



## **Parasha Va'etchanan**

August 13, 2022

*Torah:* Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 40:1-26

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Acts 13:13-43

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* Our *parasha* today is *Va'etchanan*. Verses in this *parasha* include a retelling of the Ten Words given in Exodus 20, the *Shema* and also the *V'ahafta*. The *Shema* and *V'ahavta* command us: 4 "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. 7 You are to teach them diligently to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, they are to be as frontlets between your eyes, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 TLV). This command, which Yeshua emphasized as being the most important command of all in Matthew 22 (also found in Mark 12 and Luke 10) is barely acknowledged by the majority of Yeshua's followers. Yeshua also referred to the second greatest commandment, "love your neighbor as yourself," found in Leviticus 19:18. Then He said: 40 *The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*" (Matthew 22:40 TLV). This verse means that all of principles found in the *Tanach*, the Hebrew Bible, are suspended from, embodied in, these two commands. Every command ADONAI gave in the *Torah* or through the prophets has its basis in these two expressions of love. G-d is love and He commands His followers to exhibit that love. We at *Beit Shalom* understand all of ADONAI's commands as being for us, that is, the ones which have not been made inactive by the absence of a Levitical priesthood and a Temple. We do not prescribe this theology for or judge others for their approach to these commandments. It is their decision to make. But, at the very least, Yeshua's stressing the importance of these commands should motivate all of His followers to wish to study the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible.

What Moses said to Israel as they were about to enter the Land of Promise strongly relates to what ADONAI is saying to Israel today: 25 "When you father children and children's children and have been in the land a long time, and you act corruptly and make a graven image in the form of anything and do evil in the sight of Adonai your God, provoking Him to anger, 26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will certainly be carried off quickly from the land you are crossing over the Jordan to possess. You will not prolong your days on it, for you will certainly be destroyed. 27 Adonai will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where Adonai will drive you." (Deuteronomy 4:25-27 TLV). Israel abandoned ADONAI and He has scattered them. We read this Scripture last *Shabbat*. Yeshua said: 24 "They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations." (Luke 21:24a TLV). Using *remez* to hint at earlier Scriptures, Yeshua was referring to those Jews, including His followers, who escaped the Great Tribulation in Jerusalem in the year 70. This was but one example of ADONAI scattering Israel among the nations until the time of the end.

That we are now in the last of the last days as evidenced by the rebirth of the Nation of Israel in the land which ADONAI gave them and the restoration of Jewish authority over its ancient capitol, Jerusalem, it's important that we focus upon the events of these last days. The old saying, "Don't beat a dead horse" does not apply in this situation. This subject is definitely not a dead horse, but a lively and important one. But, lest you think that my message will continually be about this subject, take heart. This message, entitled "Yeshua, Daniel and Revelation 2," is the second in a series of three. The purpose of these three messages is to provide a systematic review of Yeshua's comments in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, His words to His disciples on the Mount of Olives, and related verses. It is extremely important for us to have a good grasp on what will happen as we get closer to Yeshua's return.

The next thing that Moses said applies directly to our subject today: *30 "When you are in distress and all these things have come on you, in the latter days (**acharit hayamim**) you will return to Adonai your God and listen to His voice. 31 For Adonai your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you, or forget the covenant with your fathers that He swore to them."* (Deuteronomy 4:30-31 TLV). We are approaching the time when Israel will listen to ADONAI's voice and return to Him, His voice spoken through His Son Yeshua.

Continuing where we left off last *Shabbat* with Yeshua's words on the Mount of Olives: *23 "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here's the Messiah,' or 'There He is,' do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will rise up and show great signs and wonders so as to lead astray, if possible, even the chosen"* (Matthew 24:23-24 TLV). (also Mark 13:21-22). We also spoke about the false Messiahs last *Shabbat* along with false prophets when we discussed Matthew 24:11. There are reports that there have been 25 or more false Messiahs to appear through the centuries. The latest was the *Chabad Rabbi* Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the *Lubavicher rabbi* of New York City who died in 1994. His picture was on many billboards in Israel when we visited in 1994 with this message: "Behold Your Messiah." His followers still believe that he will rise from the dead.

These false Messiahs and prophets will perform signs and wonders. As the old saying goes, "You ain't seen nothing yet" applies to Yeshua's words here. We can expect that this will happen. *HaSatan* and his demons possess the ability to perform supernatural acts through their human hosts. Just as Pharaoh's magicians could duplicate the plagues up to a point, this is a real possibility in our time. But, there are also works of deception, not demonstrations of the true power of the living God. When faced with this, we need to pray for answers so that the deception can be exposed. Several years ago, a man in our state said that God was putting oil into his Bible. At first, it was just wet, but it continued to increase to the point that he could share this holy anointing oil with others and there were large evangelistic meetings for months and reports of miraculous healings using it. But, it was a deception and was eventually found out. The man had been putting the oil in the Bible and the container that he had placed it in. We were even taken in by this deception and sought some of this oil. Yeshua's followers are so hungry for the miraculous that we are often not willing to question anyone who claims to be His follower.

*25 "See, I have told you beforehand. 26 "So if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out. Or, 'Look, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For just as lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 For wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather"* (Matthew 24:25-28 TLV). We are not to believe anyone who tells us that Yeshua has already come. That's

because it will not be a secret. Everyone will know it at the same time. We will all see Him in the sky when He comes. His appearance will be as clear and as bright as a bolt of lightning. “For wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather” are mysterious words. But, Yeshua’s statement is actually a simile, a comparison of one thing to another different kind of thing. It’s not about vultures seeking to eat a carcass, it’s a picture of His righteous ones streaming up to meet Him in the clouds in the manner of vultures streaming toward a dead body.

In Matthew, Yeshua said: 29 *“But immediately after the trouble of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken”* (Matthew 24:29 TLV). He spoke about the sun, moon and stars in Mark 13:23-25 and Luke 21:25-26, but only in Matthew did He say “immediately after the trouble of those days.” What are “those days?” We know that it was not the days following the Great Tribulation in Jerusalem or those signs in the heavens would have already occurred. The days to which He was referring are future days, future from now and immediately preceding His return. The trouble of those days is the trouble of our present days. The Greek word *thlipsis* does mean trouble, but also tribulation. We’re experiencing tribulation now, wars and rumors of wars with increasing persecution of believers. It is intense tribulation, but it is not the Great Tribulation which happened in Jerusalem in the year 70. The coming signs in the heavens are somewhere in our near future because we are now in the days of trouble. In Luke, Yeshua adds this: 26 *“People will lose heart from fear and anticipation of what is overtaking the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken”* (Luke 21:26 TLV). The powers of the heavens is a reference to sun, moon and stars of the other verses. Yeshua said that we are to be forewarned that it will happen. Expect it to happen! The signs in the heavens will appear just before Yeshua returns, but we are not to fear and not to lose heart. We are overcomers with strong faith. The ones who will be in fear are the ones who have not trusted Him, but also those who do not understand His words. When we see these things happen, we will rejoice because we know that our redemption is near.

Immediately following the disruption of the sun, moon and stars: 30 *“Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the land will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory. 31 He will send out His angels with a great shofar, and they will gather together His chosen from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other”* (Matthew 24:30-31 TLV). (also Mark 13:26-27 and Luke 21:27-28). I believe that the sign of the Son of Man is Yeshua Himself in His appearance in the heavens. He is the sign and we may even see His crucifixion wounds. That would also be a good time for Zechariah’s prophesy to be fulfilled: 10 *“Then I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication, when they will look toward Me whom they pierced.” They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for a firstborn*” (Zechariah 12:10 TLV). Where it says “and then all the tribes of the land will mourn” in Matthew 24:30 is speaking of the Jews, the twelve Tribes of “the Land,” *Eretz Yisrael*. It is the Jews who mourn because they pierced Him.

Whether this is the moment of the salvation of all Israel prophesied by *Sha’ul* in Romans 11 is unknown. Their salvation could occur earlier which would allow for the fulfillment another prophecy in Zechariah: 22 *“Indeed, many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek Adonai-Tzva’ot in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of Adonai.” 23 Thus says Adonai-Tzva’ot, “In those days it will come to pass that ten men from every language of*

*the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'* (Zechariah 8:22-23 TLV). This appears to be a prophecy of a coming great revival, a revival among Gentiles led by Jewish evangelists. It can only occur before Yeshua returns.

The last statement in this group of verses is: 31 *"He will send out His angels with a great shofar, and they will gather together His chosen from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."* (Matthew 24:31 TLV). Some see this as ADONAI's physical regathering of Israel to the land, something which began in the last several centuries and is continuing at record pace now. I believe that this verse is also a reference to what *Sha'ul* spoke of in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1Corinthians 15:51-52, the resurrection of the righteous dead and the rising of the living to meet Yeshua in the air. It will occur with a *shofar*. All who have trusted Yeshua are "His chosen" and this group will include "all Israel" which will have trusted Him before He receives His righteous ones into the clouds. It is also possible that Israel's trust in Yeshua could come as late as His appearance in the air and then rise to meet Him. We only know in part. By faith, we believe that all Israel shall be saved, but don't know exactly when. When we are gathered to Yeshua in the clouds is the moment that we who have trusted in Him and endured until the end will receive our resurrection bodies, bodies very much like the one which Yeshua received from His Father when He was raised from the dead.

Then, Yeshua spoke about the fig tree. In Luke it says: 29 *Then Yeshua told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 As soon as they sprout their leaves, you see it and you know at once that summer is near. 31 So also, when you see these all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near"* (Luke 21:29-31 TLV). (also Matthew 24:32-33 and Mark 13:28-29). Just as we know that summer is near when fig trees and as Yeshua said in Luke, "all trees" sprout their leaves, we know that when we see the things that Yeshua spoke of happening, that the Kingdom of G-d is near; that His appearance is near. Is Israel the fig tree? The next verse is a clue.

32 *"Amen, I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things happen"* (Luke 21:32 TLV). (also Matthew 24:34 and Mark 13:30). "This generation" is important in determining whether or not Israel is the fig tree. But, to what generation was Yeshua referring. It was not the generation that was present when the Great Tribulation occurred and the Temple was destroyed. It has to be a generation future from then. Isaiah and Micah speak symbolically of Israel as a "fig tree" and they and other prophets also speak of Israel as "the vine" and "the olive tree." The Blue Letter Bible proposes that: "the vine" is a symbol of Israel's spiritual privileges, "the fig tree" is a symbol of Israel's national privileges and "the olive tree" is a symbol of Israel's religious privileges. If this is true, then we should be looking at Israel, "the nation" with regard to Yeshua's words about a generation. But, take this with a grain of salt as it is speculation and not fact.

With regard to Yeshua's words: *"when you see these all these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near,"* we can understand that He was referring to the wars and rumors of wars and even the signs in the heavens. We must also consider that another of these "things happening" is the end of Jerusalem being ruled by the Gentiles. And, that has already happened. If Israel is the fig tree in the parable, then it would seem that the generation to which Yeshua was referring is the generation which would be living in the time since Israel became a nation again. That generation would be the generation of those born in 1948 after Israel became a nation. A person born in 1948 would be 74 today. Seeing that

Israel miraculously became a nation in 1948 and that Gentile rule ended in Jerusalem in 1967, we have to know that the Kingdom of G-d is near. This generation will not pass away before all these things happen, but how long will it last? It could be another 30 years or more if one born in 1948 lives to age 100. But Yeshua didn't say that all of that generation would have to pass away, just that the whole generation would not pass away before all these things happened. If the current generation in the Nation of Israel is that generation, Yeshua could return sometime within the next 30 years or sooner.

Because of the signs of the times today, what Yeshua said next is extremely important to us right now. 35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away. 36 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, except the Father alone. 37 "For just as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. 39 And they did not understand until the flood came and swept them all away. So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Then two men will be in the field, one taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill, one taken and one left. 42 Therefore stay alert; for you do not know what day your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24:35-42 TLV). (also Mark 13:31-37 and Luke 21:33-38).

Taking these verses verse by verse: 35 *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away."* This seems to be a reference to Matthew 5 where Yeshua said: 17 *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif<sup>b</sup> shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass.* (Matthew 5:17-18 TLV). We don't fully understand the symbolism of Revelation concerning the new heaven and the new earth. There will be changes made, but we don't know how or what. But, we do understand that it will be a renewed earth.

36 *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven nor the Son, except the Father alone."* The day and the hour to which He was referring is His coming on the clouds of heaven to receive His faithful. He didn't know the day or the hour that it would happen back then when He was on earth, but I would suspect that since He is now at the right hand of the Father that He knows.

37 *"For just as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark. 39 And they did not understand until the flood came and swept them all away. So shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man"* (Matthew 24:37-39 TLV). Yeshua compares the day of His coming with Noah's day. The people of Noah's time were scoffing at him and going on with their sinful lives. It is that way today. Many say: "yes, I am going to follow Jesus, but not right now." Others just choose their own gods to follow, having ignored ADONAI's spirit speaking to their hearts. And others say: "There is no G-d. I only trust in what I can see." The coming of the "Son of Man" in these verses is His appearance in the heavens, something sudden and unexpected, something without warning. When Yeshua appears in the air, the people who have put it off or scoffed will find that it is too late. The writer of Hebrews said: 27 *"And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, 28 so also Messiah, was offered once to bear the sins of many. He will appear a second time, apart from sin, to those eagerly awaiting Him for salvation"* (Hebrews 9:27-28 TLV). He will appear in the air to us who are eagerly awaiting Him, but it will be apart from sin. In other words, if you have not trusted in His sacrificial death and had your

sins forgiven before He returns, it will be too late. The unsaved seeing Him appear in the heavens will be like the people of Noah's day beating on the door of the ark in fear of the rising water. Yeshua's coming salvation for which we are eagerly awaiting is salvation from the troubles of this world, not from our sins.

40 *"Then two men will be in the field, one taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding at the mill, one taken and one left. 42 Therefore stay alert; for you do not know what day your Lord is coming"* (Matthew 24:40-42 TLV). This is a reference to Yeshua's coming in the clouds. One man in the field is a believer and rises to meet Yeshua. The other does not know him and is left. One of the women at the mill is a believer and rises to meet Yeshua. The other doesn't know Him and is "left behind." This rising to meet Yeshua is not what Dispensationalism calls the Rapture. The Rapture is a derived theology from Dispensationalism and includes much more than rising to meet Yeshua. It is not just an event, it's a whole doctrine. To believe in the Rapture of Dispensationalism is to believe in the AntiChrist, a rebuilt Temple and that the Great Tribulation is a whole earth event coming in the future. The Greek word *harpazo*, meaning a catching or snatching away, is what underlies *Sha'ul's* words *caught up* in the TLV and which Dispensationalism refers to as the Rapture. We definitely believe we will be caught up as *Sha'ul* described in 1Thessalonians 4 and 1Corinthians 15, but not in the way that the doctrine of the Rapture describes. In Dispensationalism, it's called the "secret Rapture," a catching away that no one will see. Suddenly, everyone's gone. But, everyone will see Him. Revelation says: 7 *"Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, even those who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Yes, amen!"* (Revelation 1:7 TLV).

Who is going up to meet Yeshua is already settled for the dead in Messiah. But not for the living. We know in whom we have trusted. As each day passes, these words of Yeshua become more and more urgent for those who don't know Him. We are living in the season of His return. It could be any one of the next 30 years or so. The time is near and we who are Yeshua's followers must stay alert and faithful.

This coming Tuesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>, will mark the twentieth anniversary of *Beit Shalom* Messianic Synagogue as a congregation. We began at 901 Smith Avenue in a very small space which we affectionately called "the mini-syni." We began with services on Friday night for about a year and then began *Shabbat* morning services. We initially had small paper *Torah* in a small Ark. In June of 2004, we received our current *Sefer Torah*. It was written in Poland and at some point in time it was taken to Israel from where we received it. We don't know when it made *aliyah* to Israel, but it was 80 years old when we received it. That now makes it 98 years old. ADONAI has been very gracious to us in these past twenty years as a congregation. We have seen a lot of changes, especially in the ways of the world. Many people have passed through these doors in that time. We have been blessed to be a small presence here in Thomasville for the Messianic Jewish Movement and for the opportunity to proclaim the truth of *Torah*.

The writer of Hebrews exhorts us: 22 *So let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and body washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the unwavering confession of hope, for He who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good deeds. 25 And do not neglect our own meetings, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another—and all the more so as you see the Day approaching.* (Hebrews 10:22-25 TLV). The signs of the times and Yeshua's words emphasize that we are seeing "the Day" approaching. May we be found

faithful. In our *parasha* today, after Moses tells Israel they will sin and be scattered among the nations, he says this: 30 *“When you are in distress and all these things have come on you, in the latter days you will return to Adonai your God and listen to His voice.* 31 *For Adonai your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you, or forget the covenant with your fathers that He swore to them.* (Deuteronomy 4:30-31 TLV). Our *haftarah* today says: 1 *“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God.* (Isaiah 40:1 TLV). It is our heartfelt wish to be a congregation of comfort to Israel and to stand with them during these turbulent times and anxiously awaiting for their salvation. *Shabbat shalom!*