

SHABBAT SHALOM. Today is 11 Av 5786, corresponding to July 25, 2026.

TORAH DIALOGUE

(p. 755 Hz) (p. 1008 S) (p. 666 Hi) (p. 958 AS)

VA'ETCHANAN ואתחנן

Deuteronomy 3:23

[Compiled by Rabbi Edward Davis (RED),

1. Moshe's final plea to Hashem occurs in the beginning of this Parshah. He wants to cross into the Promised Land, but not as the leader. He wants to see the wonderful land promised to his people. The Chizkuni (Chizkiyahu ben Mano'ach, French rabbi of the 13th century) wrote that Moshe said that there are many Mitzvot that can only be observed in Eretz Yisrael. He desired to observe these Mitzvot. Hashem responded to him that if He allowed Moshe's request, then everyone else would say that Moshe was concerned only for himself. Better he should stay east of the Jordan and care for the generation of the Spies. Hashem was confident in Yehoshua, Calev, Elazar, and Pinchas to lead the next generation to a new life in Israel.

2. The Torah specifically states that we should not add or subtract from any of the Mitzvot. (4:2). Rashi's examples are not to make 5 species among the Lulav and Etrog, or to make 5 corners of Tzitzit et al. The Chizkuni rejects those examples and wrote that when Hashem said that it is time to enter Canaan, the people added that they should send Spies, causing an entire generation to die. Then, when Hashem said not to enter, some people went forward into the Land. They were killed by Canaanites and Amalekites. Why did the Chizkuni reject Rashi's comments? It was to allow our Sages to establish fences to safeguard the Mitzvot.

3. The sin of Baal P'or occurred with the new generation. A terrible display of sexual immorality and idolatry happened without any reason or cause. Bnei Yisrael had just spent 38 years of Torah observance and Torah learning. They failed at Shittim with P'or! The result was the death of 24,000 men. More important was that they showed Moshe, Hashem, and all of us a dismal picture of the future of the nation. The slightest temptation will be impossible to withstand. With all that Hashem had done for them in the desert, they could not control themselves to live a holy and pure life. This will cloud

Moshe's feelings about the nation's future after his death.

4. And He chose his offspring after him... (4:37). This statement explicitly makes it clear that Abraham's descendants through only Yitzchak and Yaakov will inherit all that is Avraham's. The spirituality will exclude the "8 nations". It will exclude Yishmael, Esav, and the other 6 nations that came the Avraham- Keturah union. What happened in later years rejected this statement. Islam would later claim that Yishmael inherited the spirituality of Avraham. Christianity, which our Sages claimed that they are connected to Esav, clearly state that God took away the Chosen National status of Israel and transferred it to the Christian people. All of this took place in order to reject this Torah statement.

5. Shamor et Yom HaShabbat. Guard the Sabbath Day. This is a clear change from the Ten Commandments from 40 years ago. There it reads Zachor, Remember the Sabbath Day. Our Sages place these two together as if there were never any time separated them. The Chizkuni reinterpreted the word. When Yaakov first heard Yosef's dreams, the Torah states that "and his father Shamar the matter." Most commentators define the word Shamar to mean anticipated. He looked forever to the dreams coming true. This generation never heard the word Zachor. They anticipated and looked forward to the arrival of Shabbat each week.

6. Mezuzot are a constant reminder of Hashem's presence in our lives. Just like Tzitzit. Hashem is aware of our need to be constantly reminded that we are Jewish. Tephillin also serve that purpose. In fact, in origin, the command to wear Tephillin was applicable all day long. Tzitzit was difficult to fulfill exactly due to the question of the source of the Techeilet (bluish) dye. It is making a comeback in our day. There is an interesting difference in the Halachah of Mezuzah. Outside of Israel, you have 30 days to put up Mezuzot from the time you moved in to the residence. In Israel, the requirement is immediate. The day you move in, you must put up the Mezuzot. In Israel when you move in, you are HOME.

7. The question of the Chacham, wise son is in this Parshah. When stated next to the evil son's, we see the similarity. Upon close analysis, the differ-

ences are clear. Firstly, the wise son mentions Hashem's name. The evil son has removed Hashem from his rhetoric. The wise son sincerely wants to know the reason for each Mitzvah. When he states "you" in his question, he is not separating himself from the Jewish community. He expresses himself in this fashion because he was not there when Hashem made these commandments. But let's not dismiss the evil son completely. He is present at the Seder table along with his family.

8. MIDRASH. The numerical value of the Hebrew word Va'etchanan is 515, indicating that Moshe prostrated himself in the dust and offered 515 distinct prayers, crying out to Hashem, begging Him like a poor person begging for unmerited mercy.

QUESTIONS FOR PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN 5786

I. From the Text

1. What in particular was Moshe asking for in the beginning of this Parshah? (3:25)
2. After years in Exile, what will happen to the Jewish people? (4:25)
3. Where in the Torah is there the Mitzvah to believe in Hashem? (5:6)
4. What is the reason here for the Mitzvah of Shabbat? (5:15)
5. With whom may we not intermarry? (7:3)

II. From Rashi

6. Why did Moshe think that Hashem would now allow him to enter Eretz Yisrael? (3:23)
7. How many years after entering Eretz Yisrael was the First Temple destroyed? (Rashi on Daniel 9:14)
8. Hashem commanded Bnei Yisrael about the laws of Shabbat before the Revelation at Sinai. When did that happen? (5:12)
9. When in history will we NOT be the only people to believe in Hashem? (6:4)
10. The Torah says to place a Mezuzah on your gates. The gates of what? (6:9)

III. From the Rabbis

11. Why is it not permitted to add or subtract to the Mitzvot in the Torah? (RED)
12. Why is there a greater fear in the Torah that the children and grandchildren of that generation might reject Hashem? (Chizkuni)
13. Moshe set aside the three Cities of Refuge east of the Jordan. Who established the three Cities of Refuge west of the Jordan?

IV. Midrash

14. How can a person cling to Hashem?

V. Haftorah

15. What is the main message of the seven Haftorahs from Tisha B'Av to Rosh HaShanah?

VI. Relationships

16.

- a) Menasheh - Chushim
- b) Lemech - Tzilah
- c) Yefet - Ashkenaz
- d) Gershon - Livni
- e) Amram - Elazar

ANSWERS FOR PARSHAT VA'ETCHANAN 5786

1. Just to enter and see the Promised Land.
2. Jews will repent and return to Eretz Yisrael.
3. "I am the Lord your Hashem."
4. To remember that we were once slaves in Egypt.
5. With any non-Jew.
6. Because Moshe had already conquered the lands of Sichon and Og; so he was already in Eretz Yisrael.
7. 850 years. The Temple was built after 440 years of being in Eretz Yisrael, and lasted 410 years.
8. At Marrah (see Shemot 15:25)
9. In the days of the Final Redemption.
10. The gates of your courtyard, your province, and your cities.
11. It would say that the Torah is not perfect.
12. The current generation actually experienced Hashem's miracles. For the next generation, it is history and not firsthand experience.
13. Yehoshua
14. By helping to support Torah scholars.
15. To give Bnei Yisrael comfort and consolation after the destruction of the Holy Temple.
16.
 - a) First Cousins (son of Yosef and son of Dan)
 - b) Husband-Wife
 - c) Grandfather Yefet
 - d) Father Gershon
 - e) Grandfather Amram