

Parashah 50

Ki Tavo

כי תבוא

“When you come”

Deuteronomy 26:1 – 29:8

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion contains the list of blessings that the Israelites will enjoy if they keep their covenant with God and the curses that they will endure if they break that covenant. You will notice that the list of blessings is comparatively short and not nearly as graphic as the list of curses. From an historical perspective, we know that, in general, the Israelites did not keep God’s covenant.

1. Firstfruits and Tithes - 26:1-15

a) After the Israelites had settled the land, they were commanded to take some of the firstfruits and put them in a basket. Where and to whom were they to present it?

b) What were they to declare to YHWH? Why do you think God requested this be done?

c) What was to be done with the tithe every third year, “the year of the tithe” (verse 12)? How was this tithe to be used? How was this different than the other two years?

2. Follow God’s Commands - 26:16-19

This passage concisely states the covenant (the promise) between God and Israel. What does each party promise to the other? What do you think about these promises today?

This passage contains a clear statement of the tithe God expected from the Israelites. Notice how they were to present their tithe and what it was to be used for. Do you think these same principles apply to us today?

Recall that a **covenant** was an agreement entered into by two parties, in this case God and Israel. Each party swore on pain of death to keep their promises to the other party.

Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim are located about 25 miles north of Jerusalem. They are only about 3 miles apart, separated by a valley. Between them, in this valley, lies the town of Shechem (today known as Nablus). This is the same town where Jacob's daughter, Dinah, was raped as described in **Genesis 34**.



Scripture Link:
Joshua 8:30-35 tells the story of the Israelites as they carried out the command that Moses gives them in **Deuteronomy 27**.

3. The Altar on Mount Ebal - 27:1-8

a) After entering the land, as one of their first acts, God commanded that the Israelites were to cover some large stones with plaster. What was to be done with these stones?

b) Where were these stones to be set up? What else was to be constructed at this site? Do you find any significance that these items were to be constructed here?

4. Curses from Mount Ebal - 27:9-26

a) The common form for treaties between two parties in ancient times included a description of the benefits (blessings) for keeping the agreement as well as the penalties (curses) for breaking the agreement. These were written and then read in the presence of both parties. In the case of the covenant between God and the Israelites, where was this reading to take place? Can you find these places on a map? Who was to read which part and where were they to be read?

b) Verses 15 - 26 list the offenses that would bring about curses. Do you find anything interesting about the offenses that the Levites recited before all the Israelites? Do any particular ones stand out to you as more important than others? How were the Israelites to respond as each offense was recited?

5. Blessings for Obedience - 28:1-14

a) This rather short section lists the benefits that result from obedience to God's commands. The first 8 verses speak of blessings for the individual. What are some of these?

b) Verses 9 through 14 list some of the benefits Israel as a nation will receive for obedience. List these blessings.

6. Curses for Disobedience - 28:15-68

a) This much longer section (the remainder of the chapter) lists the curses for disobedience. Compare the curses with the blessings given in verses 1-14. Why do you think there is so much more detail given with the curses than with the blessings?

"And YHWH has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands."

Deuteronomy 26:18

b) Beginning at verse 26, Moses goes into great (and prophetic) detail about the curses. Can you identify any events described that occurred later in Israel's history?

c) Verses 64 - 68 describe events in Israel's future. Have all of these events taken place? Are any yet to occur?

The entire book of Deuteronomy is organized in the form of a **suzerainty treaty**, a form of contract in the ancient near-east between two unequal parties, one superior (the suzerain) to the other (the vassal). It is organized as follows:

1. Historical Prologue – where the relationship between the parties is explained
2. Stipulations – where the specific demands of the suzerain are detailed
3. Deposition - where the text of the contract is to be deposited and how it is to be attested
4. List of Witnesses – before whom the oath is sworn
5. Blessings and Curses – a listing of what will happen to the vassal depending on whether oath is kept or broken.

Can you see how the book of Deuteronomy fits into this outline?

Scripture Link:

2 Kings 17 tells the story of the conquest and dispersion of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in the 8th century bc, which could fit the description given here. It might also describe the dispersion of the Jews after their conquest by the Romans in 70 ad.

7. Renewal of the Covenant - 29:1-9

As Moses prepares to renew God's covenant with Israel, what events does he recall? What does Moses encourage the Israelites to do in verse 9?

Digging deeper

1. In Deuteronomy 28:36, Moses pronounces a curse that would come over Israel in the event of their disobedience. Read II Kings 17. Do you think this is the realization of this curse? Now read II Kings 25. What is different about this situation? Are these both examples of the same curse or are they different?

2. In Deuteronomy 29:1-9, Moses begins his exhortation to obey God's commands and keep His covenant. In verse 4, Moses says, "But to this day YHWH has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear." What do you think Moses meant by this? How does Romans 11:7-8 apply here?

For further study, see

Haftarah : Isaiah 60:1–22

Brit Hadashah : Matthew 13:1-23; Luke 21:1-4;

Acts 28:17-31; Romans 11:1-15