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The Place to Worship ADONAI

12: 1-12

The Place to worship ADONAI DIG: What was the purpose in having Moses repeat a warning about following the mitzvot once they occupied the Promised Land? Why was it important for ADONAI to specify the place of worship? How complete was the destruction of the Canaanites supposed to be? What attitudes does God desire to be a part of worship? How is that different from the pagans?

REFLECT: What “pagan shrines and gods” are in our culture today? In what ways should you be “in the world, but not of the world?” How holy are holidays today? What kinds of offerings do you bring to God? What were they to learn from this? In what other ways was Isra’el to be “in Canaan” but not “of Canaan?” What, then, is the right way to worship God?

Worship at the place and in the way that ADONAI chooses.

Moshe was a wise teacher. He devoted the first part of **his** speech (**Chapters 1-5**) to reviewing the past and helping this new generation appreciate all that **ADONAI** had done for **them**. Then **he** told **the people** how **they** should respond to the goodness of **YHVH** and why **they** should obey **Him** (**Chapters 6-11**). In other words, **Moses** was helping **his people** develop a love for **ADONAI**, because if **they** loved **Him**, **they** would obey **Him**. **Moshe** repeated **God’s** covenant promises to **the nation**, but **he** also balanced those promises with the warnings of what would happen if **they** disobeyed. More than anything else, **Moses** wanted **the Israelites** to mature in **their** faith and love so **they** could enter **the Promised Land**, conquer the enemy, and enjoy **their** inheritance to the glory of **the LORD**.³⁰⁵

Obeying His Mitzvot (12:1): These are statutes (Hebrew: *hachukkim*, meaning to write into law permanently) and ordinances (Hebrew: *hammishpatim*, meaning a judgment of the court) that you are to make sure to do in the Land that ADONAI, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess - all the days that you live on the earth (12:1). Today these words represent a gold mine of counsel and guidance. These are the words of ADONAI to the people He loves. These words are ageless and still have application to our

lives today, they are our blueprint for living. **All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness (Second Timothy 3:16a).**³⁰⁶

Purging the Land (12:2-3): The statement in **12:1** was both an assurance and a commandment. The assurance was that **Isra'el** would enter **the Land** and conquer the enemy; the commandment was that, having entered **the Land**, they must purge it of all idolatry! **Isra'el's** victory of the nation's east of the Jordan (**to see link click At - Isra'el's Conquest of the Transjordan**) was a prototype of their cleansing of the land of Canaan. This wasn't a new mitzvah, for **Moshe** had mentioned it before (**Deuteronomy 7:1-6, 23-26; Numbers 33:50-56**), and he would mention it again.

The religions of the Canaanites were both false and filthy. They worshipped a multitude of **gods** and **goddesses**, chiefly Ba'al, the storm **god**, and **Asherah**, his wife (to see a video about **Asherah** click **here**). The wooden **Asherah poles** were sex symbols, and the people made use of temple prostitutes as they sought to worship their **gods**. Since the major goal of the Canaanite religion was fertility for themselves and for their crops, they established places of worship on **the mountains and hills, the high places**, so as to get closer to their **gods**, just like those who built the tower of Babel thought. They also worshiped **under large trees**, which were also symbols of fertility. Their immoral religious practices were a form of sorcery with which they hoped to please their **gods** and influence the powers of nature to give them bountiful crops.³⁰⁷

Earlier, **the Israelites** were told to **utterly destroy** the Canaanites (see **Cd - Show No Pity**). Now, **Ha'Shem** tells **the Jews** that **they must utterly destroy all the places where the nations that they will dispossess served their gods - on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. They were to utterly destroy** anything that would lure **them** into idolatry (see **Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh**). **The Israelites were to tear down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their Asherah poles in the fire and cut down the carved images of their gods, and they were to obliterate their name from that place (12:2-3).**

As part of their training as a nation of priests, they were not to be influenced by any evil. Like all believers today, we need to put away all known sin so that **God** can freely work in our lives. However, even in the best of times, **Isra'el** had not followed **Ha'Shem's** instructions. In one fashion or another, idols had always been in their midst. In the history of the godly kings of the southern kingdom of Judah, the phrase, "**but they did not take away the high places,**" is repeated eight times (**First Kings 15:14, 22:44; Second**

Kings 12:4, 14:4, 15:4, 15:35; Second Chronicles 15:17, 20:33). Those **kings** would have glorified **God** in a much greater way if they had just obeyed **His** commandments. The same goes for us today.

Worshipping ADONAI (12:4-14): As the people of **God**, we must worship **the Lord** the way **He** commands and not imitate the religious practices of others. Our faith came by revelation, not by the invention of mankind, nor the Adversary's instruction (**Second Timothy 3:5-7**). Our most important activity is the worship of **YHVH** because everything truly spiritual flows from that worship. How tragic it is when congregations imitate the world and turn worship into entertainment, and the sanctuary of **God** into a theater.

Isra'el worshipped the true and living **God**, while the pagans in Canaan worshiped dead idols that represented false gods. The Canaanites had many shrines, but **Isra'el** would have only one sanctuary. **The place** where **ADONAI** chose to be worshiped. The Canaanites built many alters, but **Isra'el** was to have only one altar. The Canaanites sacrificed whatever they pleased to their gods and goddesses, including their own children, but **the LORD** would instruct **the Israelites** what sacrifices to bring.³⁰⁸



One place where God chooses to dwell (12:4-5, 8-11a): You are not to act like this toward your God. Rather you are to seek only the place ADONAI your God chooses from all your tribes to put His Name to dwell, there you will come (12:4-5). **The place** itself is not named. The lack of a **place**, thus, serves only to underline the importance of the name installed there - **Yeshua's** name. The text is concerned not so much with the *location* of **the place**, but on the *kind of place*, namely, one that **YHVH** chooses. What matters is not "where?" but "**Who?**" Likewise, the Canaanite places of worship were to be destroyed, not because of *where* they were, but *whose* they were? And wherever **the place** may have been, it would be less important than **the Name** that **God** had put there. Just as **God** had chosen **Isra'el**, and **her priests**, **He** alone would choose **the place** in which **He**

would be worshiped.

From the time of David onward, however, with the transfer of the ark and the building of the Temple by Solomon (see the commentary on [the Life of Solomon Ax - Solomon's Temple](#)), **the place** could be thought of only as Jerusalem. This identification is quite explicit in the TaNaKh (**First Kings 8:44 and 48, 11:13, 32, 36; Second Kings 21:7, 23:27**) and is reflected in **the Psalms (Psalms 87, 122, 132)**.³⁰⁹

You will not do all the things as we are doing here today, wandering in the desert, **everyone doing what is right in his own eyes (12:8)**. From the time of **their** departure from Sinai until **the LORD** settled **them** in **the Promised Land** there would be a certain informal quality to **their** worship. Although some compare the phrase **everyone doing what is right in his own eyes** to fit a similar statement in **Judges 17:6 and 21:25**, during a time of moral anarchy, it is unlikely that this clause points to total anarchy in **Isra'el's** worship practices.

In light of **their** unsettled existence, however, this period in **Isra'el's** history was characterized by more freedom in the details of worship. This passage envisions a future time when **the nation** would experience a relative degree of peace, and would be able to bring more order and consistency to the worship of **YHVH**. **For you have not yet come to the resting place and the inheritance that ADONAI your God is giving you. But when you cross over the Jordan and settle in the land that ADONAI your God enables you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, you will dwell in safety.** Once that happened, **Ha'Shem** would require **His people** to bring **their** offerings and sacrifices to **the place** where **He** chose for **His Name** to dwell.³¹⁰ **Then**, repeating **himself** for special emphasis, **Moses** said once again: **the place ADONAI your God chooses to make His Name dwell, there you are to bring all that I command you (12:9-11a)**

When **Yeshua** came to the earth **He tabernacled among us (John 1:14)**, but sinful men nailed **Messiah to the tree (Acts 13:29; First Peter 2:24)**. He arose from the dead and returned to heaven to receive back **the glory He** had laid aside during **His** ministry here on earth (**John 17:5**). Now each person who believes in **the Lord** becomes **a temple of God** and has **the Ruach** dwelling **within (First Corinthians 6:19-20)**. But each local congregation of believers is also **a temple of God**, and **Messiah** is building **His Church**, made up of **Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14)**. Someday, all of **ADONAI's** children will dwell in **the heavenly city** that will be **lighted** by **the Sh'khinah** glory of **God Himself** (see the commentary on [Revelation Fv - Nothing Impure Will Enter the New](#)

Jerusalem).³¹¹

One altar God chooses for His sacrifices (12:6-7, 11b-14): Canaanite worship permitted the people to offer whatever sacrifices they pleased at whatever place they chose, but for **Isra'el**, there would be but one **altar**. The only place where sacrifices were accepted was at **the bronze altar** in the Tabernacle (see the commentary on **Exodus Fa - Build an Altar of Acacia Wood Overlaid with Bronze**), and later **the Temple**, and the only people who could offer them were the priests. **Ha'Shem** didn't want **His people** inventing **their** own religious system by imitating the practices of the pagan nations around **them**. During the decadent days of **the judges**, that's exactly what some of the people did (**Judges Chapters 17 and 18**).

There you are to bring your burnt offerings (see the commentary on **Exodus Fe - The Burnt Offering**) **and your sacrifices, your tithes, the offering of your hand, your vow and fellowship offerings** (see the commentary on **Exodus Fg - The Peace Offering**), **and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock**. The point was, whatever **their** worship required **them** to bring, it must be brought to **the place** chosen by **YHVH**. **There you, the priests, the Levites, and your households will eat before ADONAI your God and rejoice in every undertaking of your hand**. The theme of **rejoicing before ADONAI** is characteristic of **Deuteronomy (14:26, 16:11 and 14, 26:11, 27:7)**. This scene envisions **a people** enjoying the bounty of **the Land** to such a degree that **they** would be in danger of forgetting **the LORD** in **their safety** and pride. Here was a way to prevent that danger. To regularly do some of **their** eating and **rejoicing** in the presence of **YHVH**, so that there could be no mistaking where the bounty came: **for ADONAI your God**, not some fertility god or goddess, **has blessed you (12:6-7)**.³¹²

The Tabernacle, and later **the Temple**, was not only a place where **the Israelites** brought **their sacrifices**, but it was also where they brought **their tithes and offerings**. **The tithe** was ten percent of what **their** land had produced, and this was shared with **the priests and the Levites**. **The priest** received a certain amount of meat from some of the sacrifices, and this was how **they** and **their families** were supported. Moses frequently reminded the people to support **the Levites** by faithfully bringing **their tithes and offerings** to the sanctuary (**12:12, 18-29, 14:27 and 29, 16:11 and 14**). **Then** they had a joyful meal as they celebrated the goodness of **YHVH**. **You will rejoice before ADONAI your God - you and your sons and daughters, your slaves and maids, and the Levite in your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance among you (12:11b-12)**. There is only one true **God**, there is only one true worship, there is only one **place** to worship **God**, and one way to approach **God**.

Dear Mighty Heavenly **Father**, Praise you for being the one and one **God** - a living, powerful, pure and loving **Father** to all who love **You**. Praise **You** that the way to please **You** is by loving **You**. And **He [Yeshua]** said to him, "**You shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.**" **This is the first and greatest commandment (Matthew 22:37-38).**

The path to heaven is a narrow path. **Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and those who find it are few (Matthew 7:13-14).** But it is a sure path that is 100% reliable. **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).** It is a path that goes beyond mere knowing about **You** - to loving **You** and making **You the Lord** of our lives whom we lovingly obey. **You** are a wonderful **Father** and I rejoice in following **You** and **Your** path to heaven. Though the path is sometimes hard and full of trials, eternity will be so long and cause me to forget earth's pain. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18).** In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **HIS** resurrection. Amen