

Parashah 45

Va'etchanan

וַאֲתַחֲנֶן

“I pleaded”

Deuteronomy 3:23 – 7:11

Torah Together



As Moses continues his last words to the Israelites, this *Torah* portion contains the Hebrew *Shema*, the important statement of monotheism and the declaration of God's supremacy. Moses also restates the Ten Commandments as a reminder of the covenant that the Israelites entered into with God. God, through Moses, continues to encourage the Israelites to be obedient and keep His commands.

1. Moses Forbidden to Cross the Jordan - 3:23-29

a) What request did Moses make of God in this passage? What was God's response? Why did God respond this way? What did God allow Moses to do?

b) Who did Moses blame for this situation? Do you think this was fair?

2. Obedience Commanded - 4:1-14

a) In verses 1 and 2, what specifically does Moses command the Israelites to do? What will the Israelites gain by following God's command?

b) What incident do you think Moses is referring to in verses 3 and 4?

Scripture Link:

Numbers 20:1-13 records the event that led to Moses being denied the privilege of leading the Israelites into the land of Israel. Note that *Pisgah* is another name for Mount Nebo.

Scripture Link:

Numbers 25 tells the story of how Balak and the Moabites led the Israelites into the worship of their pagan god, Baal of Peor. This was a good example of why it is important to be obedient to God's commands.

c) In verses 5 - 8, Moses gives the Israelites another reason for following the commands of God. What is this reason?

Scripture Link:

Moses asks that the Israelites remember when they were at the foot of Mt. Sinai, to receive the Ten Commandments. This dramatic scene is described in **Exodus 19 and 20**. Note that Mt. Horeb is another name for Mt. Sinai.

d) What event does Moses ask the people to remember in verses 9 - 14? What did the Israelites do when they heard God's voice at Mount Sinai?

3. Idolatry Forbidden - 4:15-31

a) What specific sin does Moses address in this passage? What things might the Israelites do in committing this sin? Why do you think this was of such importance to Moses?

As history has shown, the Israelites did indeed engage in idolatry. They were subsequently destroyed and scattered among the peoples. Only a few survived (today's Jews). Even today, however, if we seek God with all our heart and soul, and obey Him, then He will not abandon us and will fulfill His covenant.

b) In light of the history of Israel, verses 25 - 31 seem very prophetic. Can you describe how some of these things have come to pass? Do you think more is still to come?

4. YHWH is God - 4:32-40

In this passage, Moses asks the Israelites to consider the things God has done for them. What are some of these things? What conclusion does Moses draw from these things? Based on this, what then does Moses encourage the people to do in verses 39 - 40?

5. Cities of Refuge - 4:41-43

What three cities did Moses name as cities of refuge east of the Jordan river? Where were these cities? What was the purpose of a city of refuge?

Scripture Link:

Numbers 35:6-28 tells about the “cities of refuge,” their purpose and the names and location of three of them. The others and more about the “cities of refuge” can be found in **Joshua 20**.

6. Introduction to the Law - 4:44-49

As Moses prepares to present the Ten Commandments to the Israelites a second time, he records exactly where they were, both physically and in history. Physically, where were the Israelites at this time? Exactly what land did they control? From whom was this land taken?

7. The Ten Commandments - 5:1-33

a) As a preamble to reading the Ten Commandments, Moses reminds the Israelites of what fact in verses 2 - 3? Why is this important?

b) As you reread the Ten Commandments, has the Holy Spirit given you any new insight into either the commandments themselves or their Author?

c) Verses 22 - 30 is Moses' recollection of the events described in Exodus 20:18-21. What additional information is added here? What words does God speak to Moses that reveal His heart for the people of Israel? What does Moses exhort the people to do? Why?

Note the emotion in God's voice in verse 5:29 as He says about his people the Israelites: “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!” God, in his omniscience, knew that the Israelites would not keep his commandments and it truly saddened Him.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 are probably the most important verses in Judaism (and Christianity for that matter). The last four Hebrew words of verse 4 can be translated in several different ways: "The LORD our God, the LORD is one," or "The LORD our God the LORD is one God, or "The LORD our God, the LORD alone." Each conveys a slightly different meaning but each is equally true. Note that the words "The LORD" are translated from the name God gives himself in **Exodus 3:14**, יהוה or yod-hay-vav-hay.

Scripture Link:
Matthew 22:35-37 record *Yeshua's* words about the *Shema*. Notice how his focus is on the second part of the *Shema*, **Deuteronomy 6:5** and how he expands on them.

8. Love YHWH your God - 6:1-25

a) Moses gives several reasons why the Israelites should obey God's commands, decrees, and laws. What are they?

"Love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength."

Deuteronomy 6:5

b) Verses 4 and 5 are the famous *Shema*. What important attribute of God is stated in verse 4? What did *Yeshua* say about verse 5?

c) Other than to obey them, what responsibilities do we have concerning God's commandments? What is the result of doing this?

d) What Jewish traditions have come from the commands in verses 8 and 9?

9. Driving out the Nations - 7:1-11

a) What seven nations did God say that the Israelites would drive out of the land of Israel? What do you know about any of these nations? Were they larger or smaller than Israel?

b) After God had “delivered them over to” the Israelites, what was to be done with these nations? Specifically why were the Israelites forbidden to intermarry with them? What was to be done with the various religious items left by these nations?

c) According to verses 7 - 11, why did God choose the Israelites to be his “treasured possession”? Based on this, what did Moses exhort the Israelites to do?

It can be reassuring to note why God chose to love and to bless the Israelites. Verses 7 and 8 make it clear that God chose the Israelites to honor His promise to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. For us as well, God chose to love us not based on anything inherently good about us, but just as an act of His free will.

Digging deeper

1. In the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), we are commanded to “love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Is this an emotional response that we feel or is it a conscious act on our part? What’s the difference? Does this reveal anything to you about God’s character?

2. According to Deuteronomy 7:1-2, after the Israelites defeated the current occupants of the land of Israel, they were to totally destroy them, and “show them no mercy.” Does this seem consistent with God’s character to you? Why do you think a loving God might act in this way?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 40:1-26

Brit Hadashah : Matthew 4:1-11; 22:33-40; Mark 12:28-34;

Luke 4:1-13; 10:25-37; Acts 13:13-43;

Romans 3:27-31; I Timothy 2:4-6; James 2:14-26