SUMMARY OF PARASHAT EQEB

This Parasha continues with Moshe Rabbenu's long speech before separating from the people of Israel, since God will not allow him to enter the land of Israel with the rest of the people. Moshe speaks of the blessings that God will bring to Israel for keeping the Tora. And these blessings, in turn, will allow the people to fulfill the Tora in peace and without suffering material poverty. Moshe reminds them that HaShem is the one who will protect them and help them to conquer the land and to displace the enemies. He also warns them of the danger of forgetting God, when we think that we are strong and powerful. Or when we have a full stomach and we feel that we do not need Divine assistance. One of the ways to remember God is the recitation of Birkat Hamazon, the Mitsva of thanking God after eating a full meal.

Moshe warns the people about the dangers of prosperity, and how wealth can lead them to forget God and practice idolatry. Idolatry has always been associated with superstition. Sometimes, a person that possesses wealth and does not know how to credit God for his good fortune, and how to thank Him for His generosity, tends to look for "magical methods to protect his fortune". Magic is directly or indirectly associated with idolatry, since it invokes powers unrelated to God. This addiction to superstitions will end up alienating this individual from God. We Jews must be humble, especially in times of economic and military prosperity and remember that it is God, and not our own power, who allows us success and well-being.

The people are about to enter the land of Israel, which they will have to conquer militarily. From Moshe's words, it can be seen that the people were afraid of not being worthy of Divine assistance in the difficult battles that awaits them, because of the sins of their fathers. Moshe explains to them that after the sin of the golden calf, the Jewish people indeed

lost part of their merit, especially the merit of inheriting the promised land, but he assures them that this should not demoralize them, since HaShem will still grant them an outstanding victory and with His help they will defeat the inhabitants of Canaan. Moshe tells them that the inhabitants of that land deserve to be expelled from the holy land for their own evil deeds, such as idolatry, murder, and promiscuity. Moshe presents them with other factors that will also contribute to Israel's future victory, despite not being worthy of it: first, that God promised Abraham, Yitzchaq, and Jacob that their descendants would inherit the land. And second, that if God does not grant them victory, God's name will be profaned among the nations, as these nations would question God's power to protect His own nation and fulfill His promise to them.

Moses presents the famous question: "What does God want from us?" And his answer is that God wants us to follow his paths of righteousness and justice, for our own good. Much of this Parasha is devoted to describing the beautiful characteristics of the land of Israel. And it is also explained, in what we know today as the second paragraph of the Shema Israel, that the land of Israel, which is directly supervised by God, will "react" by Divine instruction to our behavior: on the one hand, the land will reward our loyalty to God us with abundant rains and prosperity. On the other hand, the heavens will close, there will be no rain, and our life on God's land will be impossible if we betray our covenant with Him. As a consequence of poverty, we will have to leave the promised land and escape into exile.

The people of Israel will obtain victory over their enemies, and will be able to conquer the promised land and live in it forever if they listen to the Divine commandments and follow the ways of HaShem.