



South Head Youth Parasha Sheet

PARASHAT VAETCHANAN



Parashat Vaetchanan is a continuation of the speech Moshe began in last week's Parasha, Parashat Devarim. The Parasha contains lots of important information: Moshe reviews many Mitzvot for the Jewish people, he reviews the Ten Commandments and tells the Jewish people the importance of the Shema prayer. However, before describing and reviewing the Mitzvot for the Jewish people, Moshe first reminds the Jewish people of his punishment from Hashem. He tells the Jewish people that although he led them from Egypt and has led them for the past forty years in the desert, he will not be leading them into the holy land of Israel. The reason for this punishment is because when Moshe's sister Miriam passed away, the Jewish people had no water to drink. During Miriam's life, a well of water accompanied the Jewish people in Miriam's merit. However, with her passing, the well disappeared. When the Jewish people complained to Moshe that they had no water to drink Hashem told him to speak to the rock that had previously given forth water and request it to bring water once again. Moshe did so, however, when the rock only gave a few drops of water, Moshe hit it causing water to gush out from the rock. Whilst all the Jewish people rejoiced at the sight of the water Hashem became very sad. He had specifically told Moshe to speak to the rock because He wanted to show the Jewish people that even a rock, an inanimate object, listens to Hashem so how much more so should the Jewish people! Moshe profusely apologises to Hashem but Hashem stays true to His word - Moshe may not enter the land of Israel. Instead, Moshe's prize student, Joshua, will lead the Jewish people into the land of Israel and he will also lead the Jewish people once they settle in Israel.

Moshe begins reviewing the Mitzvot by first stressing a very basic rule of keeping Mitzvot: you may not add or subtract from a Mitzvah. In other words, every Mitzvah must be kept in the exact way that Hashem has commanded. For example on Sukkot we are commanded to take four species (the Lulav, Hadassim, Aravot and Etrog) and shake them all together. We may not change this Mitzvah by using different species or by using more or less species than commanded. We may only perform this Mitzvah by using the four species with which Hashem commanded us to perform this Mitzvah. Some of the great Torah sages added to the Torah laws. However, the reason they were allowed to do so is because the laws the Torah sages added are like 'fences'. They protect the Torah laws from being transgressed.

Moshe also tells the Jewish people to never forget the giving of the Torah and the events that occurred at Mount Sinai. Even though the generation of Jewish people that Moshe is talking to were not present at Mount Sinai and had not heard the Ten Commandments from Hashem, Moshe still says 'You stood at Mount Sinai' and 'You heard Hashem's voice'. One reason for this is because some of this generation had heard the Ten Commandments as young children and infants. Another reason is that even though they were not physically present at Mount Sinai, they were spiritually present and their Neshamot heard the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Moshe tells the Jewish people that it is a Mitzvah for them to tell their children about the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai and their children must tell their children too in order that every single generation of Jewish people knows about the giving of the Torah and feels as though they themselves were present at Mount Sinai for the receiving of the Torah from Hashem. While reviewing the Ten Commandments with the Jewish people Moshe once again stresses to the Jewish people that they should not build or worship idols. Moshe warns the Jewish people that if they do worship idols Hashem will expel them from the land of Israel and scatter them amongst the nations of the world. At the same time, Moshe also gives the Jewish people some help and advice. He tells them that if they are unfortunately expelled from the land of Israel they should immediately do Teshuva and repent to Hashem for the sins they have committed. He reminds the Jewish people that Hashem is always there for us and He is always listening to our prayers.



Moshe tells the Jewish people that a Jewish boy must wear Tefillin from the time he turns Bar Mitzvah. He also tells the Jewish people that they must place a Mezuzah on every doorpost of their homes, businesses and any other properties that they may own and occupy. Inside both the Tefillin and the Mezuzah is the special Shema prayer. The very first verse of the Shema declares that Hashem is our One and Only G-d. It also tells us that we are to place the Shema inside of the Tefillin and Mezuzot in order that Hashem and His Torah are always on our mind. The second verse of the Shema teaches us about the love that we should have for Hashem. We show our love for Hashem by observing His Torah and Mitzvot with all our heart, soul, life and resources (resources refers to money). We are told to love Hashem not only with all our heart, soul, life but also with our money because some people value money over life. Additionally, it is not cheap to be Jewish. Keeping Kosher, buying Matzah for Pesach, building a Sukkah and many other Mitzvot all require a large financial commitment. However, when we make a commitment to love Hashem and we don't complain about the high financial cost of being Jewish, we are surely observing the Mitzvah of not only loving Hashem with all our heart, soul and life, but also with all of our resources and money.

The Shema prayer that is kept inside the Tefillin and in the Mezuzah is very special. It may not be written by any ordinary person but only by a Sofer (a Jewish scribe). A Sofer is a Jewish man who is trained to write the Torah and Shema. The Sofer takes a long time to write the Shema for the Mezuzah and Tefillin. He writes every single word with much love and detail. The Shema is written on a piece of parchment with a feather and ink, just like the Torah! The third verse of Shema tells us that everything that exists in this world only exists because of Hashem. Moshe tells the Jewish people that in the desert Hashem provided the Jewish people with their every need. Hashem gave them food and clothes and made sure that they had a place to live. However, when the Jewish people enter the land of Israel it will be every person's responsibility to ensure that he has food and whatever else he may need. While Hashem will cause rain to fall from the sky and the sun to shine brightly to help the plants grow, it will be up to the Jewish people to actually plant the seeds to ensure that they have food to eat. Moshe tells the Jewish people that if they perform Hashem's Mitzvot, Hashem will continuously cause rain and dew to fall so that their crops grow. However, if the Jewish people do not listen to Hashem or obey His commandments Hashem will cause the land to dry up. No rain will fall and their crops will not grow.



Moshe tells the Jewish people that Hashem will still be with them in Israel, helping them and supporting them in all they do. Moshe tells the Jewish people that by men putting on Tefillin and families hanging Mezuzot on their doorposts, they will constantly be reminded that Hashem is always here with us, supporting us and helping us in all that we do.

The Shema is said three times a day, once in the morning, once in the evening and once before retiring to bed at night. When we say the Shema it is very important for us to remember that the world is Hashem's little ball. Hashem holds the world in the palm of His hands. Hashem can see everything that we do. We must acknowledge and recognise the greatness of Hashem. Therefore when saying the Shema we must recognise and appreciate all that Hashem does for us. The Shema prayer is so important that it is one of the very first prayers that is taught to a Jewish child.

The Parasha concludes with Moshe telling the Jewish people 'you are a holy nation. Hashem has chosen you as His special nation'. This is something which we must always remember. We should not forget how special and dear we are to Hashem. For this is what will assist us and help us in our observance of Hashem's Torah and Mitzvot.

Mission: Come to Shule early on Shabbat morning to hear the Ten Commandments.

It was great seeing you in Shule! We hope you enjoy reading this Parasha Sheet and quizzing your family! Shabbat Shalom from Brookie and the South Head Youth Crew!

