

From Pleading to Strength: Parashat Va'etchanan

(Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11)

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Shabbath Shalom!

1. Overview of Va'etchanan

Hebrew: וַאֲנִי נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵיתִי – “And I pleaded”

- **Torah Portion:** Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11
- **Haftarah:** Isaiah 40:1–26
- **Ketuvim HaNotzrim (Messianic Writings):** Luke 3:2-15

Central Themes:

- Moshe's plea to enter the Land
- The Shema and the command to love God
- The Ten Commandments restated
- Importance of teaching Torah diligently

- Warning against idolatry

2. Moshe's Plea and Yehovah's Response (Deut. 3:23–29)

Moshe pleads with The Almighty to enter the Promised Land, but The Almighty says, “Speak no more to Me of this matter” (v. 26). He is allowed only to see it from Mount Pisgah.

- ♦ *Insight:* Even the greatest leader is under divine authority. Moshe's humility and acceptance of God's decision model true submission.

3. Repeating the Ten Words (Deut. 5:1–21)

Moshe restates the Ten Commandments (Aseret HaDibrot), first given at Sinai.

- Emphasis on “*Keep*” (שָׁמַר) the Sabbath instead of “*Remember*” (זָכוֹר), highlighting the communal responsibility to guard the sanctity of Shabbat.
- It could be that the difference between “Remember the Shabbath” in Exodus 20 and “Keep the Shabbath” here in Deuteronomy 5 is that the people were unfamiliar with the Shabbath just after coming out of bondage. NOW, they have had forty years to learn about Shabbath.

♦ *Messianic Note:*

Yeishua affirms the commandments, saying: “Do not think I came to abolish the Torah... not the smallest letter shall pass away...” (Matt. 5:17–19)

4. The Shema: Declaration of Faith (Deut. 6:4–9)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

“Hear, O Israel, Adonai is our God, Adonai is One!”

a. We are commanded to:

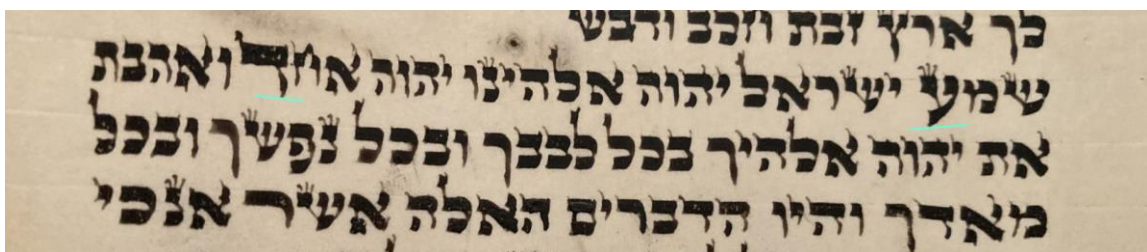
- Love The Almighty with all our heart, soul, and might
 - The word translated as “all your might” is the Hebrew word *məodekha*. It is an adverb and carries the idea of "very," "much," "exceedingly," "greatly," or "intensely."
- Teach these words diligently to our children
 - This can go for our grandchildren and any other children who are entrusted to our care.
 - It can also be applied to any who become our students. It was the practice that when a Teacher/Rabbi travelled that his students travelled with him. He would

teach as they journeyed. Every experience in life had the potential to become a lesson in how to properly live out Torah daily.

- Bind them as frontlets (tefillin) and write them on our doorposts (mezuzot)
 - Symbolically, this is saying that all we think, do, and say should be governed by Torah.
 - The common Jewish expression of this is the donning of Tefillin by men before their prayers during the week.
 - This was already a custom by the lifetime of Yeishua
 - Matthew 23:5—*“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments.”* (NASB95)
 - Many like to use this passage to say that Yeishua condemned the “Jewish” practice of donning the tefillin. However, if this is what he meant, he was also condemning the wearing of tzitziyot. And we know from the story of the woman with the issue of blood that he wore tzitziyot himself. I propose that it is possible that he himself even donned the tefillin
 - Tefillin, very similar to the ones we see today, have been found in the caves of Qumran dating back to circa 170 B.C.E.
 - Fabrics with techeilet date back as far as the 12th-11th centuries B.C.E. This would be the period of the Judges.



- A careful examination of the text shows that he was condemning their hypocrisy.
- The Masoretes have retained a great witness (pun intended) for us in the passage containing the Shema. It is found in the enlarged ayin and dalet in the Torah Scroll
- The two letters circled are the ayin and the dalet.
 - Together they spell the word ad which means a sign or witness.
 - The ayin often is symbolic of an eye
 - The dalet is often symbolic of a door
 - Together we have the eye (entrance) of the door



◆ *Messianic Application:*

- Yeishua calls the Shema and the V'ahavtah the two **greatest commandments**
- Mark 12:28–30—*One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, “What commandment is the foremost of all?” Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.’” (NASB95)*
- If we are going to be followers of Yeishua, we need to emulate him and his students’ actions in our walk. No doubt, Yehoshua ben Nun was near where Moshe was much of the time, observing and learning from Moshe.
- 1 John 2:6—*the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” (NASB95)*
- Also see—1 Peter 2:21, Ephesians 5:1–2, Philippians 2:5–8, 1 Corinthians 11:1

⚠ 5. A Warning Against Idolatry (Deut. 4:15–31; 7:1–5)

- Moshe warns Israel not to make any image or form to worship. They are called to be distinct, set apart (kadosh).
- This verse could also easily be interpreted to say we are not to put a face on him.

- By doing so, we place limitations on The Almighty that do not exist. He is a spirit without a body.

♦ 6. Modern Relevance

- Idolatry today is not just statues—it's placing anything above The Almighty: money, power, comfort, or even religiosity.
- He must be our ONE AND ONLY
- All other relationships must take second place.
- Luke 14:26—*“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.”* (NASB95)
- Matthew 10:37—*“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.”* (NASB95)

🗨 6. Application to Our Lives Today

🧘 1. Remember the Power of Prayer—Even Unanswered

- Moshe's unanswered plea teaches us that faith includes trusting The Almighty's wisdom even when He says “No, my child.”
- The Almighty sees the full picture.

- **Personal Challenge:** Trust His timing. Do not grow bitter when your plans are not fulfilled—He may have a better view from Mount Pisgah.

2. *Shema is Not Just Recited—It's Lived*

- Loving The Almighty with *all* your being means integrating His commandments into every part of your life.
- This is one of the aspects of living a life guided by Torah that I have really come to revere.

Daily Practice:

- Speak Torah with your children, grandchildren, neices, nephews, etc.
- Post Scriptures in your home.
- Let love and obedience to God shape your work, relationships, and rest.

3. **Torah Is for Every Generation**

- Moshe commands us to teach our children diligently—not only through lessons but by modeling it.

Encouragement for Families:

- Observe Shabbat joyfully.

- Discuss the Word during meals.
- Let your home be a sanctuary of truth and peace.

4. Yeishua Gave us Instructions on How to Live Out Torah

- Yeishua did not replace Torah—He walked it out perfectly.
- Matthew 5:17—*“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.”* (NASB95)
- Hebrews 4:15—*For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

(NASB95)
- 2 Corinthians 5:21—*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (NASB95)
- 1 Peter 2:21, 22—*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH;”* (NASB95)
- By doing so, he showed us how to do the same.
- “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15)

Call to Action:

- As talmidim (disciples) of Yeishua, we are to reflect His faithfulness to Torah and love.

✦ 7. Closing Encouragement

Va'etchanan reminds us:

- Torah is not distant or ancient; it is our life
 - Deut. 4:40—*“So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time.”* (NASB95)
 - Deuteronomy 30:11–14—*“For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. “It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ “Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?’ “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.”* (NASB95)
- The Shema is our anthem—our declaration of love and allegiance
- We are called to teach, guard, and live the commandments with joy
- Through Yeishua, we are empowered to obey from a heart of love
- *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”* (Philippians 4:13, NASB95)

Shabbat Shalom!

May we go from pleading to strength as we walk in the light of the Torah and the example of our Moshiach, Yeishua.

HaSof