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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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Q1: Why is there a ceremony for the *first* fruits (and not e.g. the best fruits)? Do you perform it once a year, every harvest cycle, or simply your first harvest on new land?

Q2: Who was a wandering Aramean? Why does that idiosyncratic description of our ancestry appear in this ceremonial speech?

Q3: What is the connection between agriculture and the Exodus?

Q4: Why confirm that you have not eaten of your holy food while mourning? Or given any to the dead? Why would mourning people or dead people find themselves eating holy things?

Q5: What does it mean to be a landed, prosperous person in this society? What responsibilities do you have to others, and to your history?

Q6: How do you relate to those responsibilities if you don't own land? How do the Levite, stranger, widow, and orphan relate to the ideals of this society?

Q7: What does it mean that the land is flowing with milk and honey? What does that particular imagery convey about the goodness of the land?

Q8: Why are the blessings so much shorter and simpler than the curses? In general, why does it seem like bad things are so much more elaborately bad than good things are good?

Q9: Don't the blind grope around in the dark just as much as at noon (28:29)?

Q10: Do these blessing and curses operate on an individual or collective level? Do they reflect the regular workings of the world we know?

Q11: Imagine being a sinful farmer who repents. Since you're a sinner, your crops have been failing for years--and a sabbatical year is coming up soon! How do you improve your lot when God and the world are against you?

Q12: Is there anything wrong with the case in the previous question? Is it too literal? Too individualistic?

Q13: Why is there a second covenant here at Moab, in addition to the one at Sinai (Lev. 26)?

Q14: Even though you saw and heard all the wonders of the Exodus and the desert, it is only on *this day* that your old senses have been replaced by new, godgiven senses (29:3). What does it mean to have a new pair of eyes, ears, and a heart? And why now?