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“Because”

Deuteronomy 7:12 – 11:25

Torah Together



In this *Torah* portion, Moses continues to speak for God as he pours out his heart to the Israelites. He tells the Israelites how and why God will lead them successfully into the Promised Land and he encourages them to love and obey God, keeping his commandments.

1. Driving out the Nations - 7:12-26

a) According to verses 12-15, what are some of the benefits of following God's laws?

Some benefits the Israelites would reap by keeping God's law include: 1) God would love, bless, and increase their numbers, 2) He would bless the fruit of their wombs, the crops of their land, and the offspring of their herds and flocks, and 3) He would keep them free of diseases.

b) According to Moses, what could the Israelites expect as they went up against the stronger nations that possessed the land?

The Israelites could expect their enemies to be defeated in the same way that God defeated the Egyptians. God himself would drive out their enemies.

c) Why did God say that the Israelites would take the land “little by little”? What was to be done with the people they conquered? What was to be done with their idols?

By taking the land “little by little,” the Israelites would be able to gradually take over the management of the land. Otherwise, “wild animals would multiply” making it necessary to tame the land again. The people who the Israelites defeated were to be totally destroyed, their idols to be burned.

2. Do Not Forget YHWH - 8:1-20

a) What were the Israelites supposed to learn from their time of testing in the desert? How was this like a father disciplining his son (verse 5)?

The Israelites were tested in the desert “to know what was in their hearts, whether or not they would keep God's commands.” They were humbled so that they would know that their lives and livelihood came from God. God was teaching them how to live a life pleasing to him, like a loving father.

Stop and ponder verse 8:2 for a moment. From God's perspective, what is the purpose of testing? Don't you think that God already knows what's in our hearts? So who, then, is to gain from knowing what's in our hearts and why is it important?

Scripture Link:

Matthew 4 records the events that led to *Yeshua* quoting **Deuteronomy 8:3**. Why do you think He might have chosen this verse?

As we learn more about God and how he deals with mankind, we see that he often uses one group of people as an instrument of judgment on another. This can be seen throughout history. In **Deuteronomy 9:4-5**, God states plainly why he will make the Israelites successful in their conquest of the Promised Land.

Scripture Link:

Exodus 17:1-7, **Numbers 11:1-3** and **Numbers 11:31-34** describe the events that Moses alludes to in this verse.

b) What were the circumstances when *Yeshua* quoted Deuteronomy 8:3?

During his temptation in the wilderness, after forty days Satan suggested that Yeshua turn the stones into bread that He might eat. Yeshua responded with this verse, implying that God's word is more important the food.

c) What were some of the good things the people could expect in the land of Israel? Of what were they to beware? Does this danger still exist today?

The land was well-watered, producing "wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey." It also contained valuable mineral deposits. They would be well-fed and lack nothing. But they needed to be careful to obey God's commands AND to remember that God had given this to them - they didn't achieve it on their own. This is still a problem today, when one is materially blessed but does not give God the credit and glory.

3. Not Because of Israel's Righteousness - 9:1-6

a) How did Moses encourage the Israelites as they prepared to invade the land of Israel? What kinds of cities and people were they expecting to encounter?

Moses told the Israelites to be assured that God himself would go ahead of them like a devouring fire and that He would destroy and subdue their enemies, even though they were larger and stronger than the Israelites and lived in large walled cities. (Anakites were giants, like Goliath.)

b) From God's perspective, why could the Israelites expect to be victorious?

In verse 4, God says that it is because of the wickedness of the current inhabitants that they were being destroyed. It had nothing to do with Israel's righteousness - God was using Israel as an instrument to punish the wicked.

4. The Golden Calf - 9:7-29

a) Compare this version of the story of the golden calf with version in Exodus 32. What differences and similarities do you notice? Does this version explain why it appears that Aaron was not punished for his role in the affair?

The two versions of the story are very similar, even the part where God threatens to destroy the Israelites. A significant addition is Moses praying on Aaron's behalf so that God would not destroy him.

b) Verse 22 mentions similar incidents that occurred at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah. Can you recall and describe these incidents?

Taberah refers to the episode in Numbers 11:3, Massah refers to Exodus 17:7, and Kibroth Hattaavah refers to Numbers 11:34.

c) What argument did Moses use to convince God not to destroy the Israelites.

Moses reminded God of his promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also pointed out that if He destroyed the Israelites, the other nations (notably Egypt) would say that God was not able to bring them into the land He had promised.

5. Tablets Like the First Ones - 10:1-11

a) According to this passage, who chiseled out the second set of tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were written? Who did the writing? Where were they stored?

According to this passage, Moses chiseled out the stone tablets and God wrote on them. (This is not clear from the Exodus passage.) These tablets were stored in the Ark of the Covenant which resided in the Tabernacle.

b) How long did Moses stay on Mount Sinai the second time to receive the Ten Commandments? Why was he successful in averting God's wrath toward the Israelites?

Moses stayed on Mount Sinai 40 days and nights (verse 10). This verse also says, "It was not his [God's] will to destroy you [the Israelites]."

6. Fear YHWH - 10:12- 22

a) In this very moving passage, what does God ask of his people? How does "fear of God" fit together with the command to love God?

God asks of his people that they "fear him, walk in all his ways, love him, and serve him with all their heart and soul." The fear of God is not a negative thing; it is more the fear of disappointing someone who loves you. Perhaps "respect for God" is better.

b) Moses points out to the Israelites how remarkable it is that God chose them to be His. Based on this, what does Moses exhort the Israelites to do?

Moses exhorts the Israelites to "circumcise their hearts," to have a soft and pliable heart before God, not to be "stiff-necked."

c) What are some of God's character traits that Moses lists? What does Moses say about the promise that God made to Abraham in Genesis 15:5?

God "is mighty and awesome, shows no partiality, accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing." Moses says that God had fulfilled his promise to Abraham to make his offspring "as numerous as the stars in the sky."



Scripture Link:

Although one can find many other examples, **Micah 6:8** is also a good summary of what God expects of his people: "And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Other examples might be **Matthew 22:36-40** and **James 1:27**. There are many other examples.

Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that YHWH your God is giving you this good land

Deuteronomy 9:6

7. Love and Obey YHWH - 11:1-25

a) To encourage the Israelites to love and obey God, Moses recalls some of the miraculous events in their recent history. List some of these events. What is the significance of the fact that the people he was addressing experienced these events and not their children?

Moses speaks of the exodus from Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's army, God's provision for them in the desert, and of his destruction of Dathan and Abiram during Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16). Thus Moses' audience had first-hand experience of these things - it was not just a story told to them.

b) According to verses 8 and 9, what would be the benefits of observing God's commands?

Observing God's commands would give them the strength to take the land and they would live long in the land, a land "YHWH your God cares for."

Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to you forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

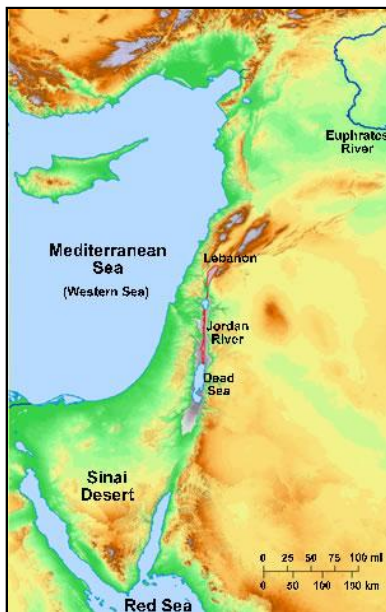
Deuteronomy 11:8-9

c) How would agricultural practices be different in the land of Israel than they were in Egypt? How might this encourage the Israelites to have a close relationship with God?

Unlike Egypt, where crops were grown by irrigation, in Israel, crops would be naturally watered by rain from heaven. Thus the Israelites had to depend on God for the rain to grow successful crops. (See verses 13-14)

d) What is the extent of the land promised to Israel? What did the Israelites have to do so that they and their children might live prosperously in the land forever?

Verse 24 describes the land as extending "from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western (Mediterranean) sea." The Israelites had to obey the commands of God and teach them to their children to assure long life in the land.



Digging deeper

1. According to Deuteronomy 10:12-13, why should we “observe YHWH’s commands and decrees”? Do you think God expects us to be successful in keeping all his commands all the time? Do we earn our righteousness by keeping his commands?

Verse 13 says that we are to observe YHWH’s commands and decrees “for our own good.” God knows that we will not be able to keep all his commands and decrees. (What are sin sacrifices for?) But if we love him with all our heart and with all our soul, then we will always be trying to observe his commands and decrees. This is not to “earn our righteousness,” but just to please someone we love. In doing this, we are working “for our own good” and God will bless us. A useful New Testament reference might be Hebrews 4:15-16, which reads, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

2. Circumcision of the heart is often thought of as a New Testament term. Is it clear from Deuteronomy 10:16 what Moses means when he exhorts the Israelites to circumcise their hearts? What does a circumcised heart mean to you?

Romans 2:25-29 refers to circumcision and its value. Essentially, a circumcised heart implies that a person is sensitive to God’s leading in their life and desires to do his will. His heart is not hard but soft, sensitive to both God’s will and the needs of others. God can work with a soft and willing heart with ease but He must soften a hard heart before He can begin to conform it to His will. Ezekiel 11:19-20 makes this point very clearly.

As a Christian, you may have been taught that Jews believe that one must “earn” God’s approval by being obedient to His Law, the *Torah*. After your study of the *Torah*, do you believe this is true of all Jews or of Judaism in general?

Scripture Link:
In **Romans 2:25-29**, Paul explains his view of physical and spiritual circumcision. Do you think his view is consistent with the one given by Moses in Deuteronomy 10:16?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 49:14 – 51:3

Brit Hadashah : Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; James 5:7-11

