

PARSHAT EKEV
DEUTERONOMY 7:12-11:25
HAFTARAH ISAIAH 49:14-51:3
20 AV 5785/14 AUGUST 2025



Flag

Encaustic and collage on canvass by Jasper Johns (1967)

AMERICAN MANNA

1. God gave you manna (*man*) to eat, that which neither you nor your ancestors had ever known, in order that you might know that a person does not live on bread alone but on whatever comes forth from God's mouth (*motza pee Adonai*). (Deuteronomy 8:3)
2. 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, "What is it (*man hoo*)? for they did not know what it was (*mah hoo*?)." (Exodus 16:14-15)
3. Manna is both bread and not-bread...A substance that tells of the unknown leads the consumer to *see through* its flimsy appearance...the unknowable leads the traveler to an imaginative knowledge, which refigures transfigures the world...What issues forth (*motza*) from God's mouth speaks not to the senses but to the human capacity for language... (Avivah Zornberg, *Bewilderments*)
4. It all began with my painting a picture of an American flag...I went on to similar things like targets, things the mind already knows. I made the flags and targets to open people's eyes...they we both things which are seen and not looked at, examined. (Jasper Johns)

5. He [Johns] isn't trying to indoctrinate you to some fixed set of beliefs. You have to think for yourself. The efforts that his aunt made to engender a respect for the flag actually worked, but not in the manner that she expected. For Johns, "respect" seems to involve an active and ongoing commitment to seeking and questioning ideas and values. (John Seed, Professor Emeritus of Art, Mount San Jacinto College)

6. "And why do you pray, Moshe?" I asked him. "I pray to the God within me that He will give me the strength to ask the right questions." (Elie Wiesel, *Night*)