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Moshe Remembered when He Cut Two Tablets of Stone

9:25 to 10:11

Moshe remembered when he cut two tablets of stone DIG: How does Moses demonstrate his understanding of the heart and plans of God? How do you think this speech would make the Israelites feel? Why is this story important for the people as they prepare to enter Canaan? Why does God instruct Moshe to prepare two new tablets of stone? What does this tell you about the nature of ADONAI? What is unique about the Levites (see 10:8-10)? In what way is YHVH their inheritance? In what ways will the Levites help all of Isra'el as the people enter Canaan?

REFLECT: What are the basics of the life of a believer? How are these similar to the tablets of stone as a blueprint for our lives? Who, in your life has been an intercessory prayer warrior? Who do you pray for? When you pray do you speak to the heart of God? If you pray for what you already know is the desire of His heart, how does that guarantee your prayer will be granted (timing, however, is another issue)? When ADONAI says to you, "Rise up, go, journey ahead," where is He calling you to go to today? Will you be faithful to that call?

In the face of national extinction, Moshe interceded on behalf of Isra'el, and ADONAI responded with clemency and graciously provided a second revelation of the Ten Words.

A. The intercession of Moses (9:25-29): At last, we reach the words that stood between **God's** anger and **God's** mercy. Because of the golden calf incident (see the commentary on **Exodus**, **to see link click Gq - The Golden Calf Incident**), **Ha'Shem** had threatened to renounce both **the Sinai Covenant** (by disowning the people) and **the Abrahamic Covenant** (by destroying them and starting again with **Moses**). But **Moshe**, with incredible boldness, raised **his** hand to **YHVH** on both accounts. **He** was not demanding something of **God**, but was pleading on **Isra'el's** behalf.²⁶⁶ **So, I threw myself down before ADONAI those 40 days and 40**

nights, because ADONAI had said He would destroy you.

Moses' intercession focused on **three points**, on which **he** knew **he** was speaking to the heart of **his God**. **I prayed to ADONAI and said: O Lord, ADONAI, first, do not destroy Your people - Your inheritance that You have redeemed through Your greatness and brought out from Egypt with a mighty hand.** Although the people deserved judgment, there had been a divine purpose in the **Exodus**, and **Moshe's** request was that that purpose not be frustrated through **the people's** unfaithfulness. The **second** request went back even further than **the Exodus**, "**Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**" It is interesting to compare **Moses'** use of history and selective memory in **his** intercessory prayer here to **God**, and in **his** address to **the people**. To **the people**, **Moses** recalled that history which showed **their** unfaithfulness, and on that basis, **he** called **them** to obedience and faithfulness. In **his** prayer here to **God**, however, **Moses** recalls the long history of **the LORD's covenant** faithfulness and seeks **His** forgiveness for **the people** on the basis of **His** nature, not **the people's** worthiness. If merit were the criterion, **the covenant** would have already been voided. Therefore, **Moshe** could say: **Pay no attention to the stubbornness of this people or to their wickedness or their sin.** The **third** basis of **Moses'** request was related to the honor of **YHVH** in the eyes of **Egypt**. **Otherwise, the land from which You brought us out may say, "Because ADONAI was not able to bring them into the land that He spoke of to them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness."** What kind of **God** would **they** take **YHVH** to be if **He** destroyed **the** very **people He** had so miraculously delivered? **Yet they are Your people - Your inheritance that You brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm (9:25-29).**

Thus, the recollection of the prayer in **Moshe's** address served to bring a sobering influence on **his audience**; in the past, there had been moments when the whole future of **Bnei Yisra'el** hung in the balance. In the present, therefore, **the people** were to **remember** the past mercies of **YHVH** and to commit **themselves** wholeheartedly in allegiance to **their LORD**.²⁶⁷



B. The Ten Words and the Ark (10:1-5): These words indicate that **YHVH** accepted **Moshe's** intercessory prayer. In the secular realm the renewal of a covenant after its breach involved the preparation of new treaty documents and the taking of a new oath of allegiance. And it was thus with **Isra'el**. **At that time**, indicating the **time** of **Moses'** intercessory prayer, **ADONAI** said to me, “Carve for yourself two tablets of stone like the first ones and come up to Me on the mountain. Make yourself an Ark of wood. I will write on the tablets the words (see [Bk - The Ten Words](#)) that were on the first tablets that you smashed, and you are to put them in the ark.” The shattering of the **first tablets of stone** (see my commentary on [Exodus Hb - The LORD said to Moses: Chisel Out Two Stone Tablets](#)), symbolized the breaking of the **covenant** relationship because of **Isra'el's** sin in making the golden calf. **So, I made an Ark of acacia wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand.** Unlike the first **Ark**, **Moshe** evidently made the second **one himself**. **Bezalel and Ohaliab** (see the commentary on [Exodus Ew - The Appointment of Bezalel and Ohaliab](#)) were part of the first generation that had died in the wilderness. The second **Ten Word** were indicative of the graciousness of **God** and **His** response to the intercession of **Moses**. **Like the first inscription, ADONAI wrote on the tablets the Ten Words He had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly, then gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the Ark that I had appointed Bezalel to make - and there they are, just as ADONAI commanded (10:1-5).** Therefore, the foundation had been laid on which the **covenant** could be firmly established.²⁶⁸

B. Aaron and the Levites (10:6-7): This small fragment is reported in the third person as a parenthesis in the main argument. **Bnei-Yisrael traveled**

from the wells of the sons of Jaakan to Moserah (Numbers 33:30-32) - there Aaron died and was buried, and his son Eleazar served as cohen in his place. This indicates that **God** not only restored **the covenant**, but **He** also restored the priesthood to **Aaron**. This was grace and mercy indeed.²⁶⁹ **From there they journeyed to Gudgod, and from Gudgod to Jotbah - a land of wadis flowing with water (10:6-7). The death of Aaron is now recorded.** Not only did **Ha'Shem** discipline **Moshe** by not allowing **him** to enter **the Land of promise** because of **his** sin (see [Gj - The Death of Moses](#)), but because of **the golden calf** incident (see above), it seems that **Aaron** was likewise denied.

After the parenthesis above, we are referred back to **Horeb**. While the high-priestly duties in the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, were confined to Aaron's family, the task of guarding the Torah and **the Ark** were committed to **the Levites** (see my commentary on [Ezra-Nehemiah An - Priests, Levites and Temple Servants](#)).²⁷⁰ **At that time, when God ordered Moses to make the second set of tablets, ADONAI set the tribe of Levi apart to carry the Ark of the Covenant of ADONAI as they marched into battle in Canaan, to stand before ADONAI to serve Him and to pronounce blessings in His Name - as is the case to this day. Therefore, Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers - ADONAI is his inheritance, just as ADONAI your God had promised about him (10:8-9).**

A. Summary of Moses' intercession (10:10-11): I stayed on the mountain like the first time - 40 days and 40 nights. The medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher Maimonides (Rambam) taught that the second 40-day period began on the first of Elul and culminated on the day of atonement (see the commentary on [Leviticus - Yom Kippur](#)), **when a glowing Moshe returned with two new tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God. ADONAI listened to me that time also and was not willing to destroy you.** The intercession of **Moses** was effective because it went to the heart of **God's** own priorities as **Moshe** already knew from **his** long, intimate, relationship with **YHVH**. **Moses** knew **His people, His promises, and His Name**. As a model of intercession, **his** prayer stands at the head of a list of prayers in the TaNaKh that follow a similar pattern and focus on the same priorities ([Dani'el 9:1-19; Nehemiah 9; and Joel 2:17b](#)). It is a powerful model for **God's** people in any generation.

There is, of course, a mystery about prayer in general and intercession in particular,

and this classic case study of intercessory prayer never fails to raise questions about the ways of **God** and the implications of how the conversation unfolded between **YHVH** and **Moses**. Was **ADONAI** really serious about **His** declared threat to **destroy them and blot out their name from under the heavens. Then I will make you into a nation mightier and greater than they (9:14)**? If **Moshe** had not interceded, would **Ha'Shem** have carried out **the destruction of Isra'el**? Had **the LORD** really forgotten the things about **Abraham, Isaac and Jacob** that **Moses** challenged **Him** to **remember**? Did **Moshe** actually change **God's** mind?

In answering such questions, it seems important, first of all, to say that there is not much point in wrestling with alternative hypothetical scenarios poised by such questions. The scriptures claim lay before us a genuine encounter between **Moses** and **YHVH** in which history meshed with prayer in a meaningful way. Asking, "what if" serves little theological purpose. Secondly, however, it seems equally important to preserve the integrity of the encounter. Both **God** and **Moshe** appear to be having an honest conversation. There is nothing in the text to suggest that **the LORD's** anger was exaggerated for mere effect; no suggestion that **Ha'Shem's** threat was a bluff intended to gain some hasty repentance. **Psalm 106:23** indicates the serious nature of the event: **So [God] commanded their extermination, had not Moses, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him to turn His wrath from destroying them.** The threat of **destruction** was real.

Likewise, **Moshe** took **God's** words with the utmost seriousness. **His** reaction to the **divine** wrath was not a patronizing dismissal of authority, "You can't be serious!" Rather, **he** recognized that this was a sincere threat that could be countered only with an appeal to the prior words and actions of **YHVH Himself**. The paradox is that in appealing to **ADONAI** to change, **he** was actually appealing to **ADONAI** to be consistent - which may be a significant clue to the dynamic of all genuine intercessory prayer. So, on both sides, it is vital to maintain the full seriousness of the words spoken and the intentions expressed through them. Otherwise, the whole encounter, and more significantly, the whole personal relationship between **the LORD** and **Moses** loses both credibility and personal integrity.

Then, **ADONAI** said to me, "**Rise up, go, journey ahead of the people so that they may go in and possess the Land that I swore to their fathers to give to them**" (10:10-11). The whole section (see [Ch - Moses Warns Isra'el](#)) ends, as it began in **9:1**, with the onward movement of the people into **the Land of Promise**. In the light of all that had come between the beginning and the end of



this section, this should be a humbled **people** about to move into **the Land**. **A people** with every confidence in **their God**, but with no illusions about **themselves**.²⁷¹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, We love to focus on **Your** love which is great, but **You** are also holy, **holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3)**. The threat of eternal destruction is very real for those who do not choose to love and follow **Yeshua** as their **Messiah** and **Lord**. **He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36)**. It is a joy to know that the promise of eternal life in heaven is also very real for all who love and follow **Yeshua** as their **Lord** and **Savior**. **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 (Romans 10:9-10)**. We look forward to praising **You** forever in heaven. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*