

Eikev
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Shabbat Shalom!

In this week's Torah portion, Eikev, Moses gives a speech to the Israelites telling them about their whole story since the crossing from the Sea of Reeds. Moses tells them that he knew that they made mistakes, like making the golden calf at Mount Horeb. I think G-d and Moses both recognized that the Israelites made a lot of mistakes. Moses also said "As long as I have known you, you have been defiant toward the Lord." I wondered why he said "as long as I have known you, you have been defiant", because I am guessing that they weren't defiant during the whole exodus-they probably would have quit and ran away if they had always been defiant to the Lord. I think that this is important, because we wouldn't have our religion if they had given up. I can relate to the Israelites because whenever I am on a long car ride, or doing anything that I don't like that my parents got me into, I'll be honest, I complain. I don't deal with it and go on with life, I complain. Like me, the Israelites complained to Moses about their feet being tired and every other uncomfortable thing that happened to them in the exodus. I also think my parents are kind of like Moses, because they might hear me complaining and one part of their brain is telling them not to give in while the other part is telling them just to fix the problem.

In today's Torah portion, Moses also tells the people that they must follow God's path and that if they do; the land and everything they own will prosper. He tells them that they must give thanks to God for everything. In chapter 8, pasuk 7, Moses tells the Israelites "For the Lord your G-d is bringing you into a good land, a land with streams and springs, and fountains issuing from plain and hill; a land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs, and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey; a land where you may eat food without stint, where you will lack nothing; a land whose rocks are iron and from whose hills you can mine copper. When you have eaten your fill, give thanks to the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you." I was very interested in this verse because it was very descriptive, and reminded me of when I saw Israel.

When my family went to Israel three summers ago, I expected to see a lot of military trucks, shooting, and bombs. But when we got there, the first thing we did was

plant trees. I planted a pine tree. I didn't see many military trucks, but I saw a lot of trees that our guide said were planted 50 years ago, and lots of new baby trees. In Jerusalem, we waded through icy cold water in a dark tunnel with small keychain flashlights. It was called "Hezekiah's tunnel" and was built to bring water inside the city from the spring outside the walls, so they could survive a siege. In Israel, there were beautiful gardens everywhere, even outside our hotel. We hiked to a waterfall in Ein Gedi National Park, an oasis in the desert, and went for a nice refreshing swim.

I also think of this verse when I think of going to the Golan Heights, where we took a jeep tour and saw mangoes, etrogs, and other citrus fruits growing. We saw streams and farms created with irrigation. We went to the Sea of Gailee or Lake Kinneret and ate our fill at a restaurant on the side of a mountain. Then we went to Tel Dan Nature Reserve, where we saw very, very, cold streams and lots of wildlife. After going to Israel, I learned that it's a lot more green and beautiful than I thought. We saw almost everything that Moses talked about thousands of years ago in that verse: the streams and springs, the trees and the fruit.

Finally, Moses tells the Israelites that G-d was good to the strangers, the fatherless, and widows and they should also be kind to them. He reminds them that they were strangers in Egypt and tells the Israelites to walk in G-d's ways. Rashi says that "walking in G-d's ways" means being compassionate and showing kindness to others. Showing compassion and kindness is why we work on tikun olam projects to heal the world.

Moses also told the Israelites to pass down G-d's miracles to their children. Through the centuries, Hebrew school teachers and parents have been passing down those miracles. At this time, I would like to thank all of my Hebrew school teachers who have passed down the teachings of G-d to me. I would like to thank Mrs. Fox and Rabbi Small for helping me with my d'var Torah, Moshe Pinchover, for helping me learn my Torah portions and haftorah, Cantor Cohn for helping me learn the *Shaharit* Service, my parents for helping me out with our whole B'nei Mitzvah, my brother for helping me practice for this and for sharing our B'nei Mitzvah together, my sister for putting up with us, and finally, I would like to thank all my friends and family for sharing this special event with Zach and me. Now my brother will share his *d'var torah*.

