

Moshe speaks of the rewards and punishments of keeping Hashem's Torah.

בְּרִיךְ תִּהְיֶה מִכָּל־הָעַמִּים לֹא־יִהְיֶה בְּךָ עֵקֶר וְעֵקֶרָה וּבְבִהֵמָתְךָ:

“Bless you shall be from all the nations; it will not be in you a sterile man or woman, and your animals.” (Devarim 7:14).

How is not being sterile considered being blessed above and apart from all nations? How do we read the pasuk: are the animals also not to be sterile or are they to be also blessed apart from all other nations? The Torah already blessed the people with fruitful wombs and animals (Ibid 7:13), what is being added here?

Gemara Bechoros 44b says, *Reish Lakish learns from the juxtaposition of animals to human non-sterile wombs that as long as one urinates when needed, the person will not be sterile.* (Urinary health).

Gemara Yerushalmi Berochos 8:8 says, *you are to answer Amen when a gentile blesses you as the pasuk says, “you are blessed from all nations.”* (Devarim 7:14). *One gentile blessed Rabbi Yehoshua and one cursed him. He said to each, “about what you did has already been said.” He was referring to, “those who curse you are cursed, those who bless you are blessed.”* (Bereishis 27:29).

Gemara Yerushalmi Megillah 1:9 and Yerushalmi Succa 3:10 say the same thing, however, they attribute to Rabbi Yishamel as interacting with gentiles and quoting the verse from Bereishis.

Rashi translates עֵקֶר as *one who cannot procreate.*

Aderes Eliyahu says, *blessed from all the nations means even more than their share. The blessings are going above their mazal (destiny).*

Ohr Chaim says, *you are blessed over all the nations as you will not be barren. This also includes sterility from sickness. Hashem will cure all ills. He will remove all infectious disease and Yisroel will not catch infectious disease from the surrounding nations.* However, to me, these blessings are found in Devarim 7:15.

Rabbeinu Bachya says, *you will be blessed more than any other nation. ‘More’ in implied.*

The preceding pasuk says, “And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your soil, your grain, your wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and the choice of your flocks, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you.” (Devarim 7:13). Then our verse adds more. “You will be blessed from all the nations.” The nations themselves will bless you. How will they bless Yisroel? They will give to Yisroel what Yisroel does not have.

Bnei Yisroel will be busy tilling their land, learning the Torah, and abiding by Hashem’s laws. There are things Bnei Yisroel cannot do. They cannot experiment on animals (*tzar baalei chaim* – see Bereishis 1:21 and Devarim 22:6, and 25:4), or cross breed animals or plants (Vayikra 19:19). They cannot produce artwork (Shmos 20:4), or work on Shabbos (ibid 20:8-11). Therefore, the gentiles are there to fill in that work and give to Bnei Yisroel what it is missing. Gentiles produce great innovations in science, mathematics, technology, and medicine. The Torah is telling Bnei Yisroel that just as they do not have to work very hard to have great produce and large families (the blessings in Devarim 7:13), so too, they can also reap the benefits of innovations made by the other nations. The other nations will give them to Bnei Yisroel. Thus, Bnei Yisroel will be blessed from all other nations.

“There will not be sterility in you, male or female.” The word עקר means barren. This is obvious if everyone will be able to produce a lot of children, as blessed to have a lot of children means that both male and female are not sterile. It also means uproot. When a brother or widow subject to *yibum* does not go through with it, they are considered to have uprooted the deceased’s bloodlines. (Gemara Yevomos 13b). This “עקר ועקרה” then are referring to family lines being cut off. Neither will one be cut off from the father’s side or the mother’s side. The tribal families will remain in tact and the veracity of a child’s Yisroel lineage will remain intact, as well. *There will not be in you a cause to be cut off or uprooted, from your sons or daughters.* There will be no blemished bloodlines or lineage. Bnei Yisroel are adjured not to mix with the foreign nations. (Ibid 7:3). Here, the Torah says the foreign nations will still bless Bnei Yisroel. There will be trade and contact. Yisroel will receive technology, scientific thought, literature,

humanities, and mathematics from the foreign nations. These can also be pit traps. Portions of psychology can lead to rejecting the notion of Hashem, portions of science can lead to rejecting the Torah, mathematics can lead to rejecting the notion of Hashem's control on the universe, and technology can cause one to be complacent (see *ibid* 8:14 "lest your heart grow haughty [from excess] and you forget Hashem, your Lord.").

Here, Bnei Yisroel are being protected by keeping the Torah. Baal Haturim says cryptically, *our pasuk starts with a ב and ends with a כ to indicate the twenty-two letters of the Torah. Also, the words "לא־יְהִי בְךָ עֵקֶר וְעִקְרָה" have the same gematria (numerical value) as בדברי התורה words of the Torah.*

Why does this specific verse have to be from the twenty-two letters of the Torah? All the blessings and even curses in the Torah are from all twenty-two letters. Also, why do these words have to mean "words of the Torah." All of the mitzvos and instructions should be "words of the Torah." To me, more than the mental gymnastics of the gematria calculation is the lesson. Keeping the Torah keeps one on the straight path. "If you cling and obey my rules." (*Ibid* 7:12). עֵקֶר is similar to עִקְרָה. They are one letter off. If you *cling* to the Torah then you will not be *cut off*. Yisroel can be blessed from the nations of the world, consume and assimilate their understanding and tutelage of the world, and still remain separate. Without intermarrying and with understanding the truth of the Torah above all else, Yisroel will maintain pure bloodlines. The purity will be the physical bloodline but also the uninterrupted *mesorah* of Torah.

"And your animals." The pasuk could have said "There won't be sterility in you and in your animals." It could have also said, "You and your animals will be blessed." It put animals at the end. What are the animals benefiting? The previous pasuk already said that the animals will be plenty. Having animals with lots of flock also assumes there will be no sterility in the animals. (Sterile animals cannot produce lots of flock). The pasuk is teaching that even the animals will benefit. The animals cannot have pure bloodlines, thus it cannot be "you and your animals will not be cut off." Animals also will not be blessed by foreign nations, as they cannot learn science or use technology. It is the owner that benefits when using it to produce better cattle, healthier feed, and easier farming.

“And your animals” means your possessions, food, and labor will all benefit from this blessing. Just as animals may not work on Shabbos (Shmos 20:10) so, too, they will also benefit from these blessings, their lives made easier from farming science and technology. They will stay pure breeds. They will not intermingle. All will benefit, man, animal, soil, from Bnei Yisroel keeping the Torah.