

PARSHAT EKEV  
DEUTERONOMY 7:12-11:25  
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 49:14-51:3  
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*Unpacking My Library*  
Oil on canvass by R.B. Kitaj

### TO BE EVER ON THE WAY

1. And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully... (Deuteronomy 7:12)

עֲקֵב תִּשְׁמְעוּן אֶת הַמְּשַׁפְּטִים הָאֵלֶּה וְשִׁמְרֵתֶם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

עֲקֵב - heel, footprint

עֲקֵב - follow at the heel, overreach, circumvent

עֲקֵב - one who would overreach, take advantage of; steep, hilly

עֲקֵב - as a consequence of

יַעֲקֹב - Yaakov/Jacob

2. You made for yourselves a molten calf... (Deuteronomy 9:16)  
God gave you manna to eat... (Deuteronomy 8:3)

He [Pharaoh] was afraid and reacted to fear by strengthening himself – that is the meaning of “Pharaoh’s heart was strengthened” (Ex. 7:22). (Ramban)

When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, “man hoo? (what is it)?” for they did not know what it was (mah hoo)...The house of Israel named it manna (man). (Exodus 16:14, 31)

3. It is reasonable to assume that in the life of faith, obedience is the highest virtue. In Judaism it is not. One of the strangest features of biblical Hebrew is that – despite the fact that the Torah contains 613 commandments – there is no word for “obey.” Instead the verb that the Torah uses is *shema/lishmoa*. “to listen, hear, attend, understand, internalize, respond.” In Judaism faith is a form of listening: to the song creation sings to its Creator, and to the message history delivers to those who strive to understand it. That is what Moses says, time and again in Deuteronomy. Stop looking: listen. Stop speaking: listen. Create a silence in the soul. Still the clamor of the instinct, desire, fear, anger. Strive to listen to the still, small voice beneath the noise. Then you will know that the universe is the work of the One beyond the furthest star yet closer to you than you are to yourself and then you will love Adonai your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your might. (Rabbi Jonathan Sacks)
4. To hear is to open oneself up to vulnerability, change, contingency. (Avivah Zornberg)