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Moshe Remembered the Events at Horeb

1: 6-18

Moshe remembered the events at Horeb DIG: Korah told Moses and Aaron, “(Hebrew: *rav* from *rabab*) - You’ve gone too far” (Numbers 16:3)! Why would YHVH use the same words when directing the Israelites to leave Horeb? Why did Moshe remind the people of those words now? Why was Moses eager to share leadership? What’s the wisdom of his proposal? Who qualified to be a judge? Whose justice did they represent? In what sense is Moshe’s job now both lighter and heavier? How will this help the Israelites as they enter the Promised Land? What does “all the things” mean in 1:18?

REFLECT: Compare Deuteronomy 1:17 and John 5:22 and 27. Yeshua’s *d’varim* (words) are powerful and true because He speaks what He hears from His Father. In the same way, God’s *d’varim* are made available to you through His Ruach ha-Kodesh (John 16:13). In what way are you listening, hearing and responding in faith? What “clogs” your ears from hearing His voice? How can you tell a good leader from a bad one?

As with any introduction, try to identify the main characters (who), the time references (when) and the setting (where). Here, Moses recounts God’s command a generation ago to leave Horeb. It was time to move on.

A grasp of history is important to every generation because it gives a sense of identity. If you know who you are and where you came from, you will have an easier time discovering what you should be doing. A generation without identity is like a person without a birth certificate, a name, an address, or a family. If we don’t know our historic roots, we may become like tumbleweeds that are blown here and there and never arrive at our destination.²⁸



At Horeb: Moshe then took this **new generation** back thirty-eight years and explained to **them** why **their** parents did not make it to **the Promised Land**. But even though **he** spoke to this **new generation**, **Moses** spoke to **them** as if **they** had shared in the collective failure, as if that history were **their** very own (1:26). **ADONAI** our **God** spoke to us at **Horeb** (which is the name used for **Mount Sinai** in **Deuteronomy**) saying, “**You have stayed long enough** (Hebrew: *rav* from *rabab*) **at this mountain**” (1:6). **He** says to us, as if **they** were actually there. This is not the only place **Moshe** uses the collective pronoun **us**, connecting the past and present generations, and he will use it many times throughout the first two chapters. **The Israelites**, then as now, are seen as one congregation, one unit, one people.

An example of this is when **Achan**, only one **Jew**, sinned, and the whole nation of **Isra’el** was held accountable: **But Bnei-Yisra’el unfaithfully violated the ban, Achan son of Zerach, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the things devoted to destruction. So Ha’Shem’s anger burned against Bnei-Yisra’el (Joshua 7:1)**. Even in the diaspora this principle followed the Jewish people. When **Mordecai** refused to bow down to **Haman** (see the commentary on **Esther, to see link click [At - Haman was Honored, But Mordecai would not Kneel Down Him](#)**), an action carried out by one man, the nation was seen as a unit and **Haman** wanted to annihilate all of **the Jews**. This same principle is seen again in **the nations’** rejection of **Yeshua**. Who rejected **the Messiah**? Only a small group of religious leaders, who in turn, mislead **the whole nation**, who suffered as a result. As the saying goes, “If you forget that you are **Jewish**, someone will remind you.”

As part of **His** command that **the Israelites** break camp and travel toward Canaan, **the LORD** provided an overview of the main geographical divisions of **the Promised Land**. **ADONAI** had said: **Turn, journey on, and enter the hill country of the Amorites and all their neighbors, in the Arabah, north of the Dead Sea, the hill country, the lowland, the Negev, and by the seashore - the land of the Canaanites and the**

Lebanon as far as the great river, the Euphrates (1:7). The Land described was enormous, **it** covered an area that even exceeded the boundaries of **Isra'el** during the glory days of David and Solomon. All of Canaan and Syria are included in this geographical description. Possession of **the Promised Land** would, thus be, in itself, a monumental, tangible proof of the faithfulness of **YHVH** to **His** promise.

God's promise to **Abraham** had more in mind than **Isra'el** alone. Although it is not explicit in the text at this point, the universal dimension of the **Abrahamic** covenant (see the commentary on **Genesis Dt - I Will Bless Those Who Bless You and Whoever Curses You I Will Curse**) is never far from the surface whenever it is mentioned. The "bottom line" of that covenant was that **all the families of the earth will be blessed** in, or through, **Abraham** and **his** spiritual descendents.

There is a missionary dimension to **Deuteronomy's** call for committed obedience. There always is. In the ultimate purpose of **ADONAI**, therefore, a lot more was at stake in **Isra'el's** crossing the Jordan into **the Promised Land** than merely getting **them** out of the wilderness. Their next step of obedience was also the next step in the redemption of the world. **They** needed to be motivated to take the next step, not just for **their** own sake, but to move forward in **God's** historical strategy for bringing **blessing** to the **nations**.²⁹

What began as a covenant promise made to Abraham, continued up to the present moment in the life of the nation. **See, I have set the Land before you. Enter and possess the Land that ADONAI swore to your fathers - to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (Genesis 12:1-7, 13:14-17, and so on) - to give to them and to their descendants after them (1:8).** What **YHVH** had done in the past **He** is able to continue to do in the future.

But when one compares the extent of **the Land** that the first generation was promised, to what the second generation was about to actually conquer, there is quite a difference between the two. What happened? Although **the Promised Land** was open to **them**, something terrible must have happened along the way. Something that caused **them** to forfeit the great **blessings** that were at **their** disposal, because the more **they** advanced in **the Land**, the more **the Land** seemed to dwindle. **The LORD** had told **Abraham: I have given this Land to your descendents, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:18).** But when they came to **the Edomites**, **Ha'Shem** said: **Do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land - not even a footprint - because I have given the hill country of Seir to Esau as a possession (2:5).**

While still at **Horeb**, **the LORD** declared: **Do not harass Mo'ab or engage them in**

battle. For I will not give you any of his land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession (2:9). And further: **When you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass or provoke them - for I will not give you any of the Land of the sons of Ammon for a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession (2:19).** Why were the boundaries **the Land** reduced from the original size promised in **Genesis**? What happened for the promise to not be fulfilled? It was, of course, because of **sin** (see [AI - Moshe Remembered the Events at Kadesh-barnea](#)). **Isra'el's** ability to enjoy **the Promised Land** was conditioned on **their faith in the LORD**. It is still true for us today. **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves - it is the gift of God. It is not based on deeds so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).**³⁰

Would **YHVH** keep all of **His** promise of **land** for **Isra'el**? Yes, **God** always keeps all of his promises completely. **So, ADONAI gave to Isra'el the entire land that He had sworn to give to their fathers. They took possession and settled in it. Then ADONAI gave them rest on all sides, just as He had sworn to their fathers. Not one man of all their enemies withstood them, for ADONAI gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one good thing that ADONAI had promised to the house of Isra'el failed. All came to pass (Joshua 21:43-45).**

Do **God's** children always get all that **He** promises to them? Unfortunately, no, **God's** children do not always receive what **He** has promised. Why? Does **Ha'Shem** change **His** mind? No, **the LORD** who is holy cannot change **His** mind. **God is not a man who lies, or a son of man who changes his mind (Numbers 23:19a)! The LORD** always keeps **His** promises one-hundred percent. Some promises are a one-sided done deal, and some have conditions to be met before they can be fulfilled. **God's** promise of the gift of **the land** to **Isra'el** as **their** possession was a done deal as far as **God's** part in the promise, for only **God** took part in the covenant making promise. **When the sun set and it became dark, behold, there was a smoking oven and a fiery torch that passed between these pieces. On that day ADONAI cut a covenant with Abram, saying: I give this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River (Genesis 15:17-18a).**

The land of Canaan was given by **Ha'Shem** to **Isra'el** as a permanent possession. But here was a condition to **them** receiving what **YHVH** gave **them**. **God** did not throw it into **their** laps while **they** did nothing. **He** expected **them** to obey and fight for **the Land** which **He** had promised **them** and which **He** would help **them** to conquer. It is sad that some of the tribes choose the easier path of avoiding fighting the pagan inhabitants of the land. We read

that **the children of Benjamin did not drive out. . . Manasseh, however, did not drive out. . . Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites. . . Nor did Asher drive out . . . Nor did Naphtali drive out. . . the Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill country, for they would not let them come down into the valley (Judges 1:1, 27, 29, 31, 33-34). They** would find to **their** sorrow that **they** should have obeyed and conquered the pagan inhabitants for **God** had given **them** that command because **He** loved **them** and wanted the best for **them**. **Their** children would intermarry with the pagan inhabitants bringing many tears and hardships that **they** could have avoided by obedience to **God**. **The** path of coexistence had appeared to be easier, but in the long run it brought much sorrow.

God delights in keeping **His** promises to shower blessings on **His** children, but when a child **sins**, he forfeits the blessing that the parent wants to give. That is the same in real life. Here is an example of the calling of **ADONAI**. An earthly father looked out and saw his four children playing in the backyard. He called all of them to come in for chocolate cake and ice cream, but he set out only three bowls for the four children. The parent knew that one child would not obey and come inside. The father wanted to give what he had promised to all. And he was very willing to reward all. But not all listened to his voice and followed with obedience. In a similar way, **sin** blocks the blessing **God** desires to give **His** children who obey.

The LORD's promise of a new eternal covenant of salvation is open to all. It is based on loving in one's heart (**Jeremiah 31:33-34**). Love that confesses **Yeshua** as **Lord** and believes that **God** raised our promised **Messiah**, our **Lamb of God**, from the dead after **He** died, taking our punishment for **sins**. **The next day, John sees Yeshua coming to him and says: Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)!** Salvation is promised for those whose heart believes and mouth confesses **Jesus** as **Lord**. **For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever trusts in Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all - richly generous to all who call on Him. For "Everyone who calls upon the name of ADONAI shall be saved" (Romans 10:9-13).** What a wonderful promise of eternal life and joy forever in heaven with our Holy **Father God**. Have you fulfilled the "If" condition by believing **God** in your heart and calling **Yeshua Lord**? Or do you just know *about God*? Make that decision right now to love/follow **Yeshua** with all your heart and **God** will keep **His** promise to take you to heaven forever!

Moshe Remembered when YHVH Commanded him to Appoint Qualified Leaders:

After commanding **Isra'el** to break camp and leave the base of Mount Sinai for **the Promised Land** and to assist **Moses** in effective leadership, **the LORD** exhorted **Moshe** to appoint several respected **men** from each tribe to function as **his** subordinates.³¹

The inability of some leaders to delegate work is often a big stumbling block to progress. Many leaders fail to delegate because they have an exaggerated estimate of their own ability - the "no-one-can-do-it-as-well-as-I-can" attitude.³² Unfortunately, they fail to recognize the abilities of their team members. Poor leadership in good times can be hidden, but poor leadership in bad times is a recipe for disaster. For a description of the **ten fatal flaws that derail leaders**, see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Ch - The Completion of the Walls Despite Opposition**.

If **the nation** had any doubt about **ADONAI's** intention or ability to fulfill **His** ancient covenant with **Abraham**, **she** had only to look at **her** present situation. **His** promise to **Abraham** resulted in the multiplication of **Abraham's descendents** until **they** were **like the stars of the heavens in number (Genesis 15:5, 22:17, 26:4; Exodus 32:13)**. This expression, like so many in the TaNaKh, is a vivid expression of speech. It means, simply, a great number. And that was the problem. **The nation** had become too large for **Moshe** to govern effectively. This section shows, right from the beginning of the book, how difficult leading a whole nation was for **him**. The discussion of a great number of **Israelites** leads to a discussion about the appointment of **judges**, and the main story line is resumed with the **sin of Kadesh barnea**.³³

Moses then recounts the way **he** lightened the load of leadership by sharing it with others. **He** said that **he spoke to God at that time** saying: **I am not able to bear the burden of you by myself. ADONAI your God has multiplied you** in Egypt, the fulfilment of **Jacob's blessing - and here you are today, like the stars of the heavens in number. May ADONAI, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times as many as you are, and may He bless you just as He has promised you (1:9-11)! Heritage blessings** were first commanded to **Adam**, renewed in **Noah**, and granted to **the Fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 1:28, 9:1, 12:1-3, 13:15-16, 26:3-4, 28:4 and 14)**. **They** now pass to **Isra'el** as promised by **Moshe's** own words here.

Then the tone changes dramatically. **How can I bear your load and burden and bickering by myself?** Though it is not mentioned in this parashah (see **Af - Parashah**), **Moses** appointed **judges** with authority, such as had been suggested by **Jethro**, **Moshe's** father-in-law (see the commentary on **Exodus Cy - Moses Chose Capable Men from All**

Isra'el). **He** not only appointed **judges**, but **he** also appointed **seventy elders** to share the burden (**Numbers 11:1-30**). **Moses** declared: **Choose for yourselves wise and discerning men, well known to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads (1:12-13)**. **The people** would select the men, and then **Moshe** would formally appoint **them**, or commission **them**, to **their** new tasks.

Moses repeats three times in the first four chapters that **he** was **tired (1:37, 3:26, 4:21)**. Why the insistence on this point right at the beginning of the book? What **Moses** and **his** elders had in common was that they were mediators. But here their limitations were exposed. Especially that of **Moshe**. **He** had a unique status that no one in history could ever have. **He** is unique in the Scriptures. **The LORD** spoke to **Moshe** like no one else: **There has not arisen again a prophet in Isra'el like Moses, whom ADONAI knew face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 34:10, 33:11)**. Nevertheless, **Moses** could not fulfill the role of mediator. In this way, **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** reminds us that the book is about **Messiah**, who has fulfilled the role of mediator, and not so much about **Moshe**. This is also the beginning about the warnings about idolatry. **Moshe's** failure was an example to **the Israelites**, then, and to us today. The way out of this trap is to put the Word of **God** first.³⁴

The plan was accepted by **the people**. **They answered Moses and said: The thing you have said to do is good. So, I took the heads of your tribes, men who were wise and well known, and appointed them as heads over you. There were three categories of leaders:**

First, commanders (Hebrew: *sarim*) **of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens (1:14-15a)**. Those **men** had primarily a military function, far beyond **Horeb**, and indeed beyond **Mo'ab**, **the people** were to launch into battle for **the Land** promised to **them**. Military leaders were necessary. It was among these very **men** that **the twelve spies** were chosen to go in and investigate **the Land**.

Second, officials (Hebrew: *sarei*) **for your tribes (1:15b)**. They were more administrative than purely military in nature. It might be equivalent approximately to the modern term "quartermaster," keeping a record of all the supplies needed for war or building.

And thirdly, judges (Hebrew: from *shaphat*), to whom **Moshe** gave clear instructions to guide **them** in rendering judgments. **I commanded your judges at that time saying: Hear cases between your brothers, and judge fairly (Hebrew: *tzedek*, meaning *with righteousness*) between a man and his brother or the outsider with him (1:16)**. The rich and the poor are to be treated equally.

You must not show partiality in judgment (Proverbs 18:5, 24:23; James 2:1 and 9) - you must hear the small and the great alike. The emphasis here is on character and justice and the realization that **YHVH is the Judge** and the final authority. If all officials made their decisions on the basis of nationality, race, social position, or wealth, they would **sin** against **Ha'Shem** and pervert justice. Throughout the Torah, there is an emphasis on justice, showing kindness and fairness to the poor, especially widows, orphans, and strangers in **the Land (Exodus 22:21-24; Leviticus 19:9-10; Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 16:9-12, and 24:17-21).**³⁵

Decision-making is a job for the courageous. Too many leaders tend to make decisions that are based on general acceptance rather than on rightness. The larger the number of people involved in any given decision, the greater the pressure for conformity. Sometimes the easiest way out is to make no decision at all. This is the coward's way out, which can be disastrous to the morale and direction of the followers. A right decision is like a sharp knife that cuts clean and straight. There may be some pain, but the healing process will be free from infection. Indecision is like a dull knife that hacks and tears, leaving ragged edges behind. If and when the wound heals, an ugly scar will remain as a reminder.³⁶

Fear no one, for the judgment is God's. The judges were not to be afraid of any man or woman, even if they were pressured either overtly or subtly. For **they** stood in the place of **the LORD Himself**. This principle, that judgment belongs to **YHVH Himself** is extremely important, for it removed the basis and the authority from the human realm and placed it firmly on the absolute principle of **divine** authority.³⁷ **The lot is cast into the lap, but their very decision is from ADONAI (Proverbs 16:33).** They were to send to **Moses** any case that exceeded **their** legal expertise or ability, saying: **The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it (1:17).** Both the principle and the practice are reflected also in the reforming measures taken by **King Jehoshaphat (Second Chronicles 19:6 and 8-11).**

This section ends with a summary statement referring to all the commandments given at **Horeb. I commanded you at that time all the things** (Hebrew: *ha-d'varim*, meaning *words, matters, things, commandments, events or reasons*) **that you should do (1:18).** What more could the people ask than a **God** who is faithful and a **leader** who is responsible? Now **the people** needed to be obedient.

*Dear Father **God**, How Great and Awesome **You** are! Praise **You, God**, that **You** always keep **Your** promises, as **Your** apostle Paul says as he writes about keeping his promises just as **ADONAI** does, **do I plan according to the flesh - so it might be with me "Yes, yes"***

and “No, no” at the same time? But as God is faithful, our message to you is not both “Yes” and “No.” For Ben-Elohim -Yeshua the Messiah, who was proclaimed among you by us, by myself and Silvanus and Timothy - was not “Yes” and “No.” Rather, in Him it has always been “Yes.” For in Him all the promises of God are “Yes.” (Second Corinthians 1:17c-20a).

Sin can block us from being able to receive what was promised, as when the **Corinthians sin** postponed Paul’s visit to **them**. The apostle wrote that the reason he did not come was so that he could “spare them”. **Because of this confidence, I was planning to come to you first, so that you might have a second benefit - to pass by you on my way to Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come back to you, and to be helped by you on my journey to Judea . . . But I call God as my witness - to spare you, I didn’t come to Corinth again. (Second Corinthians 1:15-16, 23.)**

We can always trust **Your** promises, **God**. **You** have said: **The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you- not wanting anyone to perish, (Second Peter 3:9a-b).** But we must read the whole verse, for you finish the verse saying, **but for all to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9c).** **You** love all, died for all, but just as **Isra’el** did not get all that **You** had promised because **they** followed **their** own selfish way instead of loving and serving **You** - so many know about **Your** love but choose to selfishly follow their own hearts. Just as many did not love **You** enough to fight the pagan inhabitants and so they missed the rest you offered, so many living now do not choose to love and follow **You** making **You the Lord** of their lives- so they too will miss the rest that **You** have for them in heaven fight against **sin** but so miss the eternal rest that **You** have for them in heaven.

How reassuring to know that you, our wonderful and Mighty **Father God** loves us. When we don’t get something that we want, it is not because you could not give it for us- but either that our **sin** keeps us from receiving the blessing, or **You, ADONAI**, who knows all things, knows that that is not the best for us. We can always trust **You, Father God**, and we love **You** for always being faithful to **Your** every promise and always being with each of **Your** children always! We love **You!** Praise **You** that **You** promised **righteousness** that brings salvation because of our faith in **You**, and not by our works. Praise **You** that **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21).** **You** are such a loving, holy and awesome **Father God!** In **Your Holy Son’s** name and power of resurrection. Amen