

Va'etchanan **“And I pleaded”**

Torah Reading: Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11

Haftarah Reading: Isaiah 40: 1 - 26

Study Notes

God is a Consuming Fire

- Moshe builds his words on the theme of fire. (Devarim 4:1-24)
 1. First he reminds Israel that the mountain from which God spoke to them was ...burning with fire up to the heart of heaven... (4:11).
 2. Second, he reminds them that the Lord brought them up from the iron crucible of Egypt (4:20)
- In Scripture, fire, among other things, was used to indicate both God's wrath and His purification.
 1. It is significant that in addition to knowing God as “a consuming fire” Moshe also knew first hand that God's fire did not always consume (the burning bush).
 - 1.1. God's remnant among Israel will always be like the bush - purified by God, yet not consumed.
 - 1.2. Those that refused to follow Him would ultimately be consumed in the unleashing of His wrath.
 2. In other words, those who are His Own, whose flesh may want to stray after other gods or practice things which are prohibited in the Covenant, God is a purifying God.
 3. But to those whose life is bent on idolatry from the start, whether outward idolatry or inward, the Lord is a consuming fire. (Rev. 19:11-12)
- The text does not state that God has a consuming fire. It states that He is the consuming fire. It is part of the very character of God Himself.

God is a Jealous God

- Moshe's declaration of God's jealousy falls in a passage about idolatry.
 1. An idol is, in essence, a man-made replacement for God. If someone worships an idol he is giving servitude and praise to something which is only to be reserved for God.
 2. God designed every human to be complete, happy, and fulfilled in serving and worshipping His creator. It is in our spiritual DNA.
- When God demands we serve only Him, He does so because He knows that He alone truly deserves it.

- He also knows that that it is for our own good. It is the only thing which gives us complete rest, security, happiness, joy and fulfillment.
- We have many modern idols today. Unhelpful relationships, damaging habits, controlling passions, sinister attractions, materialism, dominating ideas. These can take a larger form such as prosperity, security, power, and nationalism.

God is a Merciful God

- The word translated “merciful” is a beautiful Hebrew word. It is *rachum* and it shares the same root as the word for “womb”.
 1. It gives us the picture of God as a tender mother who nurses and cuddles a little child in the safe and comforting womb.
 2. In Isaiah 40:1 the word “comfort” is the same word.

God is a Unique God (the Shema)

- The Shema - “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one”
 1. The Shema sounds the keynote of all Judaism. The verse comes in three parts: the command, the declaration and the description.
 2. The command - “Hear, O Israel”
 - 2.1. The Hebrew concept of hearing, shema, means more than hearing. It carries the idea of listening to obey.
 3. The declaration - “The Lord our God”
 - 3.1. The only reason to follow God and to do what He says is simply because He is who He is.
 - 3.2. Why should we hear? Because the Lord is our God and we are His new creations which He fashioned out of His own hands.
 4. The description - “The Lord is One”
 - 4.1. The text says, “He is One”. The word used here for one is echad.
- Echad is a fascinating word. It means “one.” But it is used in ways that connote unity rather than singularity.
 1. First, in Genesis 2:26 we are told that Adam and Eve were “one” flesh. The two were individuals yet they were also one. The word used is echad.
 2. Second, Judges 20:1 says that “All the Israelites from Dan to Beersheva...came out as one man..” Again, echad is used to label thousands of Israelites as “one”.
 3. God is not just a singularity, but a unity, a composite unity. What does this make you think of?
- Israel was made unique in order to be a witness to the idolatrous world that the True God was unique. (Devarim 4:5-10). What is our role today?

God is a Faithful God

- “He is the God, the faithful God” (Devarim 7:9)
 1. When many of us think of faithfulness we think of promises and loyalty to those promises.
 2. The unconditional covenant made with Abraham. The land and the promise of Israel as a blessing to the world are included.
 3. The second covenant is the one at Sinai. This covenant was based on obedience. In it God promises the enjoyment of the land and of His blessings if His people are faithful to Him.
- God chose Israel solely based on criteria of His own. Not on any present or foreseen merit! (Devarim 7:6-7).
 1. God chose Israel just because He decided to. This is a vital truth if we are to understand anything about the faithfulness of God.
 2. Read Romans 8:29-30. All the verbs used in these verses are in the Greek “aorist” tense. This is a past tense stressing historical, finished, once-for-all action. Even the verb translated “glorified” is in the aorist tense!
 3. God’s faithfulness does not depend on performance. Quite often the elected one does not perform. God’s faithfulness depends totally on His grace and promises.
- Your salvation is based on His promises and not your performances. He is faithful to keep us just as He is faithful to keep Israel. Those who doubt should study May 14, 1948.