



“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,
46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value,
he went and sold all that he had and bought it.
Matthew 13:45

**Parsha 45: Va’etchanan (I pleaded) Deuteronomy 3:23–7:11
13th August 2022 / 16th Av 5778**

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week’s Parsha Pearl.

Key Points

The Parshah of Va’etchanan (And I Pleaded/Beseeched) continues Moses’ “Repetition of the Torah,” began in last week’s reading.

We are now in the closing weeks of the life of Moses. He speaks to the new generation of Jews who are about to enter the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. He reminds them that they are YHVH’s chosen people and that they will serve Him as priests. The generation that entered the wilderness has now died, and he recounts to the new generation what has forged them over the last 40 years as a people. He reminds them of the fundamental principles of the Torah encouraging them to follow it and thus reap the abundant blessings that YHVH will bestow on them, lest they risk His judgement. Moses goes on to predict the exile and the eventual redemption of Israel.

Va’etchanan includes some of the primary texts of Judaism, including:

The Ten Commandments (as repeated by Moses),

The Shema (which proclaims the oneness of YHVH; the duty to love YHVH, and to study and teach it to our children;

This week’s Parsha begins: **23 “Then I pleaded with Adonai, 24 ‘Adonai Elohim, you have begun to reveal your greatness to your servant, and your strong hand — for what other god is there in heaven or on earth that can do the works and mighty deeds that you do? 25 Please! Let me go across and see the good land on the other side of the Yarden, that wonderful hill-country and the L’vanon!’ 26 But Adonai was angry with me on account of you, and he didn’t listen to me. Adonai said to me, ‘Enough from you! Don’t say another word to me about this matter! 27 Climb up to the top of Pisgah and look out to the west, north, south and east. Look with your eyes — but you will not go across this Yarden. 28 However, commission Y’hoshua, encourage him and strengthen him; for he will lead this people across and enable them to inherit the land that you will see.’ 29 So we stayed in the valley across from Beit-P’or. CJB**

The beginning of the parsha makes us privy to a very personal conversation between Moses and YHVH. One argument for the decision of YHVH not to allow Moses to enter the land refers to the striking of the rock in Numbers 20:

Moses Strikes the Rock

20:1 In the first month of the year, the whole community of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Zin and camped at Kadesh. While they were there, Miriam died and was buried. 2 There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. 3 The people blamed Moses and said, "If only we had died in the Lord's presence with our brothers! 4 Why have you brought the congregation of the Lord's people into this wilderness to die, along with all our livestock? 5 Why did you make us leave Egypt and bring us here to this terrible place? This land has no grain, no figs, no grapes, no pomegranates, and no water to drink!" 6 Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to them, 7 and the Lord said to Moses, 8 "You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, speak to the rock over there, and it will pour out its water. You will provide enough water from the rock to satisfy the whole community and their livestock." 9 So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the Lord. 10 Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. "Listen, you rebels!" he shouted. "Must we bring you water from this rock?" 11 Then Moses raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So the entire community and their livestock drank their fill. 12 But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust me enough to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them!" 13 This place was known as the waters of Meribah (which means "arguing") because there the people of Israel argued with the Lord, and there he demonstrated his holiness among them.

In this passage, we see that Moses who was agitated by his grumbling flock, struck the rock instead of speaking to it. If we look closer to this event, we can see that it is as if YHVH imparts a nature to the rock that allows it to hear as you and I hear. YHVH could have directly brought water from the rock prior to the gathering but instead wants to show the people that Moses is the conduit between them. Instead, frustration overcomes Moses, and he acts as if the rock is just a rock. He strikes it with his staff.

The deeper spiritual meaning is that the 'Rock' is Messiah from which flow the streams of living water.

John 7:37 On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and called out in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in Me, just as the Scripture has said: 'Streams of living water'" will flow from within him. Among the many passages of scripture referring to the YHVH as the 'Rock' these, in particular, refer to Him as the saviour and redeemer to Israel and to all who believe personally in Him.

Psalm 18:2 The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 106:21 They forgot God their Savior, who did great things in Egypt,

Isaiah 17:10

For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and failed to remember the rock of your strength.

However, an interesting passage in the Midrash exposes the depth of Moses' plea to YHVH. The plea is only part of the discussion that occurred, but we can see in it how YHVH wants us to accept who we are and what we are becoming.

Moses said to G-d: Master of the Universe! Joseph's bones are entering the Land, and I

shall not enter?

Said G-d to him: He who admitted to his land is buried in his land; and he who did not admit to his land shall not be buried in his land. Joseph admitted to his land when his master's wife said (Genesis 39:14), "See, they have brought us a Hebrew man . . .," and he did not deny it; on the contrary, he said (40:15), "I was abducted from the land of the Hebrews." Therefore, he shall be buried in his land. You, however, did not admit to your land when the daughters of Jethro said (Exodus 2:19), "An Egyptian man rescued us from the shepherds," and you heard this and were silent. Therefore, "you shall not cross this Jordan."

There is a more significant argument to consider here, and it is worth for a moment considering the background of Moses' life. Growing up in the house of Pharaoh and being a Prince of Egypt, he had to contend with the change of what he was becoming, and indeed what his lineage was.

Escaping from Egypt and from a life of privilege, wealth and power, Moses would become a shepherd before becoming the leader of a nation promised to Abraham. Two periods of forty years would prevail until YHVH would take him home. The second period of his life would see a time of personal preparation. The third period would see him bringing and teaching the Torah to a generation who had also learned the ways and worshiping culture of Egypt. This generation was the offspring of previous ones thrown into slavery.

Gen 15: 12 As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and suddenly great terror and darkness overwhelmed him.13Then the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not their own; they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 14 But I will judge the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will depart with many possessions.

Acts 7:5He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised to give possession of the land to Abraham and his descendants, even though he did not yet have a child. 6God told him that his descendants would be foreigners in a strange land, and they would be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. 7'But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,' God said, 'and afterward they will come forth and worship Me in this place.

Now let us look into this passage a little closer.

Exodus 1:8-12 A new king arose over Egypt who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look, the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground." So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.

The pattern of Israel among the nations shows us a people who are determined to survive and prosper despite persecution. The underlying evil is so sublime that on the surface all looks well. Egypt flourished because the people were thriving. The economy grew as did the population of the Hebrews. But the Egyptians had a problem. The Hebrews were doing too well, and so the new Pharaoh, forgetting the relationship that had developed between the previous Pharaoh and Joseph, declared a clamp down forcing forced labour upon them. This is a constant dynamic among the house of Israel in the diaspora. This passage in Deuteronomy declared by YHVH, warns the people of what would arise if they were to turn away from Him. Of all the blessings in this passage, the curses far exceed them.

Deut 28:64 Then the LORD will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone, which

neither you nor your fathers have known. 65 Among those nations you will find no repose, not even a resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a despairing soul. 66 So your life will hang in doubt before you, and you will be afraid night and day, never certain of survival.

This parsha reflects on the laws given by Moses to the people and introduces us to the declaration of the Shema. The book of Deuteronomy will bring us to the end of Moses' life and the appointment of a new leader in Joshua. But the main pearl I want us to look at is the life of Moses and the struggle he had in coming to terms with who he was. We have already visited his background, but the question of identity is as much applicable to us today as it was with Him.

When Peter was questioned about his association with Yeshua, he denied that he ever knew him. Matt 26: 69-75

Knowing, Messiah Yeshua means that we also know who we are. The journey Moses and the Israelite nation in the wilderness is one that we all make. We make it because we too are being forged by the blacksmith in the furnace of the wilderness. The shape that comes out of the fire is the bride. A young girl when she is growing up has the identity of her parents' family, but when she becomes a bride, she takes on the name of her husband and comes under the authority of his house. The same principle is given to all who will become the bride of Yeshua. Her identity will change, and a good marriage will bring honour and blessing to all it produces.

In this world, we are being offered many things that will supposedly help us in becoming who we want to be. Personal attainment and choice supersede the need to maintain a family identity. Scripture tells us that Israel was a people who bore the name of YHVH. That name identified them as people among the nations — separated by YHVH to be holy unto Him. This separation would bring untold blessing and the power to make wealth. They would have an ability to affect the world and impact it with innovation and knowledge. They would be the carriers of the message of the gospel and the givers of the Torah, and from them, the saviour of the world would come.

As a matter of survival, we will turn in many ways, even denying Yeshua. Our identity will become clouded, and ultimately we will be tossed by every wind of doctrine.

Friends, we are who YHVH says we are, not who we say we are or what anyone else says we are. We were called to be imitators of God, made in His image, and to be a sweet aroma to Him for His good pleasure. We are not called to be pleasers of men. The choice to wander from our identity comes because we do not know what that identity is.

Moses lived to be 120 years old – 3 x 40. 40 represents a period of maturity and the attainment of spiritual wisdom. Choosing to know YHVH and to walk in the way of the Master is the course that changes us. It makes us that new creation, born of spirit and water. It gives us the ability to know YHVH and to become children of God. The born again experience brings us into the house of Abba and gives us a new identity, but the rejection of Him will remove us from His presence with a bill of divorce in our hands.

Moses lived in the presence of YHVH. He was a King- Chief, a leader, a shepherd and a teacher. He empowered the nation of Israel in overcoming the many battles they would face. His was indeed a Godly life. It is hard to understand, therefore, why YHVH would not relent in allowing Moses to enter the land. His plea in the Midrash begs YHVH even to let him in as an animal so that his feet may touch the ground, but YHVH remembers a request from Moses when the people were worshipping the golden calf. Moses pleaded with YHVH to save the people and that he would give his life for them.

Exodus 30. The next day Moses said to the people, “You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.”

31 So Moses went back to the Lord and said, “Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. 32 But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

We can understand a little more when we see that YHVH held Moses to his request. This passage in the Midrash opens up the conversation. G-d said to Moses: You can't have it both ways. I have already nullified My decree and upheld yours. I said: "I shall destroy them" (when Israel worshipped the golden calf), and you said, "Forgive them"—and your desire prevailed. Now, if you wish that your desire: "Let me cross over," should be upheld and My decree (that you not enter the Land) be nullified, then you must retract your "forgive them"; if you wish "forgive them" to be upheld, then you must retract "let me cross over."

When Moses approached death and the children of Israel did not appeal to G-d on his behalf that he should enter the Land, Moses gathered them together and began to rebuke them. He said: One man saved 600,000, and 600,000 cannot save one man! (Midrash)

Friends, we cannot argue with God. He hears our every word and thought. He sees everything we do and listens to the vows, the oaths our grumblings and gossip. He finds pleasure in our pursuit of Him and the fruit of our faith; the living waters that ushers out from us as we edify and encourage His family along the path of its destiny. Our future may not contain us but will for sure hold our destiny. That destiny is our descendants. We all carry the DNA of our ancient parents, and we are the fruit of their labours. Let us not forget that God has called us to fill the earth with His image. What a formidable and wonderful task that is. We must protect it and defend it because it is a truly a priceless treasure.

Finally, I pray that as we walk together that we will honour the name by which we are called and understand that calling. We may not comprehend the value of this pearl yet or the true price that Yeshua paid for us, however, we must know that the name above all names is ours, and that is our identity.



Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

[May Adonai bless you and keep you.]

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

[May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.]

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

[May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace.]

Haftarah Va'etchanan: Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 40:1-26

B'rit Hadashah : Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:1-11; 22:33-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 4:1-13; 10:25-37; Acts 13:13-43; Romans 3:27-31; 1 Timothy 2:4-6; Ya'akov (James) 2:14-26

Glossary

Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (*Aggadah*) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (*halakha*), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (*Tanakh*)

Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)

Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**, otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;
2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides- 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.