

Portion Re-eh Deuteronomy - Devarim (11.26-16.17)

In his last speech to the Israelites, Moses tells the Israelites again that they must obey God and follow the Ten Commandments. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One," Moses says. "See, I am setting before you today: blessing and curse. If you follow God's laws, you will be blessed more than all the peoples of the earth. However, if you worship other gods and ignore God's commandments, then you shall be cursed and perish. These are the laws for living in the land that God, the God of your fathers, has given you. In your new homeland you shall break other peoples idol gods and burn their sacred trees. There God will choose a place where you can bring offerings and donations and feast with joy."

Moses continues, "Remember, every offering must be clean and the first of your harvest and livestock belongs to God. Do not add or subtract from these commandments that were given by your God Who brought you out of slavery. Now if someone, whether family, friend or stranger, wants you to worship other gods - Stop. Do not listen because God, your God is testing you with this to know whether you truly love God, your God, with all your heart and all your soul. Do not ask questions about other gods or how to serve them for their offerings are everything God hates. You shall only follow and fear God."

Moses then says, "Remember when eating that you may only eat animals with true hoofs that are cleft in two and brings up the cud, like sheep, goats and oxen and not camels, rabbits and pigs. You may eat anything in the water that has fins and scales. You may eat any clean bird but not eagles, nor owls or bats. All insects are unclean. Anything that dies naturally is unclean. You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk. Remember to provide for needy and always give one-tenth of your riches away each year. Provide for the Levites who take care of the Appointed Meeting Place for God and take care of the needy so God may bless you. If you do not take care of the needy God will hear their cries and know your sins."

"Do not forget to free your slaves in the 7th year," Moses continues, "and be sure to give them some of your wealth to start a new life in freedom. Remember you were once slaves in Egypt. Remember make your offerings to God with the first of anything, the seven day Passover offering of unleavened bread, the hand-made offerings and rejoicing for the Festival of Weeks (Shavuot), and the harvest offerings for the Festival of Huts (Sukkot). Every person must give offerings which honor his or her God-given blessings.

Questions: 1) In everyday life, how does God bless and curse you? 2) How does God bless and curse the Jewish people? 3). Why is what we eat so important that Moses adds it to his last speech to the people before he dies? 4). What does it mean to search for the God's Presence? Where do you search?

Illustration Ideas: Any blessing from God...an offering to God...feasting with joy.helping the needy...