

Portion Kee Tavo Devarim- Deuteronomy (26.1-29.8)

The Israelites are listening to Moses speak for the last time, “When you live in the land God gave you as a heritage to occupy and settle, put your first fruits in a basket and take it to a place the God will choose. There, present it to the priests and say, "Today, I am affirming to God that I have come to the land that God promised to give to our fathers." Then the priest will take your basket and put it before God, your God and declare, 'My ancestors was a homeless Aramaean who went to Egypt with few yet became a great nation. Then the Egyptians became cruel and made us slaves. It was God, our God who brought us out of bondage with an outstretched arm and with great miracles. God brought us to this land flowing with milk and honey. I am bringing you these first fruits in gratitude.' Then you, and the stranger among you, shall rejoice in all the good that God has given you. Remember to have a set portion of giving, a tithe, for the Levites, and widows.”

Moses continued, “Today, God is commanding you to obey all these rules and laws. Guard them with your heart and all your soul. Today you have declared allegiance to God, with your promise to walk in God's ways and obey God. God has also declared allegiance with you today, making you God's special nation. If you keep all of God's commandments, you nation will earn praise and glory. You will remain a nation consecrated to God, just like God, your God, promised.

So when you enter the land, erect large stones plastered with lime and write upon it all the words of this Torah. Pay attention and listen Israel. Today you have become a nation to God, your God, so follow all of God's laws. When you cross over to your heritage land, put six tribes on Mt. Gerizim for the blessings and six on Mt. Ebal for the curses. Then the Levites shall speak each curse and all the people shall respond, "Amen". They said, 'Cursed are those who sculpt an image of God.' All the people shall say, "Amen". 'Cursed are those who are disrespectful to their father and mother.' All shall say, "Amen". 'Cursed are those who cheat.' All shall say, "Amen." 'Cursed are those who mislead someone who is blind.' All shall say, "Amen." 'Cursed are those who twist what is rightfully due to an orphan or stranger or widow.' All shall say, "Amen". 'Cursed are those who commit sexual crimes with humans or animals.' All shall say, "Amen". 'Cursed are those who strikes down someone in secret.' All shall say, "Amen". 'Cursed are those who take a bribe or put an innocent man to death.' And all the people shall say: Amen.”

"Now," Moses said, "As long as you listen to God and carry out God's commandments, God will set you above all the nations of the earth and you will have many blessings. Blessed will be your city. Blessed will be your fields and wombs and food baskets. Blessed will you be when you come and blessed when you go. God will help you against your enemies. If you follow God's rules, all the nations will realize that God's Name is associated with you and they will be in awe. God will give you rain in its proper time and you will have surplus. You will lend to nations and not have to borrow. God will make you a leader and not a follower. Do not stray to the left or right of these Teachings. Follow them.

However, if you do not carry out all of God's commandments curses will come in your cities and fields and wombs and food baskets. Cursed you will be when you come and when you go. God will send you misfortune and frustration. You will be anxious and restless and feel a guilt in everything to which you put your hand. If you still do not keep God's commandments, God will bring back all the Egyptian diseases you dread and they will cling to you. Whereas you were once as numerous as the stars of the sky, the survivors among you will be few in number, all because you did not obey God. God will destroy you and scatter you among the nations, from one end of the earth to the other. You will be terrified and feel negative and hopeless.

These are the words of the Covenant in land of Moab to keep with the Covenant (of the Ten Commandments) in the land of Horeb." Moses called out to the people, "before your eyes, you saw what God did to the Pharaoh and his land. All those forty years in the desert, your clothes never wore out and your feet never injured and you were always fed. God took care of you. So keep carefully the words of this Covenant so that you consider God in everything you do and be successful.

Questions 1) How do you consider God in what you do? 2) How do you feel about God's blessings and curses? 3) How do you measure success?

Illustration Ideas: Bringing first fruits as an offering to God...the tribes on each mountain...the Levites calling out the curses and blessings.... a blessing from God...a curse from God...feeling guilty....the promised land...freedom