

## Handout: Deuteronomy Lesson 5

Moses emphasized the relevance of the Sinai Covenant to the present generation in Deuteronomy 5:2-5 by these eight words and phrases:

1. *Yahweh our God made a covenant with us at Horeb*
2. *Yahweh made this covenant not with our ancestors*
3. *but with us*
4. *with all of us alive here today*
5. *Yahweh spoke to you face to face*
6. *I stood between you and Yahweh*
7. *to let you know what Yahweh was saying*
8. *since you were afraid of the fire....*

In the literal Hebrew, Dt 6:4 is rendered: *YHWH 'eloheinu YHWH 'ehad*, or “YHWH our God YHWH is one.” The statement is a three times repetition of the existence of the God of Israel as One (Yahweh, God, Yahweh). Some Fathers of the Church saw this verse as a hidden declaration of the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, naming the two Persons of the Godhead who bear names twice and the Holy Spirit who has no name.

Of the ritual items associated with Jewish life, none are more important than:

- the *talit* prayer shawl with attached fringes = *tzitziot* (Num 15:37-41; Dt 22:12)
- the *tefillin* or phylacteries, cube-like receptacles with Scripture verses from Ex 13:9, 16; Dt 6:8 and 11:18 (Ex 13:9, 16; Dt 6:8; 11:18; Mt 23:5)
- the *mezuzah*(h), door-post receptacles with 22 lines of Scripture from Dt 6:4-9

In Dt 6:20-25 Moses resumes the theme he began in 6:7 in which the people are told to teach their children about these instructions, laws and customs. He gives an example of good parenting in the son's respectful question and the father's patient response. The father's answer condenses the essential elements of the Israelite's faith in God:

- I. A statement of Israel's historical enslavement by Pharaoh (verse 21)
- II. The revelation of God to Israel
  - a. the Exodus liberation (verse 21b)
  - b. the mighty works of Yahweh's judgment on Egypt (verse 22)
  - c. God's purpose in Israel's redemption (verse 23)
- III. The revelation of the Law
  - a. command to live the Law and fear God (verse 24)
  - b. obedience to the Law is the path of life (verses 24b-25)

(Amended from Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, page 175).

The verses in Dt 6:20-21 are repeated in the ceremony of the Passover Haggadah and are followed by questions the youngest boy asks the host/father.

Dt 6:1-3 and 24-25 sum up Moses teaching in this part of his homily and give the principle of life for the covenant people: “Love of God is the basis of covenant loyalty.”