

Va'etchanan

Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

23 I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, 24 "O Lord God, You who let Your servant see the first works of Your greatness and Your mighty hand, You whose powerful deeds no god in heaven or on earth can equal! 25 Let me, I pray, cross over and see the good land on the other side of the Jordan, that good hill country, and the Lebanon." 26 But the Lord was wrathful with me on your account and would not listen to me. The Lord said to me, "Enough! Never speak to Me of this matter again! 27 Go up to the summit of Pisgah and gaze about, to the west, the north, the south, and the east. Look at it well, for you shall not go across yonder Jordan. 28 Give Joshua his instructions, and imbue him with strength and courage, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he shall allot to them the land that you may only see."

29 Meanwhile we stayed on in the valley near Beth-peor.

Chapter 4

1 And now, O Israel, give heed to the laws and rules that I am instructing you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 2 You shall not add anything to what I command you or take anything away from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I enjoin upon you. 3 You saw with your own eyes what the Lord did in the matter of Baal-peor, that the Lord your God wiped out from among you every person who followed Baal-peor; 4 while you, who held fast to the Lord your God, are all alive today.

5 See, I have imparted to you laws and rules, as the Lord my God has commanded me, for you to abide by in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. 6 Observe them faithfully, for that will be proof of your wisdom and discernment to other peoples, who on hearing of all these laws will say, "Surely, that great nation is a wise and discerning people." 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so close at hand as is the Lord our God whenever we call upon Him? 8 Or what great nation has laws and rules as perfect as all this Teaching that I set before you this day?

9 But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children: 10 The day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to Me, "Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words, in order that they may learn to revere Me as long as they live on earth, and may so teach their children." 11 You came forward and stood at the foot of the mountain. The mountain was ablaze with flames to the very skies, dark with densest clouds. 12 The Lord spoke to you out

of the fire; you heard the sound of words but perceived no shape - nothing but a voice. 13 He declared to you the covenant that He commanded you to observe, the Ten Commandments; and He inscribed them on two tablets of stone. 14 At the same time the Lord commanded me to impart to you laws and rules for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

15 For your own sake, therefore, be most careful - since you saw no shape when the Lord your God spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire - 16 not to act wickedly and make for yourselves a sculptured image in any likeness whatever: the form of a man or a woman, 17 the form of any beast on earth, the form of any winged bird that flies in the sky, 18 the form of anything that creeps on the ground, the form of any fish that is in the waters below the earth. 19 And when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them. These the Lord your God allotted to other peoples everywhere under heaven; 20 but you the Lord took and brought out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be His very own people, as is now the case.

21 Now the Lord was angry with me on your account and swore that I should not cross the Jordan and enter the good land that the Lord your God is assigning you as a heritage. 22 For I must die in this land; I shall not cross the Jordan. But you will cross and take possession of that good land. 23 Take care, then, not to forget the covenant that the Lord your God concluded with you, and not to make for yourselves a sculptured image in any likeness, against which the Lord your God has enjoined you. 24 For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, an impassioned God.

25 When you have begotten children and children's children and are long established in the land, should you act wickedly and make for yourselves a sculptured image in any likeness, causing the Lord your God displeasure and vexation, 26 I call heaven and earth this day to witness against you that you shall soon perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess; you shall not long endure in it, but shall be utterly wiped out. 27 The Lord will scatter you among the peoples, and only a scant few of you shall be left among the nations to which the Lord will drive you. 28 There you will serve man-made gods of wood and stone, that cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

29 But if you search there for the Lord your God, you will find Him, if only you seek Him with all your heart and soul - 30 when you are in distress because all these things have befallen you and, in the end, return to the Lord your God and obey Him. 31 For the Lord your God is a compassionate God: He will not fail you nor will He let you perish; He will not forget the covenant which He made on oath with your fathers.

32 You have but to inquire about bygone ages that came before you, ever since God created man on earth, from one end of heaven to the other: has anything as grand as this ever happened, or has its like ever been known? 33 Has any people heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have, and survived? 34 Or has any god ventured to go and take for himself one nation from the midst of another by prodigious

acts, by signs and portents, by war, by a mighty and an outstretched arm and awesome power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? 35 It has been clearly demonstrated to you that the Lord alone is God; there is none beside Him. 36 From the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; on earth He let you see His great fire; and from amidst that fire you heard His words. 37 And because He loved your fathers, He chose their heirs after them; He Himself, in His great might, led you out of Egypt, 38 to drive from your path nations greater and more populous than you, to take you into their land and assign it to you as a heritage, as is still the case. 39 Know therefore this day and keep in mind that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other. 40 Observe His laws and commandments, which I enjoin upon you this day, that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may long remain in the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you for all time.

41 Then Moses set aside three cities on the east side of the Jordan 42 to which a manslayer could escape, one who unwittingly slew a fellow man without having been hostile to him in the past; he could flee to one of these cities and live: 43 Bezer, in the wilderness in the Tableland, belonging to the Reubenites; Ramoth, in Gilead, belonging to the Gadites; and Golan, in Bashan, belonging to the Manassites.

44 This is the Teaching that Moses set before the Israelites: 45 these are the decrees, laws, and rules that Moses addressed to the people of Israel, after they had left Egypt, 46 beyond the Jordan, in the valley at Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated after they had left Egypt. 47 They had taken possession of his country and that of King Og of Bashan - the two kings of the Amorites - which were on the east side of the Jordan 48 from Aroer on the banks of the wadi Arnon, as far as Mount Sion, that is, Hermon; 49 also the whole Arabah on the east side of the Jordan, as far as the Sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

Chapter 5

1 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the laws and rules that I proclaim to you this day! Study them and observe them faithfully!

2 The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 It was not with our fathers that the Lord made this covenant, but with us, the living, every one of us who is here today. 4 Face to face the Lord spoke to you on the mountain out of the fire - 5 I stood between the Lord and you at that time to convey the Lord's words to you, for you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain - saying:

6 I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage: 7 You shall have no other gods beside Me.

8 You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters below the earth. 9 You shall not

bow down to them or serve them. For I the Lord your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, 10 but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.

11 You shall not swear falsely by the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

12 Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the stranger in your settlements, so that your male and female slave may rest as you do. 15 Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God freed you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

16 Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may long endure, and that you may fare well, in the land that the Lord your God is assigning to you.

17 You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

18 You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not crave your neighbor's house, or his field, or his male or female slave, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's.

19 The Lord spoke those words - those and no more - to your whole congregation at the mountain, with a mighty voice out of the fire and the dense clouds. He inscribed them on two tablets of stone, which He gave to me. 20 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, you came up to me, all your tribal heads and elders, 21 and said, "The Lord our God has just shown us His majestic Presence, and we have heard His voice out of the fire; we have seen this day that man may live though God has spoken to him. 22 Let us not die, then, for this fearsome fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer, we shall die. 23 For what mortal ever heard the voice of the living God speak out of the fire, as we did, and lived? 24 You go closer and hear all that the Lord our God says, and then you tell us everything that the Lord our God tells you, and we will willingly do it."

25 The Lord heard the plea that you made to me, and the Lord said to me, "I have heard the plea that this people made to you; they did well to speak thus. 26 May they always be of such mind, to revere Me and follow all My commandments, that it may go

well with them and with their children forever! 27 Go, say to them, 'Return to your tents.' 28 But you remain here with Me, and I will give you the whole Instruction - the laws and the rules - that you shall impart to them, for them to observe in the land that I am giving them to possess."

29 Be careful, then, to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. Do not turn aside to the right or to the left: 30 follow only the path that the Lord your God has enjoined upon you, so that you may thrive and that it may go well with you, and that you may long endure in the land you are to possess.

Chapter 6

1 And this is the Instruction - the laws and the rules - that the Lord your God has commanded [me] to impart to you, to be observed in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, 2 so that you, your children, and your children's children may revere the Lord your God and follow, as long as you live, all His laws and commandments that I enjoin upon you, to the end that you may long endure. 3 Obey, O Israel, willingly and faithfully, that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly [in] a land flowing with milk and honey, as the Lord, the God of your fathers, spoke to you.

4 Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day. 7 Impress them upon your children. Recite them when you stay at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them serve as a symbol on your forehead; 9 inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

10 When the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you - great and flourishing cities that you did not build, 11 houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant - and you eat your fill, 12 take heed that you do not forget the Lord who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. 13 Revere only the Lord your God and worship Him alone, and swear only by His name. 14 Do not follow other gods, any gods of the peoples about you 15 - for the Lord your God in your midst is an impassioned God - lest the anger of the Lord your God blaze forth against you and He wipe you off the face of the earth.

16 Do not try the Lord your God, as you did at Massah. 17 Be sure to keep the commandments, decrees, and laws that the Lord your God has enjoined upon you. 18 Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you and that you may be able to possess the good land that the Lord your God promised on oath to your fathers, 19 and that all your enemies may be driven out before you, as the Lord has spoken.

20 When, in time to come, your children ask you, "What mean the decrees, laws, and

rules that the Lord our God has enjoined upon you?" 21 you shall say to your children, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 The Lord wrought before our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; 23 and us He freed from there, that He might take us and give us the land that He had promised on oath to our fathers. 24 Then the Lord commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the Lord our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. 25 It will be therefore to our merit before the Lord our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as He has commanded us."

Chapter 7

1 When the Lord your God brings you to the land that you are about to enter and possess, and He dislodges many nations before you - the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations much larger than you - 2 and the Lord your God delivers them to you and you defeat them, you must doom them to destruction: grant them no terms and give them no quarter. 3 You shall not intermarry with them: do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. 4 For they will turn your children away from Me to worship other gods, and the Lord's anger will blaze forth against you and He will promptly wipe you out. 5 Instead, this is what you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, smash their pillars, cut down their sacred posts, and consign their images to the fire.

6 For you are a people consecrated to the Lord your God: of all the peoples on earth the Lord your God chose you to be His treasured people. 7 It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you - indeed, you are the smallest of peoples; 8 but it was because the Lord favored you and kept the oath He made to your fathers that the Lord freed you with a mighty hand and rescued you from the house of bondage, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9 Know, therefore, that only the Lord your God is God, the steadfast God who keeps His covenant faithfully to the thousandth generation of those who love Him and keep His commandments, 10 but who instantly requites with destruction those who reject Him - never slow with those who reject Him, but requiting them instantly. 11 Therefore, observe faithfully the Instruction - the laws and the rules - with which I charge you today.

Haftarah for Vaetchanan

Isaiah 40:1-26

1 Comfort, oh comfort My people,
Says your God.

2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
And declare to her
That her term of service is over,
That her iniquity is expiated;
For she has received at the hand of the Lord
Double for all her sins.

3 A voice rings out:

"Clear in the desert
A road for the Lord!
Level in the wilderness
A highway for our God!

4 Let every valley be raised,
Every hill and mount made low.
Let the rugged ground become level
And the ridges become a plain.

5 The Presence of the Lord shall appear,
And all flesh, as one, shall behold -
For the Lord Himself has spoken."

6 A voice rings out: "Proclaim!"

Another asks, "What shall I proclaim?"

"All flesh is grass,
All its goodness like flowers of the field:

7 Grass withers, flowers fade
When the breath of the Lord blows on them.
Indeed, man is but grass:

8 Grass withers, flowers fade -
But the word of our God is always fulfilled!"

9 Ascend a lofty mountain,
O herald of joy to Zion;
Raise your voice with power,
O herald of joy to Jerusalem -
Raise it, have no fear;
Announce to the cities of Judah:
Behold your God!

10 Behold, the Lord God comes in might,
And His arm wins triumph for Him;
See, His reward is with Him,
His recompense before Him.

11 Like a shepherd He pastures His flock:

He gathers the lambs in His arms
And carries them in His bosom;
Gently He drives the mother sheep.

12 Who measured the waters with the hollow of His hand,
And gauged the skies with a span,
And meted earth's dust with a measure,
And weighed the mountains with a scale
And the hills with a balance?

13 Who has plumbed the mind of the Lord,
What man could tell Him His plan?

14 Whom did He consult, and who taught Him,
Guided Him in the way of right?
Who guided Him in knowledge
And showed Him the path of wisdom?

15 The nations are but a drop in a bucket,
Reckoned as dust on a balance;
The very coastlands He lifts like motes.

16 Lebanon is not fuel enough,
Nor its beasts enough for sacrifice.

17 All nations are as naught in His sight;
He accounts them as less than nothing.

18 To whom, then, can you liken God,
What form compare to Him?

19 The idol? A woodworker shaped it,
And a smith overlaid it with gold,
Forging links of silver.

20 As a gift, he chooses the mulberry -
A wood that does not rot -
Then seeks a skillful woodworker
To make a firm idol,
That will not topple.

21 Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
Have you not been told
From the very first?
Have you not discerned
How the earth was founded?

22 It is He who is enthroned above the vault of the earth,
So that its inhabitants seem as grasshoppers;
Who spread out the skies like gauze,

Stretched them out like a tent to dwell in.

23 He brings potentates to naught,
Makes rulers of the earth as nothing.

24 Hardly are they planted,
Hardly are they sown,
Hardly has their stem
Taken root in earth,
When He blows upon them and they dry up,
And the storm bears them off like straw.

25 To whom, then, can you liken Me,
To whom can I be compared?

- says the Holy One.

26 Lift high your eyes and see:
Who created these?
He who sends out their host by count,
Who calls them each by name:
Because of His great might and vast power,
Not one fails to appear.

Taken from *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*,
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