moab, at God's command, and God [buried](#) him in the [valley](#) in the land of Moab, near Beth-peor, although no one knew his burial place. ([Deuteronomy 34:5–6](#).) Moses was 120 years old when he died, but his [eyes](#) were undimmed and his vigor unabated. ([Deuteronomy 34:7](#).) The Israelites [mourned](#) for 30 days.

([Deuteronomy 34:8](#).) [Joshua](#) was filled with the spirit of [wisdom](#) because Moses had laid his hands on him, and the Israelites heeded him. ([Deuteronomy 34:9](#).)

Never again did there arise in Israel a [prophet](#) like Moses, whom God singled out, [face](#) to face, for the signs and portents that God sent him to display against [Pharaoh](#) and [Egypt](#), and for all the awesome power that Moses displayed before Israel.

([Deuteronomy 34:10–12](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) In inner-biblical interpretation

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 33

[Genesis 49:3–27](#), [Deuteronomy 33:6–25](#), and [Judges 5:14–18](#)

present parallel listings of the twelve tribes, presenting contrasting characterizations of their relative strengths:

Tribes	Genesis 49	Deuteronomy 33	Judges 5
Reuben	Jacob's first-born, Jacob's might, the first-fruits of Jacob's strength, the excellency of dignity, the excellency of power; unstable as water, he would not have the excellency because he mounted his father's bed and	let him live and not die and become few in number	among their divisions were great resolves of heart; they sat among the sheepfolds to hear the piping for the flocks, and did not contribute; at their divisions was great soul-searching

defiled it

brother of [Levi](#),
weapons of
violence were
their kinship; let
Jacob's soul not
come into their
council, to their
assembly, for in
their anger they
slew men, in
their self-will
they hewed
oxen; cursed was
their fierce anger
and their cruel
wrath, Jacob
would divide and
scatter them in
Israel

[Simeon](#)

not mentioned

not mentioned

brother of
[Simeon](#),
weapons of
violence were
their kinship; let
Jacob's soul not
come into their
council, to their
assembly, for in
their anger they
slew men, in
their self-will
they hewed
oxen; cursed was
their fierce anger
and their cruel
wrath, Jacob
would divide and
scatter them in

[Levi](#)

his Thummim and
Urim would be with
God; God proved
him at Massah, with
whom God strove at
the waters of
Meribah; he did not
acknowledge his
father, mother,
brothers, or children;
observed God's
word, and would
keep God's covenant;
would teach Israel
God's law; would put
incense before God,
and whole burnt-
offerings on God's
altar; God bless his

not mentioned

Israel substance, and accept
the work of his
hands; smite the loins
of his enemies

his brothers
would praise
him, his hand
would be on the
neck of his
enemies, his
father's sons
would bow
down before
him; a lion's
whelp, from the
prey he is gone
up, he stooped
down, he

couched as a lion God hear his voice,
and a lioness, and bring him in to
his people; his hands
would contend for not mentioned
him, and God would
help against his
adversaries

[Judah](#)

rouse him? the
scepter would
not depart from
him, nor the
ruler's staff from
between his feet,
as long as men
come to [Shiloh](#),
to him would
the obedience of
the peoples be;
binding his foal
to the vine and
his ass's colt to
the choice vine,
he washes his
garments in
wine, his eyes

would be red
with wine, and
his teeth white
with milk

[Zebulun](#)

would dwell at
the shore of the
sea, would be a
shore for ships,
his flank would
be upon [Zidon](#)

he would rejoice in
his going out, with
Issachar he would call
peoples to the
mountain; there they
would offer sacrifices
of righteousness, for
they would suck the
abundance of the
seas, and the hidden
treasures of the sand

they that
handle the
marshal's staff;
jeopardized
their lives for
Israel

[Issachar](#)

a large-boned
ass, couching
down between
the sheep-folds,
he saw a good
resting-place and
the pleasant
land, he bowed
his shoulder to
bear and became
a servant under
task-work

he would rejoice in
his tents, with
Zebulun he would
call peoples to the
mountain; there they
would offer sacrifices
of righteousness, for
they would suck the
abundance of the
seas, and the hidden
treasures of the sand

their princes
were with
[Deborah](#)

[Dan](#)

would judge his
people, would be
a serpent in the
way, a horned
snake in the
path, that bites
the horse's heels,
so that his rider
falls backward

a lion's whelp, that
leaps forth from
Bashan

sojourned by
the ships, and
did not
contribute

[Gad](#)

a troop would

blessed be God Who

[Gilead](#) stayed

troop upon him, but he would troop upon their heel	enlarges him; he dwells as a lioness, and tears the arm and the crown of the head; he chose a first part for himself, for there a portion of a ruler was reserved; and there came the heads of the people, he executed God's righteousness and ordinances with Israel	beyond the Jordan and did not contribute
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[Asher](#)

his bread would be fat, he would yield royal dainties	blessed above sons; let him be the favored of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil; iron and brass would be his bars; and as his days, so would his strength be	dwelt at the shore of the sea, abided by its bays, and did not contribute
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[Naphtali](#)

a hind let loose, he gave goodly words	satisfied with favor, full with God's blessing, would possess the sea and the south	were upon the high places of the field of battle
--	---	---

[Joseph](#)

a fruitful vine by a fountain, its branches run over the wall, the archers have dealt bitterly with him, shot at him, and hated him; his bow abode firm, and the arms of his hands were	blessed of God was his land; for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep beneath, and for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, and for the precious things of the yield of the moons, for the tops of the ancient	out of Ephraim came they whose root is in Amalek
--	--	--

made supple by mountains, and for
 God, who would the precious things of
 help and bless the everlasting hills,
 him with and for the precious
 blessings of things of the earth
 heaven above, and the fullness
 the deep thereof, and the good
 beneath, the will of God; the
 breast and the blessing would come
 womb; Jacob's upon the head of
 blessings, mighty [Joseph](#), and upon the
 beyond the crown of the head of
 blessings of his him that is prince
 ancestors, would among his brothers;
 be on his head, his firstling bullock,
 and on the majesty was his; and
 crown of the his horns were the
 head of the horns of the wild-ox;
 prince among his with them he would
 brothers gore all the peoples to
 the ends of the earth;
 they were the ten
 thousands of
[Ephraim](#) and the
 thousands of
[Manasseh](#)

[Benjamin](#) a ravenous wolf, God's beloved would
 in the morning dwell in safety by
 he devoured the God; God covered came after
 prey, at evening him all the day, and Ephraim
 he divided the dwelt between his
 spoil shoulders

[\[edit\]](#) In classical rabbinic interpretation



Abraham and the Three Angels (engraving by [Gustave Doré](#))

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 33

The [Tosefta](#) found in [Deuteronomy 33:2](#) demonstration of the proposition that Providence rewards a person measure for measure. Thus just as [Abraham](#) rushed three times to serve the visiting [angels](#) in [Genesis 18:2](#), [6](#), and [7](#), so God rushed three times in service of Abraham’s children when in [Genesis 18:2](#), God “came from Sinai, rose from Seir to them, [and] shined forth from mount Paran.” (Tosefta Sotah 4:1.)

The students of Rav Shila’s academy deduced from the words “from His right hand, a fiery law for them” in [Deuteronomy 33:2](#) that Moses received the Torah from God’s hand. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 4b.](#))

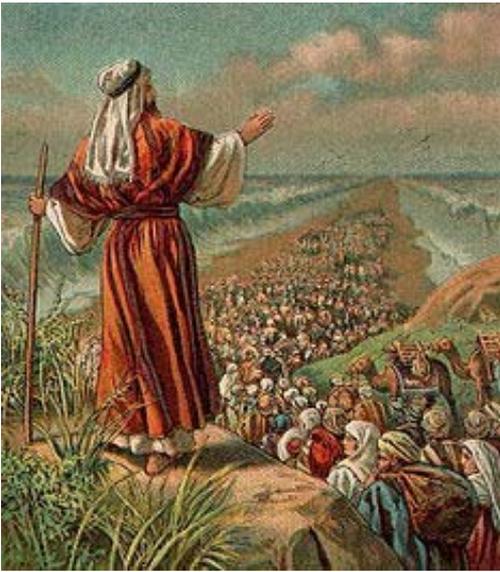


Moses Strikes the Rock (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by [James Tissot](#))

[Rabbi Hanina](#) taught that the world was unworthy to have [cedar](#) trees, but God created them for the sake of the Tabernacle (for example, in the acacia-wood of [Exodus 26:15](#)) and the Temple, as [Psalm 104:16](#) says, “The trees of the Lord have their fill, the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted,” once again interpreting Lebanon to mean the Temple. Rabbi [Samuel ben Nahman](#) in the name of [Rabbi Jonathan](#) taught that there are 24 kinds of cedars, of which seven are especially fine, as [Isaiah 41:19](#) says, “I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia-tree, and the myrtle, and the oil-tree; I will set in the desert the cypress, the

plane-tree, and the larch together.” God foresaw that the Tabernacle would be made of these trees, as [Psalm 104:17](#) says, “Wherein the birds make their nests,” and “birds” refers to those birds that the priests offered. And when [Psalm 104:17](#) says, “As for the stork (הַיָּדִיבָּה, *basidab*), the fir-trees are her house,” the הַיָּדִיבָּה, *basidab* (stork) refers to the High Priest, of whom [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) says, “Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one (הַיָּדִיבָּה, *hasidekha*).” ([Exodus Rabbah](#) 35:1.)

A midrash employed a parable to explain why God held [Aaron](#) as well as Moses responsible when Moses struck the rock, as [Numbers 20:12](#) reports, “and the Lord said to Moses *and Aaron*: ‘Because you did not believe in me.’” The midrash told how a creditor came to take away a debtor's granary and took both the debtor's granary and the debtor's neighbor's granary. The debtor asked the creditor what his neighbor had done to warrant such treatment. Similarly, Moses asked God what Aaron had done to be blamed when Moses lost his temper. The midrash taught that it on this account that [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) praises Aaron, saying, “And of Levi he said: ‘Your Thummim and your Urim be with your holy one, whom you proved at Massah, with whom you strove at the waters of Meribah.’” ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 19:9.)



Israel's Escape from Egypt (illustration from a Bible card published 1907 by the Providence Lithograph Company)

[Rabbi Meir](#) taught that when the Israelites stood by the sea, the tribes competed with each other over who would go into the sea first. The [tribe of Benjamin](#) went first, as [Psalm 68:28](#) says: “There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them (*rodem*),” and Rabbi Meir read *rodem*, “ruling them,” as *rad yam*, “descended into the sea.” Then the princes of [Judah](#) threw stones at them, as [Psalm 68:28](#) says: “the princes of Judah their council (*rigmatam*),” and Rabbi Meir read *rigmatam* as “stoned them.” For that reason, Benjamin merited hosting the site of God’s [Temple](#), as [Deuteronomy 33:12](#) says: “He dwells between his shoulders.” [Rabbi Judah](#) answered Rabbi Meir that in reality, no tribe was willing to be the first to go into the sea. Then [Nahshon ben](#)

[Aminadab](#) stepped forward and went into the sea first, praying in the words of [Psalm 69:2–16](#), “Save me O God, for the waters come into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing Let not the water overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up.” Moses was then praying, so God prompted Moses, in words parallel those of [Exodus 14:15](#), “My beloved ones are drowning in the sea, and you prolong prayer before Me!” Moses asked God, “Lord of the Universe, what is there in my power to do?” God replied in the words of [Exodus 14:15–16](#), “Speak to the children of Israel, that they go forward. And lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the children of Israel shall go into the midst of the sea on dry ground.” Because of Nahshon’s actions, Judah merited becoming the ruling power in Israel, as [Psalm 114:2](#) says, “Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion,” and that happened because, as [Psalm 114:3](#) says, “The sea saw [him], and fled.” ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 36b–37a.](#))



The Cup Found (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)

A [Midrash](#) told that when in [Genesis 44:12](#) the steward found Joseph's cup in Benjamin's belongings, his brothers beat Benjamin on his shoulders, calling him a thief and the son of a thief, and saying that he had shamed them as [Rachel](#) had shamed Jacob when she stole [Laban's](#) idols in [Genesis 31:19](#). And by virtue of receiving those unwarranted blows between his shoulders, Benjamin's descendants merited having the Divine Presence rest between his shoulders and the Temple rest in Jerusalem, as [Deuteronomy 33:12](#) reports, "He dwells between his shoulders" (Midrash [Tanhuma](#) Mikeitz 10.)

The [Mishnah](#) applied to Moses the words of [Deuteronomy 33:21](#), "He executed the righteousness of the Lord and His ordinances with Israel," deducing therefrom that Moses was righteous and caused many to be righteous, and therefore the righteousness of the many was credited to him. (Mishnah Avot 5:18.) And the Tosefta taught that the ministering angels mourned Moses with these words of [Deuteronomy 33:21](#). (Tosefta Sotah 4:9.)

A midrash taught that as God created the four cardinal directions, so also did God set about God's throne four angels — [Michael](#), [Gabriel](#), [Uriel](#), and [Raphael](#) — with Michael at God's right. The midrash taught that Michael got his name (*Mi ka'el*, מִי־כָּ־אֵל) as a reward for the manner in which he praised God in two expressions that Moses employed. When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, Moses began to chant, in the words of [Exodus 15:11](#), "Who (*mi*, מִי) is like You, o Lord." And when Moses completed the Torah, he said, in the words of [Deuteronomy 33:26](#), "There is none like God (*ka'el*, כָּ־אֵל), O [Jeshurun](#)." The

midrash taught that *mi* (מי) combined with *ka'el* (כָּאֵל) to form the name *Mi ka'el* (מִי-כָּאֵל). ([Numbers Rabbah](#) 2:10.)



Moses Viewing the Promised Land (woodcut by [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](#) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)



Moses Viewing the Promised Land (illustration from the 1890 Holman Bible)

[\[edit\]](#) Deuteronomy chapter 34

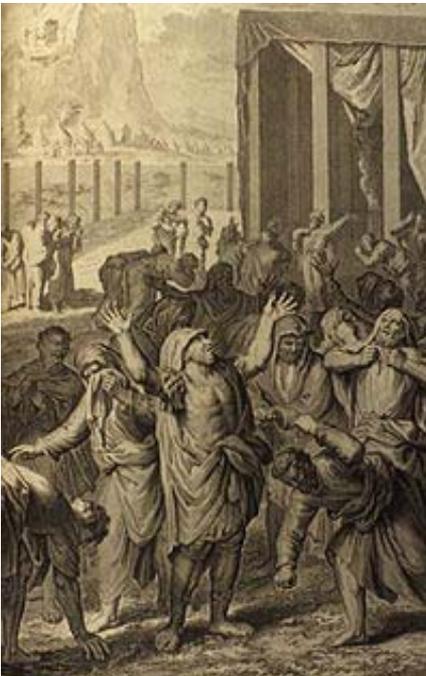
The [Sifre](#) taught that one should not read [Deuteronomy 34:1–2](#) to say, “the Lord showed him . . . as far as the hinder sea (יָם, *yam*),” but, “the Lord showed him . . . as far as the final day (יּוֹם, *yom*).” The [Sifre](#) thus read [Deuteronomy 34:1–2](#) to say that God showed Moses the entire history of the world, from the day on which God created the world to the day on which God would cause the dead to live again. ([Sifre to Deuteronomy 357:5:11.](#))

Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman in the name of Rabbi Jonathan cited [Deuteronomy 34:4](#) for the proposition that the dead can talk to each another. [Deuteronomy 34:4](#) says: “And the Lord said to him (Moses): ‘This is the land that I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, *saying*’” Rabbi Samuel ben Nahman reasoned that the word “saying” here indicates that just before Moses died, God told Moses to *say* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that God had carried out the oath that God had sworn to them.

([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 18b.](#)) The Gemara explained that God told Moses to tell them so that they might be grateful to Moses for what he had done for their descendants. ([Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 19a.](#))



Moses views the Promised Land (by [Lord Frederic Leighton](#), from the 1881 *Illustrations for "Dalziel's Bible Gallery"*)





The Israelites Mourn for Moses (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

The Mishnah and Tosefta also cited [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) for the proposition that Providence treats a person measure for measure as that person treats others. And so because, as [Exodus 13:19](#) relates, Moses attended to Joseph's bones, so in turn, none but God attended him, as [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) reports that God buried Moses. ([Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9](#); Tosefta Sotah 4:8.) The Tosefta deduced that Moses was thus borne on the wings of God's Presence from the portion of Reuben (where the Tosefta deduced from [Deuteronomy 32:49](#) that Moses died on Mount Nebo) to the portion of Gad (where the Tosefta deduced from the words "there a portion of a ruler was reserved" in [Deuteronomy 33:21](#) that Moses was buried). (Tosefta Sotah 4:8.)

Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina taught that [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) demonstrates one of God's attributes that humans should emulate. Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina asked what [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) means in the text, "You shall walk after the Lord your God." How can a human being walk after God, when [Deuteronomy 4:24](#) says, "[T]he Lord your God is a devouring fire"? Rabbi Hama son of Rabbi Hanina explained that the command to walk after God means to walk after the attributes of God. As God clothes the naked — for [Genesis 3:21](#) says, "And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife coats of skin, and clothed them" — so should we also clothe the naked. God visited the sick — for [Genesis 18:1](#) says, "And the Lord appeared to him

by the oaks of [Mamre](#)” (after [Abraham](#) was circumcised in [Genesis 17:26](#)) — so should we also visit the sick. God comforted mourners — for [Genesis 25:11](#) says, “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” — so should we also comfort mourners. God buried the dead — for [Deuteronomy 34:6](#) says, “And He buried him in the valley” — so should we also bury the dead. ([Babylonian Talmud Sotah 14a.](#)) Similarly, the [Sifre](#) on [Deuteronomy 11:22](#) taught that to walk in God’s ways means to be (in the words of [Exodus 34:6](#)) “merciful and gracious.” (Sifre to Deuteronomy 49:1.)

The Tosefta deduced from facts reported in [Deuteronomy 34:8](#) and [Joshua 1:1–2, 1:10–11](#), and [4:19](#) that Moses died on the seventh of [Adar](#). (Tosefta Sotah 11:7.)

[\[edit\]](#) Commandments

According to [Maimonides](#) and [Sefer ha-Chinuch](#), there are no [commandments](#) in the parshah. (Maimonides. [Mishneh Torah. Cairo](#), Egypt, 1170–1180. Reprinted in Maimonides. *The Commandments: Sefer Ha-Mitzvot of Maimonides*. Translated by Charles B. Chavel, 2 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1967. [ISBN 0-900689-71-4](#). *Sefer HaHinnuch: The Book of [Mitzvah] Education*. Translated by Charles Wengrov, 5:443. Jerusalem: Feldheim Pub., 1988. [ISBN 0-87306-497-6](#).)



The Ark Passes Over the Jordan (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)



The Children of Israel Crossing the Jordan (illustration by Gustave Doré)

[\[edit\]](#) Haftarah

The [haftarah](#) for the parshah is:

- for [Ashkenazi Jews: Joshua 1:1–18](#);
- for [Sephardi Jews: Joshua 1:1–9](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Summary

After Moses' death, God told Moses' minister Joshua to cross the Jordan with the Israelites. ([Joshua 1:1–2](#).) God would give them everyplace on which Joshua stepped, from the [Negev](#) desert to [Lebanon](#), from the [Euphrates](#) to the [Mediterranean Sea](#). ([Joshua 1:3–4](#).) God enjoined Joshua to be strong and of good courage, for none would be able to stand in his way, as God would lead him all of his life. ([Joshua 1:5–6](#).) God exhorted Joshua strictly to observe God's law, and to meditate on it day and night, so that he might succeed. ([Joshua 1:7–8](#).)



Israel Enters the Promised Land (illustration from a Bible card published by the Providence Lithograph Company)



The Israelites Pass the River Jordan (illustration from the 1728 *Figures de la Bible*)

Joshua told his officers to have the Israelites prepare food, for within three days they were to cross the Jordan to possess the land that God was giving them. ([Joshua 1:10–11](#).) Joshua told the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh to remember their commitment to Moses, whereby God would give them their land on the east side of the Jordan and their wives, children, and cattle would stay there, but the men would fight at the forefront of the Israelites until God gave the Israelites the

land of Israel. ([Joshua 1:12–15](#).) They answered Joshua that they would follow his commands just as they had followed Moses. ([Joshua 1:16–17](#).) Whoever rebelled against Joshua’s command would be put to death. ([Joshua 1:18](#).)

[edit] Connection to the Parshah

The haftarah carries forward the story in the parshah. As the parshah concludes the [Torah](#), the haftarah begins the [Prophets](#). The parshah (in [Deuteronomy 34:5](#)) and the haftarah (in [Joshua 1:1–2](#)) both report Moses’s death. The haftarah (in [Joshua 1:6–9](#)) echoes God’s encouragement to Joshua to be “strong and resolute,” which God had voiced in text just before the parshah (in [Deuteronomy 31:23](#)).

[edit] In the liturgy

Jews call on God to restore God’s sovereignty in Israel, reflected in [Deuteronomy 33:5](#), with the words “reign over us” in the weekday *Amidah* prayer in each of the three [prayer services](#). (Reuven Hammer. *Or Hadasb: A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom for Shabbat and Festivals*, 6. New York: The Rabbinical Assembly, 2003. [ISBN 0-916219-20-8](#).)

In the *Yigdal* hymn, the seventh verse, “In Israel, none like Moses arose again, a prophet who perceived His vision clearly,” derives from the observation of [Deuteronomy 34:10](#) that “there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” (Menachem Davis. *The Schottenstein Edition Siddur for*

Weekdays with an Interlinear Translation, 16–17. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 2002. [ISBN 1-57819-686-8](#).)

[\[edit\]](#) The Weekly Maqam

In [the Weekly Maqam](#), Sephardi Jews each week base the songs of the services on the content of that week's parshah. For parshah V'Zot HaBerachah, which falls on the holiday [Simchat Torah](#), Sephardi Jews apply Maqam Ajam, the maqam that expresses happiness, to commemorating the joy of finishing up the Torah readings, getting ready to begin the cycle again.

[\[edit\]](#) Further reading

The parshah has parallels or is discussed in these sources:

[\[edit\]](#) Biblical

- [Genesis 49:2–28](#) (12 tribes).
- [Exodus 3:2–6](#) (bush).
- [Judges 5:1–31](#) (12 tribes).



Josephus

[\[edit\]](#) Early nonrabbinic

- [Josephus](#), *Antiquities of the Jews* 4:8:47–49. Circa 93–94. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged, New Updated Edition*. Translated by [William Whiston](#), 124–25. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 1987. [ISBN 0-913573-86-8](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Classical rabbinic

- [Mishnah Sotah 1:7–9](#); Avot 5:18. Land of Israel, circa 200 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Mishnah: A New Translation*. Translated by [Jacob Neusner](#), 449, 688. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988. [ISBN 0-300-05022-4](#).
- [Tosefta](#): Maaser Sheni 5:27; Sotah 4:1, 8–9, 11:7; Bava Kamma 8:18; Sanhedrin 4:9. Land of Israel, circa 300 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Tosefta: Translated from the Hebrew, with a New Introduction*, 1:330, 844, 847–48, 879; 2:999, 1160. Translated by Jacob Neusner. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Pub., 2002. [ISBN 1-56563-642-2](#).
- [Sifre](#) to Deuteronomy 342:1–357:20. Land of Israel, circa 250–350 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation*. Translated by Jacob Neusner, 2:399–462. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987. [ISBN 1-55540-145-7](#).

- [Jerusalem Talmud](#): Berakhot 23a, 77a. Land of Israel, circa 400 C.E. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Yerushalmi*. Edited by Chaim Malinowitz, Yisroel Simcha Schorr, and Mordechai Marcus, vols. 1–2. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.
- [Genesis Rabbah](#) 1:4, 11; 6:9; 36:3; 39:11; 68:9; 72:5; 75:6, 12; 77:1; 82:5; 84:6; 86:3; 93:6–7; 95; 95:1, 4; 96; 97; 98:4, 12–13, 20; 99:2, 4, 9, 12; 100:9, 12. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Leviticus Rabbah](#) 1:4; 4:1; 9:3; 10:7; 21:2, 6; 25:2; 28:6; 30:2; 31:4; 32:2; 35:11; 36:4. Land of Israel, 5th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).



Talmud

- Babylonian [Talmud](#): [Berakhot 6a, 18b, 33a, 51a, 56b–57a, 62a](#); [Shabbat 63a, 118b](#); [Pesachim 52a, 72b](#); [Yoma 12a, 26a, 53b, 66b, 83b](#); [Sukkah 42a](#); [Beitzah 25b](#); [Rosh Hashanah 21b, 26a, 32b](#); [Megillah 6a, 16a, 26a, 31a](#);

[Moed Katan 21a, 25b, 28a](#); [Chagigah 12b, 16a](#); [Ketubot 103b](#); [Sotah 4b, 7b, 9b, 11b, 13b–14a, 37a](#); [Kiddushin 38a, 66b](#); [Bava Kamma 2b, 17a, 38a, 81b, 92a–b](#); [Bava Batra 8a, 14a, 15a, 17a, 56a, 79a](#); [Sanhedrin 39a, 42a, 46b, 59a, 91b–92a, 104a](#); [Makkot 11a–12a, 23b–24a](#); [Avodah Zarah 2b](#); [Zevachim 54a–b, 118b](#); [Menachot 30a, 53b, 85b, 93b](#); [Chullin 89a](#). Babylonia, 6th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Talmud Bavli*. Edited by Yisroel Simcha Schorr, Chaim Malinowitz, and Mordechai Marcus, 72 vols. Brooklyn: Mesorah Pubs., 2006.

[edit] Medieval

- [Deuteronomy Rabbah](#) 2:5, 9; 3:12; 5:4; 7:5; 8:2; 11:1–10. Land of Israel, 9th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Deuteronomy*. Translated by H. Freedman and Maurice Simon. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Exodus Rabbah](#) 1:16; 2:6; 5:9–10; 15:14; 19:5; 25:8; 30:8; 33:7; 35:1; 38:4; 40:1, 2; 41:4; 43:4; 48:4; 52:1. 10th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Exodus*. Translated by S. M. Lehrman. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Solomon ibn Gabirol](#). *A Crown for the King*, [14:167–68](#). Spain, 11th Century. Translated by David R. Slavitt, 22–23. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. [ISBN 0-19-511962-2](#).



Rashi

- [Rashi](#). *Commentary. Deuteronomy 33–34. Troyes, France, late 11th Century*. Reprinted in, e.g., Rashi. *The Torah: With Rashi's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated*. Translated and annotated by Yisrael Isser Zvi Herczeg, 5:371–403. Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1997. [ISBN 0-89906-030-7](#).
- [Numbers Rabbah](#) 1:12; 2:7, 10; 3:6; 8:9; 10:8; 11:2; 12:1, 3–4, 9; 13:4, 8, 15–18, 20; 14:1, 4, 9–10; 15:12–13, 18; 19:9, 13; 20:4; 22:9. 12th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *Midrash Rabbah: Numbers*. Translated by Judah J. Slotki. London: Soncino Press, 1939. [ISBN 0-900689-38-2](#).
- [Esther Rabbah](#) 7:11, 13; 10:4.
- [Song of Songs Rabbah](#) 1:13, 49, 56; 3:19, 23; 4:8, 17; 5:7, 9, 15; 7:12.
- [Lamentations Rabbah](#) 2:6; 3:1, 22.
- [Ecclesiastes Rabbah](#) 4:7; 10:20.
- [Zohar](#) 1:6b, 10a, 70a, 163a, 170b, 185b, 192b, 198a, 200b, 227b, 235a, 236a–b, 238b, 241b, 244b, 246b; 2:27a,

81a, 82a, 84a, 89a, 90b, 131a, 135a, 166b, 206b, 215a; 3:14a, 104b, 192a. Spain, late 13th Century. Reprinted in, e.g., *The Zohar*. Translated by Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon. 5 vols. London: Soncino Press, 1934.



Hobbes

[[edit](#)] Modern

- [Thomas Hobbes](#). *Leviathan*, [3:33](#), [34](#), [42](#). England, 1651. Reprint edited by [C. B. Macpherson](#), 417, 433, 521–22. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Classics, 1982. [ISBN 0140431950](#).
- [Moses Mendelssohn](#). *Jerusalem*, § 2. Berlin, 1783. Reprinted in *Jerusalem: Or on Religious Power and Judaism*. Translated by Allan Arkush; introduction and commentary by [Alexander Altmann](#), 123. Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis Univ. Press, 1983. [ISBN 0-87451-264-6](#).
- [Emily Dickinson](#). *Poem 112 (Where bells no more affright the morn —)*. Circa 1859. *Poem 168 (If the foolish, call them "flowers" —)*. Circa 1860. *Poem 597 (It always felt to me — a wrong)*. Circa 1862. *Poem 1733 (No man saw awe, nor to his house)*. 19th Century. In *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*. Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, 53, 79–80,

293–94, 703. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1960.

[ISBN 0-316-18414-4](#).



Dickinson

- [Thomas Mann](#). *Joseph and His Brothers*. Translated by [John E. Woods](#), 788. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. [ISBN 1-4000-4001-9](#). Originally published as *Joseph und seine Brüder*. Stockholm: Bermann-Fischer Verlag, 1943.
- Morris Adler. *The World of the Talmud*, 40. B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, 1958. Reprinted Kessinger Publishing, 2007. [ISBN 0548080003](#).
- [Martin Buber](#). *On the Bible: Eighteen studies*, 80–92. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Jeffrey H. Tigay. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Deuteronomy: The Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation*, 317–40, 519–25. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996. [ISBN 0-8276-0330-4](#).
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- [Esther Jungreis](#). *Life Is a Test*, 266. Brooklyn: Shaar Press, 2007. [ISBN 1-4226-0609-0](#).

[\[edit\]](#) See also

- [Man of God](#)

[\[edit\]](#) External links

[\[edit\]](#) Texts

- [Masoretic text and 1917 JPS translation](#)
- [Hear the parshah chanted](#)

[\[edit\]](#) Commentaries



- Aish.com
- American Jewish University
- Anshe Emes Synagogue, Los Angeles
- Bar-Ilan University
- Chabad.org
- Department for Jewish Zionist Education
- eparsha.com
- Jewish Theological Seminary
- MyJewishLearning.com
- Ohr Sameach
- Orthodox Union
- OzTorah, Torah from Australia
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- Pardes from Jerusalem
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- [Sephardic Institute](#)
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