

November 10, 2019 - Deut. 3:23 – 4:24 - Moses' Prayer, Warnings
Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 3:23 – 4:24 - Moses' Prayer, Warnings
Psalm 110 and Psalm 111
Haftarah: Isaiah 33:2-6, 17, 19-22

Moses Prays to Enter the Land

Deuteronomy 3:23-25 - "And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon."

Moses prayed 515 prayers — the numerical value (gematria) of *va'etchanan*, "and I beseeched" — to be allowed to enter the Land. (Midrash Rabbah)

Rashi - [Moses said] After I had conquered the land of Sihon and Og, I thought that perhaps the vow [which God had made, that I should not enter the land] was nullified, [since the land I entered was part of the land of Canaan]. This is one of three occasions in which Moses said before the Omnipresent, "I will not let You go until You let me know whether or not You will grant my request" (Sifrei).

Rashi - "The goodly mountain and Lebanon" - this is Jerusalem and the Temple.

Rabbi Eliezer taught: "Prayer is greater than good deeds, for there was never a man who had better deeds than Moses our Master, nonetheless, Moses was only answered as a result of his prayer, for it says, 'Enough for you! Speak no more to me on this matter' and right afterward it says 'Go on top of the peak...'" (Talmud Brachot 32b)

Moses' prayer was answered, but not in the way he imagined. He got to "see" the Promised Land, but only from the top of the mountain.

In the same way, the Law brings us to the point of seeing our inheritance. But only Jesus/Joshua can lead us there, through our repentance at our inability to keep the Law.

'Enough!'

Deuteronomy 3:26 - "But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter."

God says *Rav Lach!* "Enough for you!" Rashi translates *rav lach* literally -- *rav* "a lot," *lach*, "awaits you" -- and then goes on to explain: [This means] "there is a lot of good awaiting you," therefore Moses need not pray anymore for his share in the other world.

"God said to Moses 'It is enough that you have been united with the Shechinah -- you can advance no further.'" (Zohar D'varim 260b)

In fact the Haftarah says: **Isaiah 33:17** - "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

This is a lesson in importunity in prayer - "Even if a sharp blade is on a person's neck, they should not cease to ask for mercy" (Sifri D'varim piska 29).

"Let it suffice the" - Recall the wonderful "It Would Suffice Us" passage from the Passover Haggadah

Recall Paul's prayer - **2 Corinthians 12:8-9** - "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

See notes on **Deuteronomy 1:37**, where this is first stated.

"for your sakes" - literally this means "on account of you," i.e. it's your fault, the people's fault.

But some rabbis saw it as it meaning "on *behalf* of you"

[Moses said:] "But God was angry with me for your sakes: For I desired to keep you there (in Israel), so that you would never be exiled. But He (God) had already lifted up His arm to disperse you among the nations." (Sforno 3:26)

i.e. at the incident of the golden calf, God had already purposed to send them into exile. "He (God) had already lifted up His arm to disperse you among the nations."

So now, Moses will begin to teach them again, restating the Law. (Mishneh Torah - the 'again law').

In the end, Moses' efforts fell short, and Israel eventually went into exile, but the "lecture" he left us remains.

More Stories About Moses' Appeal

See https://www.chabad.org/parshah/in-depth/plainBody_cdo/AID/3032

When Moses saw that the decree had been sealed against him, he went and drew a circle and sat inside it, and said: I am not moving from here until You nullify the decree! . . . He then wrapped himself in sackcloth and covered himself with ashes, and stood in prayer and supplication before God until the heaven and the earth and the very laws of creation began to tremble, and said: Perhaps the time has come for God to

destroy the world? . . .

What did God do at that moment? He announced at every gate of every heaven and at every gate of every court that Moses' prayer should not be admitted . . . for the voice of Moses' prayer was like a sword that slices and rips, and which nothing can stop . . .

Said Moses to God: If You will not allow me to enter the Land, allow me to [enter] as a beast of the field, which grazes on the grass and drinks water and sees the world that way—let my soul be as one of those!

Said God: "Enough!"

Said Moses to God: If You will not allow me to enter the Land, allow me to [enter] as a bird that flies in the air to all four corners of the earth to collect its feed, and in the evening returns to its nest—let my soul be as one of those!

Said God: "Enough!"

(Yalkut Shimoni)

Joseph's Bones

Moses said to God: "Master of the Universe! Joseph's bones are entering the Land, and I shall not enter?"

Said God to him: "He who admitted to his land is buried in his land; and he who did not admit to his land shall not be buried in his land. Joseph admitted to his land when his master's wife said (Genesis 39:14), "See, they have brought us a Hebrew man . . .," and he did not deny it; on the contrary, he said (ibid. 40:15), "I was abducted from the land of the Hebrews." Therefore, he shall be buried in his land. You, however, did not admit to your land when the daughters of Jethro said (Exodus 2:19), "An Egyptian man rescued us from the shepherds," and you heard this and were silent. Therefore, "you shall not cross this Jordan."

(Midrash Rabbah)

Moses Told to Instruct Joshua

Since Joshua is a type of Christ, the following story is extremely interesting:

Deuteronomy 3:28 - "But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see."

Instruct Joshua . . . for he shall go over before this people (3:28)

Moses Sits Under the Teaching of Joshua

(This is a remarkable story viewed from a New Testament perspective, with Moses = the Law, Joshua = Jesus):

God said to Moses: Such is the way of the world—each generation has its teachers. Until now it was your portion to serve Me; now has come the portion of Joshua your disciple.

Said Moses to God: Master of the Universe! If it is because of Joshua that I must die, let me become his disciple.

Said God to him: If that is your wish, you may do so.

So Moses arose early in the morning to Joshua's door, and Joshua was sitting and teaching. Moses bent his frame and covered his mouth, so that Joshua did not see him. . . . All of Israel came to Moses' door, but found him at Joshua's door, and Joshua was sitting and Moses was standing. The people said to Joshua: "Joshua! What has happened to you, that Moses our master is standing and you are sitting?" As soon as Joshua lifted his eyes and saw this, he immediately tore his garments and cried and wept: "Master! Master! Father, my father and lord!"

Said the people to him: "Moses our teacher! Teach us Torah."

Said he to them: "I have not license."

Said they to him: "We shall not leave you!"

Then a voice came forth from heaven and said to them: "Learn from Joshua!" and they accepted it.

[Compare **Matthew 3:17** - "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'"]

Joshua sat at their head, Moses to his right and the sons of Aaron to his left; he sat and taught, and Moses did not understand his teaching.

After they stood up, the people of Israel said to Moses: "Moses our teacher, explain the teaching to us."

Said he to them: "I know it not," and Moses was stumbling and failing.

At that moment, he said to God: "Master of the Universe! Until now, I asked for life. Now, my soul is placed in Your hand."

Compare **Luke 2:46-47** - "And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in

the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”

- **John 1:17** - "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Crossing Over

Any venture not led by Joshua/Jesus will fail.

Rashi -"he will cross over before this people" - So, indeed, we find that when Joshua sent some of the people against Ai and he remained behind,“the men of Ai smote of them” (Josh. 7:5). And when he fell on his face, God said to him ... it is you standing in your place and sending My children out to war [that brought about this defeat]. Why do you fall on your face? Did I not tell this to your master, Moses, “If he [Joshua] crosses, they will cross, but if not, they will not cross”? (Sifrei)

Jesus has crossed over - He is the Way!

- **John 14:6** - "Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'"

- **Luke 9:23** - "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Warnings to Not Add or Subtract from God’s Word

Deuteronomy 4:1 - "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you."

Deuteronomy 4:2 - "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

- **Deuteronomy 12:32** - "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."

- **Proverbs 30:5-6** - "Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you and prove you a liar"

- **Jeremiah 26:2** - "Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:"

- **Matthew 5:18** - "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

- **Revelation 22:19** - "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Not a jot or tittle is either to be put to it, or taken away from it.

That the Law was already tampered with in Josiah's day is implied in **Jeremiah 8:8**, "the false pen of the scribes has wrought falsehood."

Later the Pharisees did this, inventing the belief that the Oral Law (passed on orally from rabbi to disciple, later written down in the Talmud) was given to Moses along with the written Law and carried equal weight.

- **Matthew 15:9** - "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

- **Luke 11:52** - "Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."

By hedging around the Law with with extra prohibitions, it gave the Pharisees the illusion that they could actually keep the Law perfectly. Thus there was no way to get to real repentance - the "key of knowledge."

Heed The Lesson of Baal-Peor

Deuteronomy 4:3 - "Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day."

In the Sight of the Nations

Keeping and doing God's laws and statutes will have universal significance:

Deuteronomy 4:6-8 - "Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

God says the Law He has given Israel has a purpose also for the Gentile nations. Just

as Abraham was promised that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him, the Law (and Israel's keeping of it) would attract the attention of Gentiles, who would judge Israel's laws as the greatest and most just.

The prophets envisioned the nations coming to Jerusalem to have their claims adjudicated as well as to worship. The Temple would become a "house of prayer for all people" (**Isaiah 56:7**)

- **Isaiah 2:3** - "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Although this will be universal at the end of time, it began even in Solomon's time, when strangers and foreigners would come to Jerusalem to inquire into the Law. Later many Romans became "God-fearers" - proselytes who stopped short of circumcision but gave up idolatry and sought to study the Law in the synagogues.

For instance, early Christian historian Eusebius quotes the 3rd century A.D. neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry's "Philosophy from Oracles" in saying Apollo declared in an oracle that "Chaldeans alone obtained wisdom, and then the Hebrews." (note that Abraham, the father of the Hebrews, came from Chaldea). See Euseb Evangel. Praepar. l. 9. c. 10. p. 413.

Over the centuries, Israel's statutes and laws - expanded and clarified by Christ's teachings - became the foundation for the growth of human rights theories, the abolition of slavery and even the thirst for political liberty in the nations of the world.

Remember the Giving of the Law at Sinai - Deuteronomy 4:9-14

Deuteronomy 4:9 - "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;"

- **2 Corinthians 13:5** - "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"

Guard Against Idolatry - **Deuteronomy 15-19**

God's Goodness to Israel - **Deuteronomy 4:20**

Deuteronomy 4:20 - "But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day."

Rashi - "the iron furnace" - a vessel in which gold is refined.

- **Proverbs 17:3** - "The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts."

- **Isaiah 48:10** - "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tried you in the furnace of affliction."

- **Malachi 3:2-4** - "He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the Lord."

- **1 Peter 1:7** - "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ"

- **1 Peter 2:9** - "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"

"peculiar" = *peripoiēsis* - his own special possession

Moses Will Die

Deuteronomy 4:21 - "Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance: But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land."

Deuteronomy 4:24 - "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

Rashi - He burns in His anger to exact retribution from idol worshippers.

When God spoke to Israel at Sinai, his glory appeared "like devouring (consuming) fire on the top of the mount" (**Exodus 24:17**)

Moses had just spoken (**verses 10-19**) of the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, where God spoke "out of the midst of the fire" and which was accompanied by fire, smoke and thunders. This was displayed to the disciples on the Day of Pentecost, when "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (**Acts 2:3**).

This was a picture of the chaff (our old man, Adam/Edom) being burned up, leaving only the Seed. Or alternately, our being consumed as a whole burnt offering dedicated to God.

- **Hebrews 12:28-29** - "Therefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be filled with gratitude, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe. For our

God is a consuming fire."