PARASHA DEVARIM

אֵלֶּה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן בַּמִּדְבָּר בָּעֲרָבָה מוֹל סוּף בֵּין-פָּארָן וּבֵין-תֹּפֶל וְלָבָן וַחֲצֵרֹת וְדִי זָהָב׃

Today we begin the final and last book of God's Torah!!! It's been a heck of an exciting journey to get to this point in our studies, hasn't it? It is important for us to keep in mind that there is no one book in the Bible that stands alone... and of course, that includes Deuteronomy and the Bri Chadasha writings. Although I've said this a million times before, it bears repeating. If one does not study the Torah and thoroughly absorb its principles and patterns, I can guarantee you will misunderstand and misapply the books that come after. Moshe in Deuteronomy assumes his audience already possesses a working familiarity of the many topics that came before. He will refer to many of the major events in Torah such as the Golden Calf incident, the whole affair involving Balaam, Balak and the people of Moab as mere passing references. For instance, he refers to the time when Miriam was struck with leprosy because of her rebellion as "*what happened to Miriam*". If you hadn't already read and studied Torah, you'd have no idea what Moshe was talking about...and that's just scratching the surface. Onward. Out of all the five books of the Torah, Deuteronomy is probably the one book that has influenced traditional Judaism more than Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers combined. For instance, did you know that out of the original 613 commands in Torah, about 200 of them come from Deuteronomy? Or did you know that Rabbinical Halakah *(Rabbinical legal rulings)* is based on how Moshe expounded on the Law here in Deuteronomy? That's right. If one understands the form and protocol of how Rabbis come to their legal conclusions, you will realize that their method is much more like the pattern seen here in Deuteronomy than in any of the other four books of the Torah that came before. Next... did you know the three main prayers that are a part of modern-day Jewish liturgy originate in the Book of Deuteronomy? The three main prayers are... The Shema, the Amidah and the Aleinu. Note the top of the list is called the Shema. That one little word represents the most important and most fundamental tenet that undergirds not only the whole of the Book of Deuteronomy...

I want to share one way to look at Deuteronomy that may prove to be a fresh perspective for you. I submit to you that... Deuteronomy is Moshe's version of Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount. Now what do I mean by that? Let me explain. At the start of Deuteronomy, Moshe begins his address by tracing back how Israel has arrived at this present moment in time. And during this process, he touches on a good 50% of the rulings and instructions God gave Moshe at Sinai. When I say *"touches on"*, I mean he literally point by point, expounds on pretty much all of the Law with the purpose of explaining what God really intended by giving these instructions.

Moshe will reveal how the underlying higher spiritual reality in the heavens is connected to what on the surface appears to be only physical or earthly instructions. For instance, when we were studying the Kosher food laws back in Leviticus, in answer to the question of why God forbade eating certain animals, I explained that it was connected to a holiness pattern already established in the heavens. The food laws have nothing to do with sanitary conditions in those days or for health reasons. That's just a Greek/gentile way of thinking. In fact, to one who possesses a Torah mindset, it is embarrassing to even ask the question *"Why".* The important thing to do is ask *"which pattern that God has already established in the heavens should I look for?".* Moshe starts off by saying that 40 years ago when the Law was first given at Mount Sinai, this is how your forefathers, the first generation who left Egypt put these commands of God into practice. However, I'm telling you that since we are soon going to be entering the Promised Land, this is how you should do these commands. Are you noticing a speech pattern here you may have possibly encountered before? Moshe is saying, <u>in those days</u> we did it that way but <u>now</u> I am telling you to do it this way. This is exactly how Yeshua spoke when he delivered His famous Sermon on the Mount. Again, Moshe is elevating God's Law from the physical or earthly plane to a higher more spiritual plane. And in the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua does the same thing by building on what Moshe established here in Deuteronomy. I think it's important to stress that point. Yeshua did NOT do away with the Law; He built on it. It was the rock and unshakeable foundation of His ministry. During Yeshua's time, much of the spiritual element that Moshe had given to the Law in Deuteronomy had been lost and weakened by the traditions of men. Yeshua sought to rectify that by pointing out the true spiritual meaning behind God's commands. He came to fill up *(pleroos in Greek)* the Torah instructions with their true meaning, which is what to fulfill the law in context really means... not the laughably ridiculous theological interpretation that says *"since Christ fulfilled the Law for me, I don't have to keep it anymore"* nonsense. Indeed, in Deuteronomy, Moshe, as the first mediator between God and man, expounded on the spiritual ideal of the Law and how it was be applied once the Israelites entered into the Promised Land. In the Brit Chadasha, God manifested in Yeshua, as the second mediator for man, He expounded and showed us how it was to be applied to His kingdom that He was ushering in... that we are moving to enter into.

The book of Devarim, Words, is not just Moshe's farewell speech. It is the final "covenant renewal ceremony" before Israel enters the Land. The Sages call it "Mishneh Torah" "the Repetition of the Law", but it is far more than repetition. It is interpretation, application, and prophecy rolled into one. Just as Israel stood at the edge of the Jordan; the question Moshe asks them is the same one the Ruach HaKodesh asks us: "Do you remember what God did?" Do you understand what He said? Will you obey what He commands? ...He says, Go and possess the land!

In Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22, Moshe retells Israel's recent history — not as dry facts, but as theological instruction. Every place name, every rebellion, every victory is meant to teach us about God's faithfulness, our unfaithfulness, and the grace that overcomes both. The opening verse says, *"These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Israel on this side of the Jordan in the wilderness..." "These are the words" - Eleh had'varim.* The Sages note that the word devarim can mean "words," "things," or "plagues." Rashi comments that Moshe spoke both words of rebuke and words of comfort. The Zohar sees in this phrase a hint to the entire Torah, the "words" are the building blocks of creation itself. - *"On this side of the Jordan", B'ever haYarden.* The phrase b'ever can mean "on the other side" or "across from." The Talmud *(Sotah 13b)* says this location emphasizes that Moshe didn't enter the Land, a reminder of the cost of disobedience, even for the greatest prophet. How are we progressing towards the land? The "words" Moshe spoke are later called logia in the Septuagint, the same term used of Yeshua's own words (Matthew 24:35). Yeshua is the D'var, the Word made flesh (John 1:14) who also speaks from "across the Jordan" to prepare His people for a new inheritance. *"It is eleven days' journey from Horev by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea... And it came to pass in the fortieth year..." (vv 2-3)* The Sages are stunned, 11 days of travel took 40 years! The distance from Horev (Sinai) to the border of Canaan was approximately 300 miles. A healthy traveler could do it in less than two weeks. But because of sin, the journey became a generation-long wandering. In Jewish thought, the number 40 represents testing and transformation. The Flood lasted 40 days. Moshe was on Sinai 40 days. Yeshua fasted 40 days. The wilderness generation's 40 years was a purification cycle, the old had to die so the new could enter. There is a term in Hebrew that says, *Midah K'neged Midah (Measure for Measure).* God's justice is precise: They rejected the Land in 40 days of spying, so they wandered 40 years. This is a fundamental Jewish doctrine: consequences match the transgression *(Talmud, Sanhedrin 90a)*. Verses 4–8 say, *"Adonai our God spoke to us in Horev, saying: 'You have dwelt long enough at this mountain... Go in and possess the land...'" "You have dwelt long enough" - "Rav lachem shevet".* The Sages interpret this as a gentle but firm word: There is a time for learning and a time for acting. At Sinai, Israel received Torah. But Torah is not meant to be studied forever in isolation it is meant to be lived out in the Land.

Taking a closer look at Messianic synagogues and churches today, what can we see? I can see people who called themselves Believers and Christians, who come to services contentedly on a once-a-week basis. There, as their custom, they had their "worship service". Everything is fixed, programmed, and routine. They sit, stand, listen and sing piously, and at the end, as if everyone is satisfied, they receive the benediction with a great "Amen". But where is the victory? Where is the growth? Where is the productivity? They looked the same! They felt no difference! They lived as usual!

Why, what is the problem? They say it's the "devil". So, some groups had mean business to "bind and defeat" haSatan. But this is impossible! Please people, we should pray with our heads! Satan is already a defeated foe. We are already victors in Yeshua! And to bind Satan is not our work to do; it's Yeshua's when He comes to set up His millennial kingdom. The liberal pastors and denominations are not the problem either. The worst enemy of the body of Messiah is the dictatorship of the routine. When we are satisfied with what we already are or have, then there is no more room for anything to become. If you don't desire to grow, you won't grow! If you stop desiring for productivity, your life will produce nothing worthy for the kingdom to rejoice. To this kind of congregation our God has a message: "Go up! Possess the Land!" God's people don't have to stay where they are; they must be going forward. Messianic believers must not be satisfied with what we already are or have, or we close the door of greater experience that is waiting for us. The body of Messiah is not a dead monument; it is a living, dynamic organism that has the state of becoming. If you look at our text, God spoke to His people through Moshe saying, "Enough of your stay here! Go up and possess the land!" What is the implication of this command of God to His people?

I say it is a CALL TO ADVANCE! God is so passionate for the advancement of His people. In this passage, God says, *"You have stayed long enough in this mountain... now set up your journey. Go up and possess the land."* It is both a command to leave the place where they were staying; a place where they were already accustomed to, and to advance their journey toward the Promised Land. Adonai's desire for His people is not to stay in a spiritual status quo, or what we called the customary life. Instead, He wants to see His people progressing with great measure in their spiritual journey. But...

First, God wanted to see the intensity of His people's emotion toward Him. As the Israelites lived long enough on Mt. Horev their passion for the Promised Land had grown cold. Their emotional fervor, their excitement and their exuberance for God's Promise had to some extent been alleviated. "It's okay here. We're already accustomed to it here. No more adjustments." The promise was still in their minds, but the intensity of their passion for it has waned. So, God came to rejuvenate their emotions. "Go up and possess the land." God dislikes half-heartedness, lifelessness, and, as the Spirit of God says to the Church of Laodicea, "lukewarm" spirituality. Both Kefa (Peter) and Rav Sha'ul (Paul) understood this and said: "continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Savior and Lord." There must be an increase of devotion; there must be more passion, more fervor, more joy, and greater willingness to sacrifice for the Lord!

Second, God wanted His people to come to a new horizon of experience. The Israelites were becoming accustomed and contented with their stay on the mountain. What more could they long? They had comfort, ease and safety on that mountain. Everything is fine, why should they go up to another place?

First because that was not the place where they should be. Next, they can never come to that place until they leave the place where they were. This gives us the principle that "what has been should not determine what will be." So for them to be in the place God wants them to be, they must go through new horizons of their journey. Exactly true with us. If we want to be a person God wants us to be, we must be willing to go through new horizons of our spiritual journey. What we have been, should not determine what we will be or what we are to be spiritually. That's why Rav Sha'ul said: *"Therefore leaving the elementary teaching... let us press on to maturity."* A man with his written life-testimony. Having found that rats spoiled his paper, he said to the pastor: "Oh, my testimony was gone. I have now lost my wonderful experience with God." I want to say this: A crumb of fresh encounter with Yeshua is better than a feast of stale experience.

It is a <u>CALL TO CONQUER</u>. To possess the Promised Land the Israelites must first conquer it. In most dictionaries, to conquer means, *"to take over an enemy's territory by force".* This is the picture of Israel taking possession of Canaan. Of course, the Canaanite people will not easily hand their land over to the Israelites. There must be resistance. In light of God's covenant to Avraham, the land belongs to the Israelites. Nevertheless, the Canaanites knew nothing about that covenant. Granted that they knew, would they recognize it? Therefore, until the last drop of their blood, they will resist any invader and defend their territory. This leaves the Israelites to have no other option: to take the land forcibly! They must conquer it as implied in God's command. From this we can see that Adonai wanted to see that His people forcibly fulfilling His purpose. Do you remember the tower of Babel? The people of the ancient world wanted to stay in a certain place called the Plain of Shinar. God confounded their tongues to scatter them. Why? Because God wants the human race to conquer the world. Do you remember the command of Yeshua before His ascension? Yes! Go and make disciples of all nations! In a short while the disciples were permitted to tarry at Jerusalem waiting for the Ruach haKodesh (Holy Spirit). But after that, the shaliachim went everywhere to obey the commission from Yeshua beginning from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth. God wants the Gospel of Yeshua, through each of us, invade the whole earth. There is a purpose for which we are called to attain; a purpose for which we are to become. To the Israelites, it was to possess and become possessor of the Promised Land; to us today, it is to bring the life-changing message of Yeshua to all lands and become Adonai's catalyst for the transformation of people's lives. Did we as Messianic believers obey the command of our Commander-in-chief forcibly, or, I shall say with all our energy? Have we been advancing toward the fulfilling of God's purpose and goal? I seem to hear God saying, *"It's now about time to advance. Go up! All of you. Possess the Land."* Did you notice? God did not say, *"some of you will go and some will stay";* the whole congregation was summoned to go. Isn't God calling for corporate and unified effort? Isn't God calling for everybody to help set the journey?

God expects us to say, "Let's do it". Let's advance in fulfilling the commission of our Master, as a church together! Let us conquer the land!

Adonai wanted to see His people experiencing victory. To possess the Promised Land, the Israelites will have to engage battle against the inhabitants of it and should defeat them. Though God Himself had told them to do it thus giving them the assurance of victory, but it takes great faith, courage and confidence to "go up and possess the land". Isn't it better that they would stay where they are? For God it is not! He wants His people to leave the life of customary to a life of victory. Staying where they are would spare them from battles and challenges, but they would never experience victory either. To experience the fullness of victorious life, God's people must be willing:
First to "go up" –that is to leave the life they used to live. Enough of the life of pretensions, of emptiness, of dead formality, of mediocrity, of mere religiosity, of defeat and disobedience! Rise up! With great courage and confidence in God, go up and advance victoriously!
Second to "possess the land" –that is to face the challenges ahead with great courage and faith. Oh, it is lamentable to know that many Messianics and Messianic synagogues do not have vision for spiritual advancement in terms of living and service because they were afraid to face the challenges ahead. Therefore, they stayed in the status quo. Didn't they understand? The command was from God. Therefore, victory is sure! The problem with us is our lack of trust and our being slow to understand that life's challenges are meant by God to give us opportunity to experience His Great Power. Victory does not come by way of human competence and capability, but by way of man's dependence on the Omnipotent God Who is faithful to keep His promise. C'mon You who call yourself Messianic, let's rise up in victory, for we are God's conquering army.

It is a <u>CALL TO CLAIM</u>. When Adonai came and told them to go up and possess the land, He had also reminded them that they have something to claim from Him. What was that something? His covenant to them. The Covenant that even goes far back to their Patriarch Avraham. Along with this Covenant were the blessings, promised and prepared, that include the Promised Land (the Land of Abundance), Victory over the Enemies, Becoming a Nation, and Becoming a Blessing to all Nations. Sounds familiar to the Messianic faith? Yes, it should. Because God had also entered into a Covenant with us through His sacrifice in Yeshua. And through this renewed covenant we have the blessings that include the Life of Abundance, Victory, becoming a Holy Nation, and becoming a blessing to the world. Like the Israelites, we have these blessings to claim. But the claim of these covenant blessings must be aggressive. And I must confess that the cowards, the doubtful, the hesitant, the lazy, and the unwilling have no part of the claiming party. One must be willing, ready and prompt to obey the voice of God. One must be diligent to follow God's direction.

One must have great faith and courage for whatever challenge he is to face. Two words are appropriate to characterize them: "Obedience and Dependence." To claim the covenant blessings is more than using the name of Yeshua in what they called "bold declaration." This is only pseudo-boldness. We do not have the right to declare something using the name of Yeshua if we have not lived in total surrender and full obedience to the Lord. People, if only we have walked in total obedience and dependence to our Master, we would have been enjoying the fullness of the covenant blessings. It is sad to know that the prevailing message you hear from most pulpits today is about survival. Why should we worry about how to survive? The body of Messiah doesn't have to worry on how to survive because Yeshua had promised that even *"the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against it."* C'mon Messianics, enough of that survival mentality. We don't have to stay living in pretension, in want, in defeat and in disobedience. Go up! All of us! Let us rise up and possess the land! Let us experience and enjoy the covenant blessings in Yeshua! Let us experience and enjoy the Life of abundance and victory and become a blessing to the world! Now, let's give ourselves to God. Let's confess our disobedience and pride. And once again, renew our commitment to Him, that from now and onward, we will be walking in total obedience to our Lord and Master.

Adonai doesn't want us to stay where we are in our spiritual journey – to look the same, to feel no difference, and to live as usual. He wants us to rise up from the life of pretension, want, defeat and disobedience to a life of abundance, victory and blessing. He wants us to advance, to progress, to grow in our passion for Him, for His purpose and goal. He wants us to experience the blessings of His covenant with us in Yeshua. Yes! What we need to do now is come to Him. Confess our pride, our disobedience, and our pretensions and go forth an possess the land... our place in His kingdom.

b'Shem Yeshua, haMelech v'haMashiach Shelanu! Amein.
("in the name of Yeshua, our King and the Messiah! Amein.")