

Parashah 52

Vayelekh

וַיֵּלֶךְ

“He went”

Deuteronomy 31:1–30

Torah Together



In this short *Torah* portion, Moses formally appoints Joshua to succeed him as the leader of the Israelites and he graphically predicts Israel's rebellion against their God. This is also the time that Moses put the *Torah* in writing.

1. Joshua to Succeed Moses - 31:1-8

a) In his last address to the Israelites, what reasons does Moses give for naming a new leader? To what events in their recent past does Moses refer to help encourage them? According to Moses, why should the Israelites “be strong and courageous”?

b) Next, Moses speaks directly to Joshua. Specifically what does Moses instruct Joshua to do? What reason does Moses give for Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged?

Scripture Link:

Numbers 20:1–13 relate the incident that led to Moses being told by God that “you shall not cross the Jordan.”

Scripture Link:

Numbers 21:21–35 tell the story of the defeat of Sihon and Og when the Israelites were victorious over their enemies.

These words that Moses spoke to Joshua must have been a great encouragement to him. Even though Joshua had been a faithful servant to Moses for over forty years, the task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land would be daunting.

Scripture Link:

The story of Josiah, a King of Judah, is told in **II Kings 22**. It is believed that the Book of the Law referenced in this story was a copy of the book of **Deuteronomy**.

2. The Reading of the Law - 31:9-13

According to verse 9, who wrote down the Torah? To whom did he give it? What was to be done with the Torah? Why was this to be done? Does this seem like a good idea to you? Do you think Israel followed Moses' instructions?

3. Israel's Rebellion Predicted - 31:14-30

a) Where did the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua occur? How does the description of this event in **Numbers 27:18-23** differ from this one?

b) In verses 16 -21, God is speaking directly to Moses. What did He say that the Israelites would "soon" do? Why do you think God chose to use these exact words to describe their behavior? Does this seem appropriate to you?

Note that twice (in verses 6 and 8) Moses tells Joshua and the Israelites that God "will never leave you nor forsake you." Given that God considers himself married to Israel, what does this say about his commitment as a husband?

c) What does God say he will do to the Israelites “on that day”? Did this happen? When?

d) Why does God instruct Moses to “write this song”? What does God intend this song to do? Has this happened? (The song is recorded in **Deuteronomy 32**.)

e) What command did God give to Joshua in verse 23?

f) After Moses completed writing the *Torah*, he gave it to the Levites along with his instructions. Was Moses confident that the Israelites would obey God’s Torah? How do you think the Levites felt about Moses words?

Can you sense the emotions that Moses must have been experiencing as he spoke to the Levites in verses 26 through 29? Even though he fervently hoped that the Israelites would be faithful to God’s covenant, he seemed to know in his heart that they would break their vows.

“ . . . for YHWH your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Deuteronomy 31:6

Digging deeper

Scripture Link:

In **Romans 9:19-21**, Paul quotes from **Isaiah 29:16** and **45:9** to help believers understand what it means for God to be sovereign:

“One of you will say to me: “Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?” But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? “Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?”

1. Earlier in Deuteronomy we are given a description of what would happen to the Israelites if they broke their covenant with God. In this passage, God foretells that they will indeed break His covenant. Why do you think God went ahead and allowed the Israelites to go into the promised land even though He knew they would not live up to the covenant? What insight does this give you into the character of God? Do you think **Romans 9:19-21** applies here?

2. From our vantage point of approximately 4000 years of recorded history, it is awe-inspiring to think that God has foreseen all of the experiences that His people would endure. How likely do you think it is that the nation of Israel would exist today if it were not for God? As believers in the Messiah *Yeshua*, what is our relationship to Israel according to **Ephesians 2:19-20**?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Hosea 14:2-10; Micah 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27

Brit Hadashah : Hebrews 13:5-8