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Be Silent and Listen, O Isra'el

27: 1-10

Be silent and listen, O Isra'el DIG: Where were the large stones set up? What significance did that have? What did the large stones represent? What function would they serve? When were these things to be set up (see Joshua 8:33-35)? What was the intended attitude?

REFLECT: How does building an altar serve as a living reminder for you to obey ADONAI? To what would you build an altar? Do you have living reminders in your place of worship today? What attitudes and principles might still apply? Why?

Moses gave directions for a ceremony for the renewal of the covenant that were to be followed when the Israelites entered the Land of Promise.

Notice that **Moses** joined with **the elders (verse 1)** and **the priests (verse 9)** in announcing the covenant to the people. **Moshe** would soon leave the scene (**to see link click Gj - The Death of Moses**), but **the nation** would continue, and the authority of **ADONAI** would operate through **their** civil and religious leaders. **The people** weren't committing themselves to **Moses**; **they** were committing **themselves** to **YHVH to keep all His mitzvot (26:18)**.



A new address is signaled by the mention of **Moses** in the third person (**27:1**). **Moshe** had not been mentioned in the third person since **5:1**, at the beginning of the stipulations of the covenant (see **Bi - The Stipulations of the Covenant**). **Moshe** had explained the general

stipulations of the covenant (see [Bj](#) - **The First Address: The General Stipulations of the Covenant**), and the specific details of the covenant (see [Cr](#) - **The Second Address: The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant**). Throughout Isra'el's history it would be necessary to call the nation to renewals of the covenant commitment and obedience. These renewals would take place at significant points in her history, such as in preparation for entering **the Promised Land** here in **Deuteronomy 27**, at the dedication of Solomon's Temple in **First Kings 8**, and during the change of leadership in **Joshua 24** and **First Samuel 12**.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being willing to make a covenant with people. Praise **You** for making us **Your children**, those who love **You** and rejoice in following **Your** covenant. **But whoever did receive Him, those trusting in His name, to these He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12)**. Help us to remember that being in covenant with **You**, our great **God**, is both a wonderful privilege and a responsibility to listen and to obey what **You** say. Praise **You** for **Your** great love that guides the path of **Your** children so that when we choose to follow **You**, we will have the greatest of joys forever. We love **You** and delight in our relationship with **You**.*

*It is such a calming thought to meditate on **You**, our great and wonderful **Father**. Even in times of difficulty, we choose to focus on the future that **You** have for those who love and that quiets us. **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)**. This world will soon be gone, but eternity is forever. How important it is to make wise choices now of our time and money; choices that will last for all eternity and merit an eternal reward. **For no one can lay any other foundation than what is already laid - which is Yeshua the Messiah. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work - what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward (First Corinthians 3:11-14)**. Praise **You** for judging the action not on how big the gift is, but on our heart attitude when we give. Thank **You** for giving us the choice to follow **You** or to follow our own ways. I choose **You**! **You** are always the best choice! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of resurrection. Amen*

A. Keep the whole mitzvah that I am commanding you today: Moses and the elders of Isra'el commanded the people, saying: **Keep the whole mitzvah that I am commanding you today (27:1)**. This was not for salvation, but for **the blessings** of the Covenant. For the first time in **Deuteronomy**, **the elders of Isra'el** are associated with

Moshe as **God's** spokesmen to **the** chosen **nation**. We are reminded of the importance of great leaders' surrounding themselves with good men. **The elders** surrounded and supported **Moses** at the close of **his** days leading **Bnei-Yisrael**. **They** had also accompanied **him** to face Pharaoh and ask for the release of **the** captive **Israelites (Exodus 3:16-18)**. On many occasions between the beginning and the close of **Moshe's** career as a leader, others came around him to enhance **his** leadership and to help carry the heavy responsibility that had been given to **him**. Is it not true that few people are successful unless a lot of other people want them to be? Great works of **God** are built by the relay race principle, not by a single runner. Here **Moses**, the leader, is passing the baton of leadership onto **the elders** before the entire congregation of **Isra'el**. The leaders will change, but not the covenant.⁵⁷²

B. Write on them the words of this Torah: Now on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the Land that **ADONAI** your God is giving you, you are to set up large stones for yourself and coat them with plaster (a common practice in Egypt). The stones were to be erected and prepared for writing by whitewashing; when the mitzvot was written on **the stones**, the white background would make it clearly visible and easy to read. **The stones** would not only display **the written words of the Torah**, but **they** would also function as a silent witness to the renewal of the covenant. **Then you are to write on them all the words of this Torah when you cross over**. In general terms, the phrase **all the words of this Torah** describe the specific stipulations of the covenant (see [Cr - The Specific Stipulations of the Covenant](#)), but whether it should be interpreted literally as referring to a transcription of those chapters is uncertain.⁵⁷³ **So that you may enter the Land that ADONAI your God is giving you, a Land flowing with milk and honey just as ADONAI, the God of your fathers, promised you (27:2-3).**

B. Write on the stones all the words of this Torah: Now when you cross over the Jordan, you are to set up these stones about which I am commanding you today on Mount Ebal, and coat them with plaster. It seems striking that **the stones** were to be set up on **Mount Ebal** (and not **Mount Gerizim**), and **the sacrifices** detailed below are to be offered there, for **Mount Ebal** was **the mountain of cursing (27:13)**, while **Mount Gerizim** was **the mountain of blessing (27:12)**. This location probably emphasized the need for **Isra'el** to recognize that failure to keep the covenant meant that **she** would have to accept the resulting **curses**. If **the Israelites** sought to obey **the mitzvot** without a faith relationship with **YHVH**, then **they** were doomed to fail.⁵⁷⁴ The ceremony was bathed in worship. **There also you will build an altar to ADONAI your God, an altar of stones - you are not to use**

an iron tool on them. Human effort was unacceptable as a means of approaching God. **You are to build the altar of ADONAI your God of whole stones, and you are to offer up burnt offerings** (see the commentary on [Exodus Fe - The Burnt Offering](#)) **on it to ADONAI your God. You are to sacrifice peace offerings** (see the commentary on [Exodus Fg - The Peace Offering](#)) **and eat there, and you will rejoice before ADONAI your God.** This often happened with important occasions (Exodus 32:6; Joshua 22:27; Judges 20:26; First Samuel 10:8; Second Samuel 6:17-18, 24:25; First Kings 3:17). **You are to write on the stones covered with plaster, all the words of this Torah very clearly (27:4-8).** This emphasized the supreme importance that **God's Word** would play in **the New Land.**

A. Do the Mitzvot that I am commanding you today: Then Moses and the Levitical kohanim spoke to all Isra'el, saying: **Be silent and listen, O Isra'el - this day you have become a people for ADONAI your God.** This did not imply that Isra'el was not **the people of God** before that time. It meant that there, on the plains of Mo'ab, at that significant turning point in **her** history, that **Isra'el** had freshly committed **herself** once again to **her** covenant relationship with YHVH. Again, **she** was told to **listen to the voice of ADONAI your God, and do His mitzvot and statutes that Moses commanded them** that historic **day (27:9-10).**