

Va'etchanan

FUSION
WITH RABBI JASON



with
Rabbi Jason Sobel

5786 - THE YEAR OF OPEN WINDOWS

TORAH PORTIONS
Parashat Va'etchanan



THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTIONS

DEUTERONOMY 3:23-7:11

Parashat Va'etchanan / פרשת ואתחנן

In this weeks guide...

COMMENTARY..... 1

Parashat Va'etchanan centers on Moses' final appeal to Israel to remember God's covenant, remain devoted to Him alone, and live in faithful obedience. Through the repetition of the Ten Commandments and the Shema, Moses teaches that covenant life is sustained by love, memory, and wholehearted loyalty. The parashah reminds us that God's faithfulness endures across generations, calling each new generation to embrace the covenant for themselves.

NEW TESTAMENT TIE-IN..... 2

The New Testament tie-in explores the biblical theme of being chosen by God, showing that God's calling always comes with purpose and transformation. Just as Israel was chosen to be God's treasured people and a light to the nations, Yeshua's disciples are chosen to bear lasting fruit and participate in His mission. Our identity is rooted not in our own qualifications but in God's gracious calling and faithfulness.

HEBREW WORD STUDY..... 3

The Hebrew word **godel** ("greatness") points us beyond human achievement to the incomparable greatness of God. Scripture consistently presents God's greatness as the source of awe, worship, and humble trust, while warning that human greatness divorced from humility becomes pride. True greatness is found not in exalting ourselves but in recognizing and proclaiming the greatness of the Lord.

OVER VIEW

This week's portion begins with the sad and sobering account of Moses pleading with the Lord to enter the Promised Land (Va'etchanan means, "and I pleaded" in Hebrew). Moses argued for obedience to the law, recounted the establishment of the Cities of Refuge, and recited the Ten Commandments. Finally, Moses gave instructions for the Israelites' conquest of the Land. The highlight of this portion is the Shema, the prayer that serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services.

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Parashat Va'etchanan / פרשת ואתחנן | with **Rabbi Jason Sobel**

Staff Contributor

COMMENTARY

Parasha Va'etchanan is a key section in Devarim because it reminds Israel of their covenant, responsibilities, and the love that binds them to God. Moses stands before the new generation of Israel, aware that he will not cross the Jordan. The same leader who faced Pharaoh, climbed Sinai, and led the people through the wilderness now asks *ADONAI* for permission to enter the Land. Even though he is disappointed, Moses shows humility. He accepts God's decision and focuses on preparing Israel spiritually for what lies ahead.

The start of this parasha is full of emotion. Moses shares how he asked to enter the Land, but *ADONAI* refused. Instead, Joshua will guide the people. This shows that even the greatest leaders must answer to God. In Jewish tradition, Moses is the greatest prophet, but he still serves under God's authority. This truth is humbling. Being chosen does not mean we are above accountability.

Moses' response also points us toward Messiah Yeshua. Moses is allowed to see the Land from a distance, but he cannot lead the people in. Joshua, or Yehoshua, will take them forward. This connection is clear. The Torah looks beyond Moses to a greater Redeemer. Just as Yehoshua leads Israel into their land, Yeshua leads His people into the full promises of God.

A key part of this parasha is the reiteration of the Ten Words and the Shema:

"Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one." Deut. 6:4 (TLV).

This is more than just a theological idea. It is a promise of loyalty. Israel is called to turn away from the divided loyalties of the nations around them. In ancient times, idolatry was not only about statues but also about having mixed loyalties. Va'etchanan teaches that faithfulness to the covenant starts with being devoted only to *ADONAI*.

Moses often warns the people not to forget. This theme is strong throughout the parasha. Remember Sinai. Remember the covenant. Remember what you saw. Faith in the Bible is closely tied to memory. Forgetting leads to compromise, and compromise can lead to exile. This warning is still important today. Each generation must remember God's faithfulness or risk forgetting it.

The rabbis teach that the Shema is not just something to say, but something to live. "Love *ADONAI* your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength," (Deut. 6:5) is central to Jewish life. In Messianic Judaism, we see that Yeshua also called this the greatest commandment. Loving God is not just a feeling; it means obeying Him because of our relationship with Him.

The parasha also warns against blending in with the nations of Canaan. Israel is told they are a holy people, chosen not for their size or strength, but because of God's covenant love and faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Holiness starts with who they are, not just what they do.

Va'etchanan reminds us that living in covenant with God depends on remembering, obeying, and loving Him. The people about to enter the Land needed to understand that their survival was not just about military power. Their future depended on staying faithful to the God who saved them. This is still true for us today.

New Testament Tie-In

“To”...

These two simple letters are often pivotal to our understanding of a passage of Scripture. Why? Because they reveal intention and purpose. The Hebrew word **le** is a preposition that “may indicate the direction or result of a transformation or change ... A process might endow a given object with a new character or role.”¹

If you feel a little confused, hang around—it’s about to come into focus!

In Deuteronomy 7.6–7, we read, “For you are a holy people to *ADONAI* your God—from all the peoples on the face of the earth, *ADONAI* your God has chosen you to be His treasured people. It is not because you are more numerous than all the peoples that *ADONAI* set His love on you and chose you, for you are the least of all peoples.” (emphasis added).

God’s choosing of Israel was a process (of sorts), an event that endowed them with “a new character or role.” According to Moses, Israel was inherently unqualified to be chosen. They were “the least of all the peoples,” after all. No, this choosing was about God and His faithfulness to His own word (see v. 9). Though humbling, Moses’ words were not an insult to the Children of Israel—they offered relief. Israel’s lack of qualification meant that rather than enduring the pressure to continually prove their quality, they lived in gratitude and praise of God’s quality.

Remember, in Deuteronomy we’re reading the first sermon in the Bible, one in which the preacher recounts Israel’s history. In this section, Moses is revisiting Mount Sinai and the covenantal words of Exodus 19. There we see that one of the roles Israel assumed was that of a nation: “Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine. So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of *kohanim* and a holy nation” (Exodus 19.5–6a).

“Holy” nation implies distinction. Israel was suddenly thrust into the geopolitical arena. God’s desire for a light amongst the nations precipitated His choosing of Israel. In other words, God’s purpose in choosing His people is bigger than them.

Now listen to *Yeshua*’s words—not to the twelve tribes, but twelve disciples: “I am no longer calling you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing. Now I have called you friends, because everything I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you. **I selected you so that you would go** and produce fruit, and your fruit would remain. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.” (John 15.15–16)

Israel’s chosenness transformed them from Egypt’s servants to God’s treasured possession. The disciples were transformed from servants to friends. God called Israel to be a “light to the nations” (Isaiah 42.6). *Yeshua* commissioned His apostles to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28.19).

The very fact that you are chosen means that, on a fundamental level, you are already transformed. Now we live out that transformation by the power of the Spirit!

Hebrew Word Study

godel [גדל] / “greatness, magnitude, arrogance”

The Hebrew word **godel** גדל means “greatness” or “magnitude” and appears just thirteen times in the Old Testament, but it has a deep theological meaning. Coming from the root gadal, which means “to grow,” “to become great,” or “to magnify,” godel refers not only to physical size but also to great importance, high status, and clear power. In the Bible, it is used in moments that show the unmatched scale of God’s character and actions, which stand in contrast to temporary human ideas of greatness.

Modern ideas of greatness often focus on fame or self-promotion, but godel is different. It is about relationships and revealing what truly matters and lasts. The Bible calls people to recognize God’s greatness, not create it. As Deuteronomy 32:3 says: “For I will proclaim Adonai’s Name, ascribe greatness to our God!” (Tree of Life Version). In this verse, greatness is not something we give to God, but something real that we are called to notice and declare.

God’s greatness is not about showiness or random power. It is the fullness of who He is, shown in creation, judgment, faithfulness to His promises, and mercy. Psalm 145:3 says: “Great is Adonai, and greatly to be praised—His greatness is unsearchable.” This greatness is not just about size or amount, but about a quality and depth that goes beyond what people can understand.

The idea of godel also includes growth and becoming greater over time. In the Bible, greatness often develops gradually: children grow up, nations grow strong, and people’s names become well known. However, the Bible warns that when human greatness is separated from humility, it becomes dangerous. Isaiah 10:12 shows this warning: “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the glory of his haughty eyes.” In this case, “greatness of heart” (godel lebab) is criticized as pride that leads to judgment.

Moses often uses the word godel when talking about God’s powerful actions: “O Lord Adonai, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do deeds and mighty acts like Yours?” (Deuteronomy 3:24). The Song of Moses says, “Ascribe greatness to our God!” (Deuteronomy 32:3). Psalm 150:2 adds: “Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness.”

Godel shows that self-made greatness is empty and instead invites us to be humble and worship God. It encourages us to put our ambitions and worries in the right place before God’s greatness. When we pray and praise, we follow the example of Moses and the psalmists, letting awe replace pride. The greatness that once spoke from Sinai now comes to us in grace, changing our lives through God’s presence. When we give all greatness to the Lord, our daily lives become a kind of ongoing praise, trusting in the One whose greatness always surrounds, saves, and fulfills us.

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Rabbi Jason & Fusion Global present
HEBREW WORD STUDY

גדל

גדל / godel / n. greatness, magnitude; arrogant

גָּדַל (godel) appears thirteen times in the Bible, describing either (1) the incomparable magnitude of God's person and works or (2) the self-exalting pride of human beings and nations. The word therefore functions as a literary fulcrum, exalting the LORD while exposing the futility of human arrogance.

The greatness that once spoke from Sinai now comes to us through the grace of Yeshua, changing our lives through God's presence. When we give all greatness to the Lord, our daily lives become a kind of ongoing praise, trusting in the One whose greatness always surrounds, saves, and fulfills us.

Taken from Lexical Summary at biblehub.org

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THOUGHTS for REFLECTION

Take some time this week to prayerfully consider and discuss with friends:

- The Shema calls God's people to love Him "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." How does that kind of wholehearted devotion shape everyday decisions, priorities, and relationships? Are there areas of your life where divided loyalties may be competing for your heart?
- Scripture calls us to "ascribe greatness to our God," reminding us that true greatness belongs to Him alone. In a culture that often celebrates personal achievement and recognition, how can you intentionally cultivate humility and keep God's greatness at the center of your life? What might that look like in your worship, work, and relationships?

GLOBAL

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS: *Parashat Eikev* / פרשת עקב

TORAH

Sunday: Deuteronomy 7:12-8:10
Monday: Deuteronomy 8:11-9:3
Tuesday: Deuteronomy 9:4-29
Wednesday: Deuteronomy 10:1-11
Thursday: Deuteronomy 10:12-11:9
Friday: Deuteronomy 11:10-21
Saturday: Deuteronomy 11:22-25

Prophetic Reading (*Haftarah*):

Isaiah 49:14-51:3

New Covenant Reading:

Matthew 16:13-20

Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the Tree of Life Version.

¹ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 463.