

## #44 Devarim Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- \* Our amazing God wants to work in us and change us.
- \* Our God can reach us through the Holy Spirit. We need to stay connected.
- \* We can engage with God in many ways; there are many ways to enjoy our relationship with God.
- \* Decide to be a kingdom focused person; live your life with God; be attached to God; be a holy and good person.

### Names

Devarim – the 1<sup>st</sup> portion in Deuteronomy  
Kefa – Peter  
Moshe – Moses  
Og – one of the Nephilim  
Shaul – Paul  
Sihon – one of the Nephilim  
Yeshua – Jesus  
Yochanan – John

### Terms

Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets  
Nephilim – fallen angels, or giants  
Parashah – one of 54 portions of the Bible from the Torah  
Rabbi – Jewish leader  
Rebbe (Rebbee) – Jewish spiritual leader  
Shevat – a month on the Jewish calendar; our January or February  
Torah – 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Bible

Devarim means, “words.” This Torah portion begins by Moshe addressing Israel 40 years after the Exodus just east of the Jordan River on the first day of Shevat. He tells them to go take the land of Canaan and begins to review their time in the wilderness. This portion is the first portion of the book of Deuteronomy.

He tells them why he picked leaders and about the incident of the 12 spies. The Amorites and King Sihon refused to allow Israel to pass so Israel attacked them. God was with Israel and they defeated the Amorites. They also defeated King Og of Bashan who attacked them. He was a Nephilim and the brother of King Sihon and it gives the details of his size; his bed was 9 cubits long, about 15 ½' long using the Egyptian cubit. The Parashah ends with Moshe addressing the issues regarding the tribes who would live east of the Jordan and encouraging Israel and telling them that God can deliver the land west of the Jordan into their hands.

It is interesting to note that some of the Nephilim survived the flood and there are some who think the Nephilim are behind some of the advances in our present-day technology. The Bible talks about spiritual powers at work against us and nothing about the possibility of the Nephilim still being around. Since some of them survived the flood, it is possible they are around too. A number of extra biblical sources talk about the Nephilim including Egyptian and archeological sources.

Israel is told to go and take the land. Most certainly this required faith in God and bravery. Perhaps we can compare this to standing up bravely for the truth of the scriptures. Or, perhaps we can compare this to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Some are afraid of the Holy Spirit, but Yeshua said that God gives good gifts to us (Luke 11:11-13). Since He is a good God, why would He give us anything bad?

Kefa tells those in Acts 2 to believe and they will receive the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for “receive” that Kefa uses is to take in a literal sense as opposed to a mental sense. You can think about picking an orange, but you can also literally pick up the orange and eat it. Just as Israel was to literally take the land, we are to literally take and use the Holy Spirit and the associated gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Some are listed as gifts in Romans 12:3-8 and Ephesians 4:7,11; in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 they are called gifts and evidences. They are intended to help us. The Bible is clear that we are to do things God's way. Shaul says in the context about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they, "Are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV. I've run into believers who don't believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, yet they are commandments of the Lord. We accept all of God's word.

The Haftarah for Devarim is Isaiah 1:1-27. The Haftarah portion begins with Isaiah the prophet reproving Israel for their sins. God says that all their empty adherences and disobedience to God are a burden to Him and He calls on

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<sup>1</sup> g2983. λαμβάνω lambanō; according to [Strong's Enhanced Dictionary](#) it means to take hold of in an active sense (not a passive sense); in other words, to receive and use.

Israel to repent. Also, Israel is not attending to the needs of the widows and orphans like they are supposed to. Isaiah 1:16-18 CJB says:

Wash yourselves clean! Get your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing evil, learn to do good! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, defend orphans, plead for the widow. "Come now," says ADONAI, let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool.

It was always God's will that we do what is good. Isaiah says stop doing evil and learn how to keep God's commandments (do good in Jewish understanding). The world often doesn't have its roots in truth. God knows all, therefore His words in the holy scriptures are truth. Talking about the Old Testament, it says in Psalms 119:160, "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." Yeshua says the same thing about the Old Testament in John 17:17 NKJV (there was no New Testament at the time), "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth;" John 17:17 NKJV. To sanctify or make holy is to separate our lives from doing what is wrong, from doing what is profane. We live our lives in deep respect for God; we live by His words in the holy scriptures; and we keep His commandments. If we don't listen to God and do what He tells us to do, we are not believing in Him and not respecting Him.

Our amazing God wants to work in us and change us. We can do things our own way or listen to an all-knowing God. He first of all works in us through His word, the holy scriptures. As we apply them, we form good habits and learn how to apply His commandments. We can also learn how to conduct ourselves from others good example. Shaul tells Timothy, "Be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine;" 1 Timothy 4:12-13 NKJV.

First of all, Shaul is using a common Jewish way of teaching by giving us a list of a few things. To include everything sometimes would be tedious. All through the Bible, there are summaries. For example, the Bible says we are to love God. We love God by keeping His commandments. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always." Yeshua said the same thing in John 14:15 NKJV, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We don't decide to love God by doing things our own way.

It was common for the rabbis to give two-part responses, or summarize using lists. The expert in the Torah said we are to love God and your neighbor; Luke 10:27. He was summarizing. Rabbi Shimon said: "Upon three things the world stands, on Truth, on Judgment, and on Peace. As it is said: Truth and judgment of peace judge ye in your gates"<sup>2</sup> (see Zechariah 8:16). Rabbi Akiba said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself is the encompassing principle of the Torah."<sup>3</sup>

In this verse, Shaul is encouraging Timothy to keep all of God's commandments especially by what and how he speaks; by how he acts; to be a kind, caring, and loving person; and as an example in spirit and faith. Purity refers to staying away from sin and keeping all of God's commandments including being pure from sexual sin.

Reading, encouragement, and doctrine is something we do to help others live right. Jewish practice includes leaders reading the scriptures to others (it is commanded in the Bible). So that is what Shaul meant when he uses the word reading. Encouragement is both talking about keeping what the scriptures say, and talking about what we are supposed to be doing. These are also things a Jewish teacher would do in that era. Philo lived in the 1st century and says that the Jews met in synagogues, read the Tanakh, and explained and taught about what they read. He calls synagogues "schools of virtue."<sup>4</sup> They were going through the Torah portions that could have been set up by the holy prophet Nehemiah.

<sup>2</sup> <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1513>

<sup>3</sup> <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1513>

<sup>4</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philo/>

Philo's usage, "schools of virtue," perhaps helps us to understand that when Shaul met in the **School of Tyrannus** in Ephesus (Acts 19:1, 8-10), it was a synagogue (not a Sunday church) that he had formed; namely, **a school of virtue**. They were a branch of Judaism called Nazarene Jews. The Synagogue of Tyrannus was the first Messianic synagogue in Ephesus. Perhaps someone by the name of Tyrannus donated the building. We always need to understand the Jewish biblical context. You've got people saying he started a Sunday church; that is wrong.

Since we know that Shaul stayed and taught at the Synagogue of Tyrannus for 2 years, he was using this opportunity to instruct Jewish and Gentile believers on how to observe the Torah and to live like the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:1). His subsequent teaching is what was spread throughout the region (Acts 19:10). Remember, Gentiles were to learn the Torah. It says in Acts 15:20-21 NKJV that the Gentiles were to learn and keep the Torah, "But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Sometimes when we bring a new point into our teaching, we also need to tie it into things we already understand. That way we expand on our understanding.

We need the teaching and explanation of the scriptures first and foremost. This is why we have our own synagogue; our own school of virtue. To the best of our ability, we are modeled after the 1<sup>st</sup> century Messianic Jewish synagogue. It is my intention that we actually learn and grow in how to live right, and not just observe ritual or just get our ears tickled with a bunch of blah, blah, blah. Rabbis say it is our ritual to do so and so. It is of utmost importance to follow God and not wrongly applied laws.

The Holy Spirit is also very important for the Messianic life. Shaul often mentions the Holy Spirit and spends several chapters of 1 Corinthians on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He says we are to, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV.<sup>5</sup> Because the Holy Spirit is our helper (John 15:26), we not only have the scriptures and help of our rabbis, but the Holy Spirit can reach us and help us.

Some are against using the word rabbi, but it essentially just means a Jewish leader. Since we are messianic Jews it is appropriate. Any term if used in the sense of being like God is wrong, even the word priest or a person's name can be overemphasized. They may be people of God, but they are not in any way the Father God; they do not take the place of God; they are not to be venerated or worshipped. They are not great ones so as to be compared in any way to God.

They are leaders by example; to be teachers of truth and virtue; and are to encourage others to keep God's commandments. For example, the word mother describes who a particular woman is. The believing woman is understood to be a woman of great respect and admiration who gives her life for her husband, family, and children; she is an industrious, caring, godly person who loves God, keeps His commandments, and teaches her family about God and how to love God. We use titles to describe what people do. There is nothing wrong with a title that is used in its correct context.

I should add that some titles are more nefarious than others. Priest was a word used to describe someone in the line of Aaron who performed sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. **There are no** genuine priests at this present time. Father is a word used for God, **so we should never use the word father** for a leader. Reverend means respected one and is okay because we are to honor our leaders, but we are not to honor them as though they are a god. Rabbi in our time can just mean a Jewish leader or Messianic Jewish leader and is okay, but can also be used inappropriately. Rebbe is a spiritual leader and is an okay title, but sometimes there is an "I can do no wrong" stigma associated with that word and that would be wrong. I think you get the idea. Like I said, any title can be used the wrong way. Leaders need to make it clear that they are humble servants of God who live by example and are not bosses over God's people. I am just a servant of God for you.

The Holy Spirit helps us to stay connected to God. We must choose to stay within the boundaries of God's commandments and learn their applications and not ridiculous extra laws that micromanage life. The Holy Spirit

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<sup>5</sup> In some places Shaul calls them gifts (charisma); he also calls them evidences of the Holy Spirit.

then helps us to keep God's commandments and leads us in matters of question. For example, what if my plumbing breaks on Shabbat? I had this problem once and I asked God what I should do. Could I just wait until Sunday? A rule of thumb I use for Shabbat is, "Can it wait until tomorrow?" Why not make Shabbat a true day of rest?

We can engage with God in many ways through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be our conscience, can lead us in our daily activities, can help us in our jobs or to be effective in our relationships. The working of the Holy Spirit is amazing. My cousin told me the story where two men worked on a major computer system for 24 hours straight and they called my cousin in because they couldn't figure out what was wrong. He said a prayer and it was fixed in 10 minutes; that's the amazing work and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there for the believer in every area of life. The Holy Spirit is also there to help us enjoy our relationship with God.

Shaul said that we can have joy and peace through the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 says, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." My prayer class has so much encouraging information in it on the working of the Holy Spirit. Please read my class; it can be a great help to you and is free online on our website. I remember wanting this jacket that was marked down to \$250 from \$500. I thought, that is too much to pay for a jacket; I thought, perhaps if it was \$50, I would buy it. I went back a few months later and that very jacket was there and marked down to \$50. That was no small ordeal for me. I frequently have trouble finding clothes off the rack because I am a tall. God can do anything; He can even provide us with an amazing jacket and the Holy Spirit can also work for us in the same amazing ways.

I frequently experience the peace of the Holy Spirit in my life. The Bible says that God can speak to us through prophecy. "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men;" 1 Corinthians 14:3 NKJV. Don't you want to hear words of encouragement from God? These are not our words, but words that God gives us. It says prophecy is to build us up, to encourage us, and to lift us up – to comfort us. People make up stuff about what is going to happen and call it prophecy; they are just speaking their own thoughts and not God's encouragement; that is wrong. In Nehemiah's time, if his words didn't come to pass, he would have been put to death. Sometimes when I touch my mezuzah, I say I love you God and I clearly hear God say "I love you" back to me. How encouraging is that! I long to be in relationship with my God and to know Him and His ways. Seek the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Decide to be a kingdom focused person; live your life with God; be attached to God; be a holy and good person. We need God's wisdom and understanding from the Torah (Deuteronomy 4:6). We need spiritual understanding, the work of the Holy Spirit and according to Colossians 1:11 NKJV to be, "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power." Shaul said in Colossians 1:9-14 NKJV after hearing of their faith:

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

(We are to be filled with the wisdom and understanding of the Torah so we can live right, please God, and be fruitful. That's what Shaul said, "In all wisdom and spiritual understanding." 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.'" I'm sorry all you people who take the scriptures out of their Jewish biblical context. Shaul is referring to the Torah. Shaul also says we are to be),

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;" (how wonderful it is to experience God's power through the Holy Spirit) "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints" (of the holy separated ones who keep God's commandments, we are of those who are) "in the light" (understanding). "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,"

(We have been rescued from knowing no truth, only darkness and lies; we have been removed from a worthless way of life so that we could be God's kingdom people through whom we have great hope.)

"in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

We are God's kingdom people. Deuteronomy 7:6 NKJV says, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth." Doesn't that make you feel special? So, act like you are His treasured people. Kefa said in 1 Peter 2:9, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

God has not changed. We have been called to be a people of understanding who don't live in darkness. Live and learn God's word and its truths. Live for God's kingdom and set your heart on making God more important than anything else. Be close to God, be separate from the evil of this world and do what is right and good.

In this portion, Israel was told to go and take the land of Canaan. Perhaps this is a picture of what we are to do spiritually; we need to stand up bravely for the truth. God's word is truth because it was given by an all-knowing God. If we don't listen to God, we are not believing in Him and respecting Him. We need God's truths in the Bible and His Holy Spirit. We need to stay connected to God. God can be part of everything in life and can work powerfully in our lives. Be a deliberately strong focused person in relationship with God; be a holy, good, and fruitful person of light.