

פרשת
ואתחנן
Parashat Va'etchanan

*Devarim / Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11, Isaiah 40:1-26
Luke 22:13-38*

Developing Awe and Reverence for the Creator

In this week's Torah portion, we read the following according to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:1-3*, וְזֹאת הַמִּצְוָה הַחֲקִים וְהַמְשֻׁפְטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם לְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם עֹבְרִים שָׁמָּה לְרַשְׁתָּהּ: ב לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשֹׁמֵר אֶת-כָּל-חֻקֹּתָיו וּמִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֲנֹכִי מִצְוֶה אִתָּהּ וּבְנֶה וּבְנֶה כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וּלְמַעַן יֵאָרְכוּ יָמֶיךָ: ג וְשָׁמַעְתָּ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁמְרָתָּ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲשֶׁר יִיטֵב לָךְ וְאֲשֶׁר תִּרְבוּן מְאֹד כִּי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה: *6:1 'Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 6:2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 6:3 'O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. (NASB)* Notice how the opening verses to *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6* speak about the command which were given to benefit us as it says, *6:2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep*

all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. (NASB) The purpose of the command is so that it goes well for us and that we will multiply in אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וְדָבָשׁ “a land flowing with milk and honey.” The very next verse is the Shema (שמע ישראל, 6:4) followed by וְהָיָה הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, “these words” are meant to remind us that our dwelling in the land the Lord God has given us is not simply for our enjoyment, or the fulfillment of His promises, but for the purpose of enabling us to keep God’s mitzvot (commands). The idea here is found in the joy of doing what is right, obeying the Lord, and the peace given by the Spirit that dwells within us (His Holy Spirit that He gives us), this peace dwells within when we remain faithful. The rabbis say, “*The enlarged letter ט in the word אַחַד alludes to both the goodwill of God which is the source of Mercy as well as to the attribute of Justice. The whiteness of the milk in the word חֵלֶב in our verse as well as redness of the honey respectively also point at the attribute of Mercy and Justice respectively. This same thought is alluded to also in Devarim / Deuteronomy 8,8 אֶרֶץ חֹטֵה וְשֵׁעֶרָה “a land producing wheat and barley.” In that latter verse wheat is the “white” and the word דָּבָשׁ appears there also to depict the attribute of Justice.*” (Rabbeinu Bahya on Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:3 Part 1) Another purpose for the commands that is coupled to the narratives found in the Torah is to teach us to fear the Lord, לְמַעַן תִּירָא אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, “so that you will fear the Lord your God.” This does not mean that we will be fearful, but that these things teach us a degree of awe and reverence for the Creator, the Lord our God. Nachmanides states that he does not believe these things are meant to inspire awe and reverence or to enjoy long life, but that they are meant to teach us to perform the command which leads to reward. (Tur HaAroch on Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:2 Part 1) The Lord God’s overriding interest is to help us to live righteous lives by His influence and then to reap the benefits thereof. This draws us back to what is written in the text of things going well for us and being multiplied. (6:2-3) Sforno’s commentary on these verses describe the reason for the goodness of God in His legislating the commands, it was because of His great kindness. (Sforno on Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:3 Part 1-2) The idea is the performance of the commands is not

meant for the sake of material reward, but לשמה (leshamah), for His name sake (for His honour) because acts of righteousness and justice are to be done in the purest sense from the purest intentions. Sforno goes on to say the following on *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:2*.

Sforno on Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:2 Part 2

ובן בנך, ואתה, ובנך, ובן בנך. *This is a reminder that even the generations who had not been eyewitnesses to G'ds powerful miracles will learn to revere Him when they accept the commandments, as you have seen.*

This reminds us about what Yeshua said to Thomas saying blessed are those who have not seen but yet believe! (Believing in the Messiah of God.) The first and greatest command is to believe in the Creator God (the God of Israel) and this is alluded to in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4* stating “*Hear O Israel the Lord.*” The intent was not for hearing but for having faith. For example, from *Shemot / Exodus 24:7* the people having heard state “*we will do and we will hear*” and Moshe states in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:3* “*hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it.*” The word Shema (שָׁמַעַ) means to hear or listen. Listening suggests that one has heard, listens, and then applies (takes or keeps) the word that was spoken. The word for hearing (Shema, שָׁמַעַ) has the intent to bring about faith and acceptance of the Lord God our Father in heaven, of His Messiah, and of His Word which is meant to be applied to our lives! Because of this, the study of God’s Word causes us to draw nearer to God in love and piety as we devote our lives in faithfulness to that which He has set our hand to accomplish. The rabbis describe this “*as means for carrying out your mission of blessing, and in order to be able independently to establish a house, as a temple in which shall be reared young scions of Adam’s race as ideal human beings, ideal Israelites. For such purpose, to grace such a house, take a wife and bring her into your home. Next follows the first task of your blessed mission of love, the first and the highest; to be all in all to helpless human creatures without claim or demand upon you; even to sacrifice your own welfare in order that they shall be able to attain to both earthly well-being and spiritual ideal; that your child may become man-Israel.*” (*Nineteen Letters 12:2*) The description

that is being provided here within these verses from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6* is a very high calling that is connected to setting up one's house as a holy place before God to rear our children to fear the Lord God in heaven so they become spiritually mature. This is the awesomeness of our God who calls us to these things as the Scriptures say, "*God, who is our Lord, is one God*" (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*) in other words, He is absolutely unique where an uncountable number of things demonstrate God's uniqueness (*Ibn Ezra on Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:3 Part 3*) and most certainly in the way in which He calls us to live and how to raise our children for the Glory of God and for the betterment of mankind!

The Scriptures we are looking at for this week are from *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:1-25*.

Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:1-25

6:1 'Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, 6:2 so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. 6:3 'O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 6:4 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 6:5 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6:6 'These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 6:7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 6:8 'You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 6:9 'You shall write them on the doorposts of

your house and on your gates. 6:10 'Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, 6:11 and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 6:12 then watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 6:13 'You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. 6:14 'You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 6:15 for the Lord your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the Lord your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth. 6:16 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. 6:17 'You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. 6:18 'You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to give your fathers, 6:19 by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken. 6:20 'When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?' 6:21 then you shall say to your son, 'We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. 6:22 'Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; 6:23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.' 6:24 'So the Lord commanded us to

observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today. 6:25 'It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us. (NASB)

א וזאת המצוה החקים והמשפטים אשר צוה יהוה אלהיכם
ללמד אתכם לעשות בארץ אשר אתם עברים שמה לרשתה: ב
למען תירא את-יהוה אלהיך לשמר את-כל-חקותיו ומצותיו אשר
אנכי מצוה אתה ובנה ובנה כל ימי חייך ולמען יארכו ימיך:
ג ושמעת ישראל ושמרת לעשות אשר ייטב לך ואשר תרבו
מאד באשר דבר יהוה אלהי אבותיך לך ארץ זבת חלב ודבש: פ
[ששי] ד שמע ישראל יהוה אלהינו יהוה | אחד: ה ואהבת את
יהוה אלהיך בכל-לבבך ובכל-נפשך ובכל-מאדך: ו והיו הדברים
האלה אשר אנכי מצוה היום על-לבבך: ז ושמנתם לבניך ודברת
בם בשבתך בביתך ובלקחתך בדרך ובשכבך ובקומך: ח וקשרתם
לאות על-ידך והיו לטטפת בין עיניך: ט וכתבתם על-מזוזות ביתך
ובשעריך: ס י והיה פי-יביאך | יהוה אלהיך אל-הארץ אשר
נשבע לאבותיך לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לתת לך ערים גדלות וטבת
אשר לא-בנית: יא ובתים מלאים כל-טוב אשר לא-מלאת וברת
חצובים אשר לא-חצבת פרמים וזיתים אשר לא-נטעת ואכלת
ושבעת: יב השמר לך פן-תשכח את-יהוה אשר הוציאך מארץ
מצרים מבית עבדים: יג את-יהוה אלהיך תירא ואתו תעבד ובשמו
תשבע: יד לא תלכון אחרי אלהים אחרים מאלהי העמים אשר
סביבותיכם: טו כי אל קנא יהוה אלהיך בקרבה פן-יחרה אף-יהוה
אלהיך בה והשמידה מעל פני האדמה: ס טז לא תנסו את-יהוה
אלהיכם כאשר נסיתם במסה: יז שמור תשמרון את-מצות יהוה
אלהיכם ועדתיו וחקיו אשר צוה: יח ועשית הישר והטוב בעיני
יהוה למען ייטב לך ובאת וירשת את-הארץ הטבה אשר-נשבע
יהוה לאבותיך: יט להדף את-כל-איביך מפניה באשר דבר יהוה:
ס כ פי-ישאלך בנה מחר לאמר מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים
אשר צוה יהוה אלהינו אתכם: כא ואמרת לבנה עבדים היינו
לפרעה במצרים ויציאנו יהוה ממצרים בגד חזקה: כב ויתן יהוה
אותת ומפתים גדלים ורעים | במצרים בפרעה ובכל-ביתו לעינינו:
כג ואותנו הוציא משם למען הביא אתנו לתת לנו את-הארץ אשר
נשבע לאבותינו: כד ויצונו יהוה לעשות את-כל-החקים האלה
ליראה את-יהוה אלהינו לטוב לנו כל-הימים לחינתנו כהיום הזה:

כה וְצִדְקָה תִּהְיֶה-לָּנוּ כִּי-נִשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-כָּל-הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּנוּ:

The Scriptures say, “*God, who is our Lord, is one God*” (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4*, אֶחָד | יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה יְשׁוּרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ) in other words, He is absolutely unique, awesome, and powerful and there is no other besides Him! Within this Scripture verse we read the ineffable, or incommunicable name of God which is written twice. This name of God is called the Tetragrammaton, from the Greek tetra (four), and gramma (letter), since this Name in Hebrew consists of the four letters YHVH. This name is known as the ineffable name because it was by tradition not to be pronounced, one was to use a circumlocution out of respect and honor for the powerful name of God. The rabbis say that everything our ancestors of blessed memory have transmitted concerning the Shema is true and needs no justification. This is how Yeshua understood it as he drew upon these Scriptures in his answering the question of the two greatest commandments. The glorious Name of God (YHVH) is followed by another name of God (אֱלֹהֵינוּ), this serves to illustrate a proper name as elsewhere the name may be description of multiple things, as is in the example of the name “*adam*” for man (*Bereshit / Genesis 3:17*, adam) and the word adam also describing the earth (*Bereshit / Genesis 2:7*, adamah). Here God’s name is proper, this name only describes the Lord God of Israel and nothing else. The YHVH is repeated in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6:4* in order to describe His uniqueness. There is a particular significance to knowing a persons name. In the Hebrew bible, knowing a persons name allows us to know who they are since it is descriptive of who they are and their lives. When Samson’s father Manoach encountered the Angel in the book of *Judges 13*, he asked the Angel for his name. The Angel refused, saying that his name is hidden, beyond Manoach’s understanding. In the Torah, we read how Abraham, Sarah, and Joshua underwent name changes. The most significant of which was Jacob having his name changed to Israel, which changed his entire path in life, his encounter with God even led to his walking differently, as it should for all of us! (see *Bereshit / Genesis 32:22-32*) Note also something in the opening chapters of Shemot /Exodus (chapter 2) we read of an unnamed man from the tribe of Levi marrying an un-

named woman, having an unnamed son, with an unnamed sister. The Torah says Pharaoh's daughter (unnamed) raises this baby boy from the water to raise him as her son and she calls him Moshe saying *"For I drew him from the water."* (וַיִּהְיֶה-לָּהּ לְבֵן וַתִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מֹשֶׁה וַתֹּאמֶר כִּי מִן-הַמַּיִם מָשִׁיתֵהוּ) The root of מָשִׁיתֵהוּ is the verb לַמְשׁוֹת, meaning to fish out, to extricate or to rescue. Some Jewish commentaries use this analogy from Moshe's name to make reference to Moshe rescuing Israel from death and drowning in the Sea of Reeds when Pharaoh's chariots were intent upon destroying the people. It is interesting how some commentaries analyze the name of Moshe by providing the etymology of his name:

Open the pages of almost any recent Bible dictionary, Exodus commentary, or biblical reference work and you will likely find the name Moses linked to the Egyptian verb ms/msi ("to give birth") or the related noun ms ("child," "son"), various forms of which occur in Egyptian royal and non-royal names. The verb ms is incorporated into the royal birth names of New Kingdom pharaohs Ahmose ("the moon god is born") and Thutmose ("Thoth is born") as the suffix -mose. In the Greek forms of the names, the verb ms becomes -mosis: Amosis and Thutmosis. The name Ramesses follows a similar pattern: Re-mes-su ("Re is the one who bore him"). The verb is also found in non-royal personal names such as Ptahmose ("Ptah is born") and Ramose ("Re is born"). All of the above names feature what scholars call a divine or theophoric element, but the Hebrew name Moses stands alone in the biblical text; it has no god's name attached to it. Scholars have debated whether it may have once included a god's name that was later dropped. (<https://www.bibleodyssey.org>)

In Moshe's birth story, we read how Pharaoh commanded to kill all the Jewish baby boys and two Jewish midwives (Shiphra and Puah) feared God and allowed the boys to live. As Moshe is growing up,

he knows his birth right, and defends the Jewish people killing an Egyptian taskmaster and then fleeing to Midian. He marries a gentile woman (Tziporah) the daughter of Yitro, and has two children (both boys). (*Note an allusion here to the Anointed One of God also calling the nations to the truth of Torah and the God of Israel.*) While tending the sheep, the Lord God appears to him in a bush that burned but was not consumed. HaShem Called to Moshe by name (*Shemot / Exodus 3:1-6*) and the Lord God introduces Himself as YHVH saying, *“I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”* The Lord God calls Moshe to a new way of life, to lead His people Israel out from Egypt. Moses asks the Lord when *“I come to the children of Israel, and I say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”* (*Shemot / Exodus 3:13*) *“God said to Moses, I will be what I will be, and He said, ‘So shall you say to the children of Israel, I will be has sent me to you.’”*

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה
וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם

The Lord God Almighty has just revealed His name to Moshe and to the Children of Israel. This is the personal name of God, of who He is. This is why we do not articulate the name of God when we read it, instead we say HaShem, Adonai, or Elohim (*Note in our English bibles we find the words “Lord” and “God” representing the YHVH in the Hebrew text*). According to the rabbinic literature, the only time the name of God was spoken was during Yom Kippur within the holy of holies. In addition to this, there are alternate interpretations on *Shemot / Exodus 3:12* when the Lord introduces Himself to Moshe. According to the Metsudah Chumash (Metsudah Publications 2009) translates this verse in *Shemot / Exodus 3:12 He [God] said, “Because I will be with you [My Word will be your support]... This will be the proof that I have sent you—when you bring the people out of Egypt—you will serve [before] Elohim on this mountain.”* (MC) The interpretation here is that *“I will be what I will be”* should be interpreted as *“I will be with you”* in good times and I will be with you in bad times. Therefore in the revelation of God’s name to His people,

we see the promise of His always being with us, we do not have to be afraid because our powerful God is by our side, in our midst! This then is consistent with what is written elsewhere in the Tanach.

Bereshit / Genesis 26:3

Stay temporarily in this land and I will be with you and bless you [My Word will be your support and I will bless you], for to you and your descendants I will give all these lands. (Metsudah Chumash, Metsudah Publications, 2009 [with Onkelos translation])

Shemot / Exodus 4:12

I [My Word] will be with your mouth, and teach you what to say.” (Metsudah Chumash, Metsudah Publications, 2009 [with Onkelos translation])

Bereshit / Genesis 31:3

And the LORD said to Jacob: ‘Return to the land of your fathers, and to your native land; and I will be with you.’ (Modernized Tanakh - Based on JPS 1917, Edited by Adam Cohn)

Devarim / Deuteronomy 31:23

And He charged Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and resolute: for you shall bring the Israelites into the land that I promised them on oath, and I will be with you.” (Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, published by JPS)

Joshua 1:5

No one shall be able to resist you as long as you live. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. (Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures, published by JPS)

Rashi states that the phrase “Because I will be with you” is a response to both the first and last question of “ Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?” saying to Moshe that it is not your [mission] but, rather,

Mine, for I will be with you, and the vision that you saw in the thorn-bush is a sign to you that it is I who sent you and that you will succeed. (*Rashi on Shemot / Exodus 3:12 Part 1*) The point of the Torah command is in knowing God is with us, His Messiah has delivered us, and His Spirit empowers us! What we are being taught here is the power of the command, from the NT account from Paul to the Romans, it has the power to bring both death and life (read *Romans 6-8*) but that life comes only by the power of God working in our lives! This is consistent with what Moshe said in *Devarim / Deuteronomy 6* of the purpose of the command is so that it goes well for us and that we will multiply in אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֵלֶב וַיִּדְבָּשׁ “*a land flowing with milk and honey.*” This is also consistent with all of Scripture, such as in *1 Kings 11:38*, וְהָיָה אִם-תִּשְׁמַע אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכֵי וְעַשִׂיתָ הַיֵּשֶׁר בְּעֵינַי לִשְׁ-מֹר חֻקֹּתַי וּמִצְוֹתַי כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה דָּוִד עַבְדִּי וְהָיִיתִי עִמָּךְ וּבְנִיתִי לָךְ בֵּית-נְאֻמָּן: *11:38 If you heed all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, keeping My laws and commandments as My servant David did, then I will be with you and I will build for you a lasting dynasty as I did for David. I hereby give Israel to you; (Sefaria.org)* These things speak of having faith, and to being faithful to the Lord God in heaven according to His Word! The rabbis even support this NT concept of “*with regard to the mitzvot God assists the individual in their performance.*” (*Talmud Bavli Toma 39a*) We need the Lord, and we need His deliverer (Yeshua) and most of all, we need His Holy Spirit in our lives! Without the presence of God dwelling in our midst (our hearts) we would have no hope. This is how the Torah and the Gospel Message go hand in hand, without the Torah, it would be with great difficulty to understand the NT text!