

#45 VaEtchanan Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11

By Moshe Schwab

- * The beginning of our spiritual walk is through Yeshua; He came to give us life.
- * We have to supply the spiritual energy to stay connected to God.
- * God is not far from us; He gives us truth and life; He is the true God and not a false God
- * Fill your life with keeping God's commandments and living with love, joy, peace, and patience. Don't let it slip away. Keep God's feasts and be in fellowship with God.

VaEtchanan means, "and I pleaded". Moshe begins by relating that he asked God if he could go into the promised land; he would not be allowed to go. Instead, Joshua would lead Israel into the land. Moshe then tells them to listen to the commands of God and do not add or subtract from them. He says that if Israel obeys God, all the nations would see that they have wisdom and that God is with them.

It is important to understand that the commandments in the Tanakh (Old Testament portion) give us life, a good life. Some say they are done away, but God says they would be a witness to the nations. We have enough troubles let alone doing things that are contrary to a good life. The natural consequences of not following what is right and good brings evil into the world. Also, Israel was to tell their descendants about all the events that took place from Egypt until their entering the promised land. We should also talk about the goodness and power of God both for our ancestors and in our lives.

Moshe then tells them about how they stood before Yehovah¹ and what they experienced at Mt. Sinai. The mountain was ablaze and they heard God speak from the sky. He says they are not to make any representation of God to worship. They were to be an inheritance to God. Moshe tells them not to forget their covenant by worshipping idols. Israel would be destroyed if they worshipped idols. If they repent though, God will not forget them.

Moshe tells them that Yehovah is God and there is no other so keep His commands. Moshe then creates three cities of refuge for the unintended killer to flee. Again, Moshe tells them to listen to God's commands and then repeats the 10 words they heard at Mt. Sinai; he again talks about their encounter at Mt. Sinai. He says listen to God's commands so that they may have a long life and then he gives them the Shema. Part of the Shema says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV. Yeshua quotes this in Matthew 22:37.

Moshe tells them again to observe God's commands and to tell their children all that God did for them. He says observing God's commands will make them righteous (live right; righteous means to live right). They were to go take the land and get completely rid of the idolaters there and their idols. Yehovah kept his promise to your ancestors (he will keep His promise to them), and so they were to obey God.

This Torah portion is often read near Tisha B'Av which is a day of fasting and mourning for the loss of the Temples and also the day of other Jewish disasters. It is connected with Tisha B'Av because Moshe tells them that they will be scattered among the nations. It also says in this portion that God will not forget His covenant with Israel. God will restore us to relationship with him when we repent.

Over and over in this portion, Moshe reminds them to keep God's instructions. The writer of Hebrews says the same thing (in Hebrews 3:5-4:2). As Moshe says there are dire consequences for not following God, the writer of Hebrews says the same. Hebrews 3:12 NKJV says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Contrary to what some say, we can depart from our relationship with God. It is important to maintain our relationship with God.

¹ Ye-Ho-VAH is pronounced as, "Yě" like the word "yes," "Hō" like "home," and "Vāh" as in "pah;" Yě-hō-vāh. The accent is on the -VAH.

The beginning of our spiritual walk is through Yeshua; He came to give us life. What kind of life does God want for us? This portion contains many important verses that tell us that. Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV says about God's commandments, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"

Yeshua came to help us achieve what God wants for us. Yeshua said, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." John 14:26 NKJV. The Holy Spirit is our helper and will help us to follow the wisdom and understanding that all the nations will recognize. That's why Yeshua said He came to give us a more abundant life. It relates to what God tells us in the Tanakh (the Old Testament portion).

Yeshua said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly;" John 10:10 NKJV. The thief are those influenced by the devil and do his works. They don't care about spiritual matters, but only care about themselves. The spiritual leaders of Yeshua's time were only looking out for themselves instead of looking out for the better welfare of the people. Yeshua came to not only help us have a good spiritual life by following God's commandments, but an amazing spiritual life through the help of the Holy Spirit.

We have to apply ourselves to living the way God tells us to live. Just as we apply ourselves in other things in life, we also need to supply our energy to stay connected to God spiritually. I remember reading about this famous basketball player when he was in college. He spent 6 hours a day practicing basketball. No wonder he did so well in professional basketball. I remember hearing that LeBron James spent 1 million dollars a year on his training. Compare that to the scripture to love God. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV. These people were putting their hearts souls and strength into basketball.

I'm not saying they were doing something wrong. I am saying that we also need to put our hearts, souls, and everything into keeping God's commandments and having life filled with the wisdom and understanding of God. We also need to have energy for the important spiritual things of life.

God is not far from us; He gives us truth and life; He is the true God and not a false God. God is not like rock or stone or some person who wants to give us his or her slant on how to have a better life. He is the creator and knows what is best for us. Since He is God and we are not, we need to remember that this is a time of testing to see if we will follow God's good ways or bring evil and pain into the world. Will we only look out for ourselves like Yeshua said of some people or will we be like our creator who is looking out for the best interests of others and ourselves?

Can you name some examples of how God's looks out for our best interests?

He offers us eternal life without pain, anguish, and death. Revelation 21:4

Through His commandments we can be wise and knowledgeable about life. Deuteronomy 4:6

He gave us the Holy Spirit to help us and encourage us. John 14:26, Romans 15:13

God does miracles for us. Deuteronomy 10:21, Acts 19:11, Ephesians 3:20

God can heal us. Acts 3:16; Matthew 8:16, 12:15, 14:14

We are told not to be anxious, but to pray to God. Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:6-8

Just looking at the above reminds me of the power and goodness of God. One time, God saved me from a fire in my home. That would have been the end of my life if it hadn't been for God. God has done great

things for me on several occasions including healings and has also done things for many of my friends who believe in Yeshua.

The end result of living right in the present is a better life. The eternal result is God recognizing our desire to do what is right and giving us eternal life with Him. Yeshua said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die" John 11:25-26 NKJV. Yeshua then raises Lazarus from the dead, "Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go;'" John 11:43-44 NKJV.

Yeshua backed up who He is with amazing miracles. Lazarus had been dead for 4 days. This is proof of who He is and the actual physical eternal life that we are promised for doing what is right. It is a win, win situation. Good things come from being good and doing what is right and we will have an amazing eternal life with a good God. Who wouldn't want that!

Moshe tells them over and over to obey God. It was for their own good. Fill your life with keeping God's commandments and living with love, joy, peace, and patience. Don't let it slip away. Keep God's feasts and be in fellowship with God. God wants us to live have a blessed life and worldly people only want what they want. "Listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live."

God knows what's best for us; it is God's ways that are wise, not what man makes up. "Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise in your latter days. There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel —that will stand;" Proverbs 19:20-21 NKJV. It says in Psalm 16:11 NKJV, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." God is a good God; trust in Him.

Over and over in this portion God reminds us to keep His commandments; it is for our own good. Yeshua came to help us and give us the Holy Spirit as our helper. We can have a better life through the Messiah, and the help of the Holy Spirit. God truly cares about us; people don't always have our best interests at heart. We need to apply ourselves well to our spiritual lives and not just to the other things of life. God is the true God and not something made up. We can have a better life through God and a wonderful eternal life. Do what is right and good; don't let it slip away. God's ways bring joy, peace, and blessing.