

Vaeschanan Deuteronomy - Devarim (3:23-7:11)

While all the Children of Israel listened, Moses told of their journeys from freed slaves to a people about to enter God's promised land. Moses tells the people, "I pleaded with God, saying 'O God, Lord! You have begun just begun to show me Your greatness. Please let me cross the river and see the good land.' But God was angry because of you people and said instead, 'Climb to the top of the cliff and feast your eyes upon the land. You will not cross it so give the new leader Joshua instructions, strengthening him and giving him courage, since he will lead the people across and parcel the land.'"

Moses said to all the people, "Now, Israel, listen to the commandments I am teaching you this day and follow them so that you may live well in the land. Do not add or subtract anything to these commandments. Keep all of them. Consider it a privilege to safeguard them since God's laws are your wisdom before all the other nations. What other nations has God so close to them and available whenever we call? What other nation has such righteous rules and laws like our Torah? Be careful to not forget what your own eyes saw when those idols worshippers were killed. Only you who cling to God are still living so never let this memory leave your hearts.

Teach your children and your children's children about the day you stood at the foot of the fiery Mount Sinai when God spoke to you and you heard God's Words but saw no image. It was then God announced God's Covenant, instructing you to keep God's Ten Commandments and God wrote them upon two tablets of stone.

Afterwards God commanded me to teach you the rules and laws for you to keep in God's promised land. Do not become corrupt and make yourselves an image of God, not of any form, not the likeness of male or a female, not of any living thing. Do not worship the sun or moon or stars. Do not allow yourself to bow down to idols or serve them. These idols God gave to other people, not to you. God made you Israel God's heritage nation that you are today.

Now, you know I will die in this land and not cross over the river. Be careful that you do not forget the Covenant that God made with you. God demands exclusive loyalty.

When you have children and grandchildren and have been in this Promised Land a long time, you might do evil in the eyes of God and provoke God's anger. I appoint this day heaven and earth as witnesses, that if you make God angry, you will not remain long in the land and you will be crushed. Then God will scatter you among the nations and you will be left few in number. You will serve man-made gods. Only then will you begin to seek God, your Lord, and, if you pursue God with all your heart and soul, you will eventually find God.

When you are in distress over the things that have happened to you, you will finally return to your God and obey God's commandments. For God, your God, is a merciful God. God will not turn you away nor let you be destroyed. God will not forget the Covenant made with your forefathers."

Now, you might ask about earlier times. Has there ever been anything as awesome as God creating man on earth? Has any other nation had God speak to them and survive? Has any other nation been taken out of slavery with signs and miracles, a strong hand and an outstretched arm, like God, your God, did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You have seen God is Supreme over heaven and earth. You know there is none beside God.

Remember, it was because God loved your forefathers and their descendants that God brought you out of Egypt and to this good land of your inheritance. Keep God's Commandments which I tell you today so God will be good to you and your children after you and endure in the land God gives you. Do not forget to set up cities of refuge and remember this is not just a covenant with our ancestors, but with each of us. Remember from the fiery mountain, God spoke:

I am God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall not recognize the gods of others in My Presence. Do not make yourself a representation in the form of an image, nor in the form of any other likeness that which is in heaven above or that which is in the water far below the earth. Do not bow down before these idols and do not serve them, for I, your God am a God Who demands exclusive right. I remember the sin of parents for their children and for the third and fourth generations for those who hate Me and I practice loving-kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and those who keep My commandments.

Do not take upon yourself the Name, your God, in vain, for God will not hold guiltless one who takes God's Name in vain.

Observe the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as God, your God, has commanded you. Six days you shall serve and do all your creating work and the seventh day is a Sabbath to God, your God. On it, you shall not perform any kind of creating work, neither you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your handmaid, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your livestock, nor your stranger who is within your gates, so that your servers may rest just like you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt when God, your God, brought you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, did God, your God, command you to observe the Sabbath in practice.

Honor your father and your mother, as God, your God, has commanded you, so that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you upon the soil that God, your God, is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit sexual impropriety.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

And you shall not desire the wife of your neighbor and you shall not desire our neighbor's house, his field, his manservant, his handmaid, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor.

These are the words God said to the entire Hebrew community from Mt. Sinai. God wrote them upon two stone tablets and gave them to me.

But you were trembling after hearing God's Voice through the fire. You wanted me to listen to God and then you would listen to me and do whatever God commanded. God heard this and said to me, 'If only their hearts would always remain this way, where they are in such awe of Me. Then they would keep my commandments for all time.'

So do as God says. Do not turn to the right or to the left. Walk only the way that God, your God, has commanded you, so that you may live well and endure on the land. Remain in awe of God, your Lord, and keep the laws. Listen, Israel. Do this so things may go well for you and you will multiply in the land which flows with milk and honey, just as God, God of your fathers promised you.

Hear O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One. You shall love God, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your resources. These words which I command you today shall be upon your heart and teach them diligently upon your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk upon the way; when you lie down, and when you get up. And bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be frontlets between your eyes. And write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

Keep in mind that when you arrive in this land promised to your forefathers, you will delight in what you did not work for and reap from vineyards and olive trees you did not plant. You will eat and be satisfied. Beware that you do not forget God. Fear God, your God and serve God. Do not go after the deities of other nations. For God, Your God, is a God demands exclusive allegiance from you.

Do not cause God to be angry lest God destroy you from the face of the earth. Do not put God, your God to the test. Just keep the commandments of God, your God and do what is upright and good in the eyes of God so that God will be good to you.

If your son asks why you observe God's commandments, tell him, 'We were slaves in Egypt until God freed us and brought us to this land. God gives us these commandments to remain in awe and fear of God and to survive. It is our privilege to safeguard and observe them as God has commanded.'

Now in this new land, after conquering, make no treaties with other peoples. Do not marry them, for this will cause your children to turn away from following God. They will serve other people's gods and provoke God's anger and lead to your destruction. Instead, tear down their false idols. You are a holy people to God, your God. It is you whom God chose to be God's treasured people among all the people of the earth. God did not choose you because you were the largest among the peoples for you are the smallest. It is out of God's love for you. It is because God kept the oath made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and brought you out of slavery with a mighty hand.

You must realize God, your God, is the Supreme Being. You can trust God, your God Who preserves the Covenant for those who love God and who keep God's commandments to the one thousandth generation. But for those who hate God, God will quickly destroy them. So safeguard these commandments that I am teaching you today so that you will keep them."

Questions: 1) How many of the Ten Commandments can you list from memory? 2) How do you serve God with your heart, soul and resources? 3) How does God show love for you and for the Jewish people now?

Illustration Ideas: Moses giving his last speech...the river Jordan...the promised land...the journeys, the freeing of slaves, the stone tablets with Ten Commandments...