

R'EI

47th of the 54 sedras;
4th of 11 in D'varim



257.8 lines in a Torah (rank: 4th)

20 Parshiyot - 5 open; 15 closed

126 p'sukim - ranks 13th (1st in D'va.)

Same number of p'sukim as Lech L'cha, but Lech L'cha ranks 23rd in size (lines), compared with 4th for R'ei - Interesting

1932 words - ranks 7th (first in D'va.)

7442 letters - ranks 7th (first in D'va.)

Relatively long p'sukim like most sedras in D'varim (hence, increase in rank from p'sukim to words/letters)

MITZVOT

55 of 613; 17 positive, 38 prohibition

That's almost 9% of the Torah's mitzvot; only Ki Teitzei (74) & Emor (63) have more mitzvot than R'ei

Aliya-by-Aliya Sedra Summary

[P>] and [S>] indicate start of a parsha p'tucha or s'tuma. X:Y is Perek:Pasuk of the beginning of the parsha; (Z) is the number of p'sukim in the parsha.

Numbers in [square brackets] are the Mitzva-count of Sefer HaChinuch AND Rambam's Sefer HaMitzvot. A=ASEI; L=LAV (prohibition). X:Y is the perek & pasuk from which the mitzva comes.

Kohen - First Aliya - 17 p'sukim - 11:26-12:1

[S> 11:26 (3)] After setting down the fundamentals of Judaism (including the formative history of the Nation, Aseret HaDibrot, Sh'ma, Brachot & Davening, and more) in the first three sedras of D'varim, Moshe Rabeinu proceeds with the "Tachlis" part of the Book - mitzvot. The sedras of R'ei, Shoftim, and Ki Teitzei contain 170 mitzvot, the greatest number of mitzvot for three consecutive sedras. They are 3 of the top 6 mitzva- sedras of the Torah.

Blessing = keeping the mitzvot;

Curse = not keeping them and turning to idolatry.

These are the simple equations that Moshe presents here and that Yehoshua will again present when the People stand on Har G'rizim and Har Eival. And what we will find in Ki Tavo.

SDT: Note the phraseology in the opening p'sukim: the Blessing - THAT you will keep the mitzvot. The Curse - IF you won't... There is an implied "recommendation" (and a hopeful assumption) for us to choose Blessing. (Similarly, "And you shall choose Life" in Nitzavim.) The Bracha, of course, WHEN you choose it... good things will happen. The curse, IF (not assumed) you are misguided enough not to choose the bracha and the path of Torah and mitzvot...

[S> 11:29 (23)] The Nation was born in Egypt, had its infancy in the wilderness, and will grow and flourish in the Promised Land. "These are the mitzvot to be preserved in the Land..."

Note that not all of the mitzvot that follow are Land-of-Israel-related, yet it is possible to suggest - as the Sifrei, Rashi and Ramban do (among others), very strongly - that ALL mitzvot were meant to be observed in Eretz Yisrael.

Furthermore, Sifrei (quoted by commentaries) says: You must keep mitzvot meticulously in Chutz LaAretz so that they will not be new (unknown) to you upon your return to the Land. This means that a Jew living outside Eretz Yisrael who is - for example - totally Shomer Shabbat, meticulous in observance, tends to be machmir in many areas of Shabbat (and other mitzvot)... is basically practicing how to keep Shabbat so that when he comes to live in Eretz Yisrael, he will be able to keep Shabbat in the PLACE that it was meant to be kept.

Baseball analogy...

Why would a very talented baseball player with the opportunity to play in the majors, choose to play for a class A minor league team? Especially when he is major league level where the salaries (reward) are amazingly greater than in the minors.

Carrying the analogy a bit further, let's say that the player has a strong reason to play in the minors - for example, he has elderly parents whom he must be close to and help when called upon, and a major league commitment and schedule would make that difficult. Would such a player at least dream and aspire to the time when things might change and allow him to accept the major league offers? 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁥󠁮󠁧󠁿

Sites, altars, idols, etc. of the nations in Eretz Yisrael are to be destroyed [436, A185 12:2]. However, we must be careful not to do the same to G-d [437, L65 12:4] - this mitzva includes the prohibition of erasing G-d's Holy Names.

While THEIR places are to be eliminated, THE Place (site of the Mikdash) is to be the focal point of Jewish spiritual life and energy. All sacrifices and offerings are to be made there and only there, at the first festival encountered [438, A83 12:5]. It is on those occasions (the Shalosh Regalim, the three Pilgrimage Festivals) that sacred foods (such as Ma'aser Sheni, Neta Reva'i) are eaten in Jerusalem (but not just then - any time is good). Things won't be as "do your own thing" as they are in the wilderness. Soon we will be entering the Land for a more "permanent", down to earth life.

MITZVAnotes

There is a fairly common situation with the Torah's mitzvot, of a positive command and a prohibition basically saying the same thing. We have a mitzva to fast on Yom Kippur and a prohibition of eating and drinking on Yom Kippur. Same thing (in practice, but different in motivation and KAVANA). We may not do Melacha on Shabbat and we must abstain from Melacha on Shabbat. Same thing (in practice, but different in motivation). In R'ei, we are commanded to "cancel" uncollected loans at the end of Sh'mita year. And we are forbidden from collecting loans after the Sh'mita year has past. Same thing (in practice, but different in motivation). There are many examples of these "two-sides of the same coin" mitzva pairs. And there are reasons for the positive mitzva and a "partner" prohibition.

But let's take a look at another aspect of mitzva pairs. Less common than the perfectly matched positive mitzva and prohibition, is the pair of mitzvot that overlap, but not completely. Take a look at [438], the mitzva to fulfill a pledge of a korban or other donation to the Beit HaMikdash. There is a partner prohibition (in Ki Teitzei) which forbids delaying the fulfillment of a pledge to the Mikdash. These mitzvot do not perfectly align. To fulfill the positive

mitzva, one must "pay up" by the next Regel. However, one is not in violation of the prohibition unless three Regalim have past since the pledge. This means that a pledge to the Beit HaMikdash made during Aseret Y'mei T'shuva, for example, should be fulfilled on Sukkot. If so, then the person is fulfilling an ASEI and also not in violation of a LAV. If he doesn't fulfill the pledge until Pesach, then he has NOT fulfilled the positive mitzva, but neither has he violated the prohibition. If Isru Chag Shavuot comes and he still hasn't fulfilled the pledge, then he is in violation of the LAV (because three chagim have passed).

Levi - Second Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 12:11-28

There (in Eretz Yisrael), a special place will be designated for the bringing of all offerings. There, spiritual rejoicing will take place, and there, we shall help the Levite and the less fortunate to also have cause to rejoice. It will be forbidden to bring sacrifices anywhere else [439, L89 12:13]. All Korbanot are to be brought only at the Mikdash [440, A84 12:14] (another matched mitzva-pair). Only those consecrated animals that become unfit for the Altar due to blemishes must be redeemed [441, A86 12:15] (without an invalidating blemish, a consecrated animal may NOT be redeemed) and then may be eaten as "regular" meat. The animals' blood, of course, may not

be consumed.

It is forbidden to eat Ma'aser Shenii outside Yerushalayim, neither of grain [442, L141 12:17], nor of wine (or grapes) [443, L142 12:17], nor olive oil (or olives) [444, L143 12:17]; nor (for a kohein) to eat sacred firstborn animals outside of Yerushalayim [445, L144 12:17], nor the more sacred sacrificial meat outside of the Temple courtyard [446, L145 12:17], nor eat the meat of an Olah (completely-burnt offering) at all [447, L146 12:17], nor other korbanot before their blood is properly applied to the Altar [448, L147 12:17], nor eat First Fruits before they are placed in front of the Altar [449, L149 12:17].

Deep breath. The previous paragraph lists 8 mitzvot that all come from a single pasuk (12:17). (We sometimes refer to this pasuk as the Nolan Ryan pasuk, since its 8 mitzvot is so many more than the second place pasuk, just as Ryan's seven no-hitters are by far, more than any other pitcher's.) Here too is an example of how we would be lost in trying to understand all that this pasuk is commanding us, without the Oral Law. It is important to remember that this is not rabbinic interpretation nor extension that we are dealing with; it is Torah as much from HaShem as Matza on the Seder night or Shofar on Rosh HaShana. That which we are taught from the Oral Law - as Torah Law - is part of Torah MiSinai, just like the Written Word.

All of the above-mentioned foods are to be eaten where they are supposed to be eaten. Be careful not to forget the Levi, the gifts due him, and other forms of help [450, L229 12:19].

[S> 12:20 (9)] "When G-d will expand your borders as promised..."

Notice that the Torah speaks of prosperity immediately following the portion about generous charity-giving and concern for others. This is G-d's "illogical" promise: the more you give, the more you will have.

If and when we desire to eat meat (other than the sacred meat of korbanot), we may do so anywhere we choose, but we must properly slaughter the animals we eat first [451, A146 12:21].

SDT: In the pasuk commanding Sh'chita, G-d says "(slaughter the animal) as I have commanded you." Yet we do not find the details of Sh'chita in the Written Torah. This is one of the sources for the concept that the Torah consists of a Written Word and an Oral Law - both the Word of G-d, and both inseparable from each other.

Non-sacred meat does not have the same restrictions as sacred meat (i.e. ritual impurity - yours or the animal's - is not an impediment to eating it). Many other halachot, of course, do apply.

An animal must be killed before its

meat is taken. This is the universal prohibition (it is both one of our 613 and one of the 7 Noahide Laws) of "Limb from a living animal" **[452, L182 12:23]**, EIVER MIN HACHAI. Furthermore, blood must be removed from meat before we may eat it.

Korbanot shall be brought from all over (even from outside of Israel) to the "Place of G-d's choosing" - the Mikdash **[453, A85 12:26]**. These korbanot shall be offered on the Mizbei'ach, the blood sprinkled thereon, the meat (when permitted) to be eaten there.

Be careful to do all that G-d asks, so that things will be good for us and our children.

Shlishi - Third Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 12:29-13:19

[S> 12:29 (4)] Repeat warning: Do not get interested in the idolatrous practices of the nations whom we will replace in the Land, lest we too anger G-d and be punished by Him.

We shall do all that we are commanded, neither adding to **[454, L313 13:1]**, nor diminishing from **[455, L314 13:1]** Torah & mitzvot.

MITZVANotes

The twin prohibitions of neither adding nor subtracting from the Torah, are mentioned in Va'etchanan and again here in R'ei, where they are

counted among the 613. The Vilna Gaon points out that the plural form is used one time and the singular form is used in the other case. This, he says, alludes to two different aspects of these prohibitions. It is forbidden to add to or subtract from a particular mitzva - for example, one may not take 5 species or 3 species on Sukkot for the fulfillment of the mitzva of "Lulav & Etrog". (If you add something to the Arbaa Minim to beautify them - but don't do it - it would not be BAL TOSIF.) Nor may one add or subtract to the total of the mitzvot. To treat a Rabbinic mitzva as a Torah law, or vice versa, would be an example of the other aspect of these prohibitions.

The spirit of these prohibitions (if not the actual definitions) would include treating (or teaching) a CHUMRA as if it were required, or vice versa (claiming that something that is prohibited is "only" a chumra or custom, when it is a halacha). Aside from people who intentionally do this, it is more common to find people doing it one way or the other inadvertently, either because of ignorance or because of a sincere (but slightly misguided) desire to enhance the observance of mitzvot. This is especially important for parents and teachers of young children. Don't say ASUR if you mean, strictly speaking it isn't actually forbidden, but it is considered a proper thing to abstain

from doing such and such. It sounds more complicated, but it is more “honest” and therefore it is the more proper way to transmit Torah to your children and students. (Obviously, when a child is very young, you have to simplify matters. But don't forget to upgrade the child's level of understanding as he or she grows older.)

[P> 13:2 (5)] If (when) there arises among us a prophet or dreamer - even one who performs miracles or signs to back up his words - who prophesies in the name of idolatry, it is forbidden to listen him [456, L28 13:4]. This is to be viewed as a test by G-d of our faith in Him. We must be true to G-d, follow Him, revere Him, keep His mitzvot, serve Him, and cling to Him. The above-mentioned false prophet shall be put to death for his attempts to turn us away from G-d. We thus uproot evil from our midst.

[S> 13:7 (6)] If any fellow Jew (even a close relative or beloved friend) tries to entice us to idolatry of any type (familiar, exotic, or foreign), we must show no love to such a person [457, L17 13:9], nor suppress our hatred of him [458, L18 13:9], nor rescue him from danger [459, L19 13:9], nor speak on his behalf in court [460, L20 13:9] nor refrain from speaking against him [461, L21 13:9].

The Torah must be very clear and strong in these commands, because it has become second-nature (hope-

fully) for us to love our fellow, not hate him, and try to save him. But not in this case. These mitzvot stand in stark contrast to the mitzvot from K'doshim (and other places) which command love of fellow Jew, not to hate him, to save him from danger, etc. These mitzvot (from this week's sedra) underline the seriousness with which the Torah treats the enticer to idolatry. He is a cancer in our midst that must be removed.

But rather, the enticer shall be put to death by stoning (after trial and conviction), the accusing witnesses initiating the execution. And (it almost goes without saying that) it is forbidden to entice a fellow Jew to leave G-d and worship idols [462, L16 13:12].

[S> 13:13 (7)] If we find out that an entire city is being enticed to idolatry, we must very carefully investigate the matter. This command is generalized to require thorough examination and questioning of witnesses in all types of cases [463, A179 13:15]. If the charges are substantiated, the population of the “city gone astray” (IR HANIDACHAT) is to be killed by sword, the possessions of the people are to be burned, and the city itself destroyed [464, A186 13:17]. The city may not ever be rebuilt [465, L23 13:17] (unless security considerations indicate otherwise). No one may benefit from anything from the city [466, L24 13:18] so as not to provoke G-d's anger.

Proper fulfillment of these and other mitzvot will find favor in G-d's eyes.

R'vi'i - Fourth Aliya - 21 p'sukim - 14:1-21

[S> 14:1 (2)] As "G-d's children", it is forbidden to gash oneself (for idolatrous purposes or to mourn the dead) [467, L45 14:1] nor tear out one's hair in grief [468, L171 14:1].

[Mitzva [467] also prohibits factionalization of the community when it is detrimental to Jewish unity - two totally different mitzvot attributed to the same source.]

It is our destiny to be the chosen from among the nations of the Earth.

[S> 14:3 (6)] It is forbidden to eat "any abomination", defined here as the meat of a korban that had become "disqualified" [469, L140 14:3].

The Torah next lists 10 types of mammals that are kosher (3 domestic, 7 wild), and then gives signs to determine a kosher animal (split hoof, cud-chewing). This is followed by four examples of animals we may not eat.

NOTE that in Sh'mini, the first place where kosher and non-kosher animals are presented, only the same four non-kosher animals are named.

Also NOTE, the kosher domesticated animals are very familiar to us: Cow, Goat, Sheep. Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan z"l identifies the seven wild kosher

animals (Chayot T'hortot) as gazelle, deer, antelope, ibex, chamois, bison (or wild ox, maybe water buffalo), giraffe. In his footnotes, he brings different opinions about the Hebrew terms for different animals. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, on the other hand, translates very few of the animals and birds mention in this parsha, and leaves all the rest in transliteration only. He defends his refusal to translate some of the animals because a mis-translation (which he considers very likely) can result in someone eating non-kosher.

[S> 14:9 (2)] Fish with scales and fins are permitted to be eaten; that which has no scales (or fins) is forbidden to us. Scales (that are easily scraped off without damaging the skin of the fish) determine the kashrut of a fish.

Note: The term "scales" can be misleading. In fact, different fishes have different types of scales - of four types, only two types are the signs of a kosher fish.

[S> 14:11 (11)] We may eat kosher birds. We are therefore obligated to examine and determine the kosher status of a bird we would like to eat [470, A150 14:11] (The corresponding mitzvot for the other types of animals have been counted as mitzvot from Shmini.)

The Torah lists 21 types of birds that are forbidden.

(Don't confuse the term species with type. Torah types do not necessarily conform to modern taxonomy.)

The characteristics of kosher and non-kosher birds are NOT mentioned in the Torah (unlike those of mammals and fish). The Gemara gives us guidelines to distinguish between kosher and non-kosher birds. Practically speaking, neither the list nor the guidelines are what determine which birds we eat. MASORET (tradition) does. Basically, we do not trust ourselves to be able to properly identify the birds named in the Torah (modern Hebrew sometimes does not match Biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew - this is one problem). If we have a tradition in our communities that a particular type of bird is kosher, then we may eat it. Otherwise we take the cautious position of SAFEK (doubt) and choose to be strict with ourselves. A Masoret for some partridge and pheasant species have been recently confirmed. These birds now join chicken, duck, goose, (some pigeon and dove) on the kosher birds list. Note, however, that some of the 'new masoret' (it's not the oxymoron that it seems to be) have not yet been accepted by some kashrut organizations.

It is also forbidden to eat non-kosher locust and other winged insects [471, L175 14:19].

Even though we may eat meat, it is

forbidden to eat of an animal that died other than by sh'chita. This is the prohibition of N'VEILA [472, L180 14:21]. Benefit may be derived from N'VEILA but not from milk-meat mixtures (when cooked together).

Although this third occurrence of BASAR B'CHALAV teaches the prohibition of benefit from cooked together meat-in-milk mixtures, it is not counted as a separate mitzva, but is included in the prohibition of eating M-in-M from Ki Tisa. We have three p'sukim that each teach a prohibition - cooking, eating, benefit - but in counting mitzvot, Meat-in-Milk is not counted as one mitzva or three, but as two of the 613 - one prohibition to cook meat and milk together, and one prohibition that forbids eating and/or deriving benefit from meat and milk that has been cooked together. (It is the third occurrence that "links" us to the teaching from the Oral Torah, that benefit is also forbidden - in contrast to most other forbidden foods that are only forbidden to eat but one may derive other benefits from them. Hence the third pasuk.)

Chamishi - 5th Aliya - 8 p'sukim - 14:22-29

[P> 14:22 (6)] (Approx. 2% of the yield of a crop is given to a Kohen as T'ruma. One tenth of the remainder is separated as Ma'aser to be given to a Levi.) One tenth of what is left is

separated as Ma'aser Sheni [473, A128 14:22], which remains the possession of the owner but is sacred and must be brought to Yerushalayim and eaten (t)here in a state of ritual purity. If the amount of Ma'aser Sheni is great, a person is permitted to redeem the produce for fair market value plus a fifth (i.e. 1/4 is added, that amount becoming 1/5 of the total). If one redeems the Maaser Sheni of his neighbor, no one adds one fifth.

(This is not a loophole that takes advantage of the Torah's intent; rather it is an option the Torah recognizes.)

The proceeds of the redemption are to be spent on food and drink in Yerushalayim. Again the Torah reminds us to care of the Levi, who has no property of his own.

(Ma'aser Sheni applies in years 1, 2, 4, 5 of the Shmita cycle.)

[S> 14:28 (2)] In the 3rd (& 6th) year of a Shmita cycle, the second tithe is to be given to poor people [474, A130 14:28]. This generous act of tzedaka will be rewarded by G-d's blessings. (Note the ratio of years of Maaseir Sheni and Maaseir Oni. And the order.)

Shishi - Sixth Aliya - 18 p'sukim - 15:1-18

[S> 15:1 (6)] If Shmita year passes, repayment of personal loans may not be demanded [475, L230 15:1]. This

rule applies when both lender and borrower are Jewish. Loans due from a non-Jew must be collected [476, A142 15:3], but it is a mitzva (required) to cancel the personal debt of a fellow Jew following the Shmita year [477, A141 15:3]

(Again we see an example of a positive mitzva and a prohibition that say the same thing).

If the Jewish People follow the Torah and mitzvot properly, we will be blessed by not having poverty among us. We will also dominate among the nations of the world.

[S> 15:7 (5)] However, when we are confronted with poverty, we must not hold back generous support of those in need [478, L232 15:7]. Rather it is a great mitzva to give tzedaka and support those less fortunate than ourselves in a giving and dignified manner [479, A195 15:8]. Be especially careful not to withhold loans to the poor because the Shmita year is approaching [480, L231 15:9]; if the poor person cries out to G-d, He will hold you accountable for not helping. Be generous in areas of tzedaka and Chessed, thereby meriting blessing from G-d. Poverty will be a "fact of life" under normal circumstances; give tzedaka freely.

Although a lender must void a debt after Sh'mita year passes (unless he has executed the PROZBUL document, by which he is considered to

have turned over his debts to a Beit Din for collection, in which case Sh'mita does not cancel such loans), the borrower may/should - offer to repay the loan. The lender is obligated to tell the borrower that the loan has been canceled by Sh'mita, and the borrower is supposed to say that he would like to give the money back to the lender anyway (as a gift). The lender can accept the repayment in that case, and the borrower is considered to have acted in a proper Jewish manner. The borrower who "takes advantage" of the Sh'mita-voiding of a debt is considered to have behaved in an improper and un-Jewish manner.

[S> 15:12 (7)] If a Jew becomes an indentured servant to a fellow Jew, he shall work no more than six years and he shall be freed in the seventh. One must not send the freed EVED IVRI away empty-handed [481, L233 15:13] but rather he shall be given a generous allotment upon discharge [482, A196 15:14] (again, a double-sided mitzva).

Using this double-sided mitzva as an example (not all are explainable in this manner) If we had only the prohibition of sending the EVED IVRI away empty-handed, a shekel might suffice to avoid violation of the mitzva. That meager amount certainly does not suffice for the fulfillment of the positive command.

We are to remember that we were

AVADIM in Egypt and that G-d redeemed us and expects us to be sensitive to those less fortunate than ourselves. If the EVED IVRI does not want to be released, his ear is ceremonially pierced and he remains in his master's service until Yovel. Do not be stingy with the servant, for he has served you hard and long.

Sh'VII - Seventh Aliya - 22 p'sukim - 15:19-16:17

[S> 15:19 (5)] Firstborns of cow, goat and sheep - if they are male - are sacred (if unblemished); they may neither be worked [483, L113 15:19] nor benefited from [484, L114 15:19], such as shearing the wool for personal use. They are to be given to a Kohen as one of his Torah-granted gifts (after taking care of the animal for its first 30 or 50 days of age, depending upon the type of animal). They are to be eaten by the kohen and his family after being brought as a korban - within a year, unless "unfit for the Altar", in which case they are the Kohen's property, to do with as he pleases.

[P> 16:1 (8)] Preserve the spring month and bring Korban Pesach. This is a reiteration of the mitzva to adjust the calendar when necessary, by adding a month - a second Adar - to keep Pesach in the spring.

Chametz is forbidden on Erev Pesach afternoon [485, L199 16:3]. This is a separate prohibition, and of a lesser

status (based on comparing punishments for violation), to the prohibition of Chametz on Pesach itself.

The Chagiga cannot be left over beyond two days [486, L118 16:4]. KP cannot be brought on a private altar [487,* 16:5].

***This mitzva is not on Rambam's list - the ONLY mitzva on the Chinuch's list that Rambam does not count. The other shoe drops in Haazinu.**

[P> 16:9 (4)] Count seven weeks until Shavuot; this is the OTHER Omer mitzva (in addition to counting 49 days - it's why we count days & weeks). Next, a mention of Sukkot and then the command to rejoice on the Festivals [488, A54 16:14]. Appear in the Mikdash and bring korbanot on Chagim [489, A53 16:15]; do not appear there empty-handed [490, L156 16:16].

Haftara - 12 p'sukim - Yishayahu 54:11-55:5

One of the shortest haftarot of the year

We have the hopeful message that G-d will take back the exile-afflicted people of Israel in great splendor. It is also a prophecy of a time when our enemies will not succeed against us. Spiritual thirst and hunger will be tended to and all will be good for us...

IF we will listen to G-d. There it is. The same deal as in the sedra. A deal repeated over and over again. A deal

that is so simple, we should only be able to exercise our Free Will and keep our end of the covenant.