

## VAY'YELECH – “He Went”

### DEUTERONOMY (D'VARIM 31:1 – 30)

#### INTRODUCTION:

1. This portion deals with the remainder of Moses' life and end of his leadership.
  - a. He appoints his successor, Joshua.
2. After the events in the previous portion, Israel returned to their tents.
  - a. Then Moses “went” (*vay'yelech*) throughout the camp speaking to the people.
  - b. Tradition says this was the last day of his life (Adar 7 is the traditional date).

#### CHAPTER 31: ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE

1. His words are to encourage them in that they accomplish God's purpose without him just as they had with him.
2. Verse 2: “I can no longer go out and come in for God has said, ‘You shall not cross Jordan.’ ”
  - a. This is not to say that he was old and feeble; he was not permitted to go with Israel.

**“Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.” – Deuteronomy 34:7**

3. He reminds them that God is the one who lead them into the land through Joshua.
  - a. Moses led them through the wilderness; Yehoshua will lead them into the land.
  - b. There is a principle important to us at the end of the age.
  - c. Y'shua (Y'hoshua) is the one who will lead us into the land, not Moses.
4. Verse 6: He encourages them to be “strong and of good courage” because God goes with you and will not forsake you at this time.
  - a. The word *חזק* *chazak* “be strong, firm” is found at the end of each book in Torah.
  - b. Intended to accentuate the need to hold firm to the teachings of the Torah.
  - c. We can know that this is truth and, therefore, reliable – can stake our life on it.
5. Before His ascension, Y'shua affirmed to disciples that He will not forsake us (Mt. 28:20).
  - a. In contrast, Moses encourages them, not that He would be there, but God would.
  - b. In a sense, Moses would be there but in the person of Joshua – ordination by Moses.
6. Verse 7: Moses ordained Joshua in sight of all the people that his authority be not questioned.
  - a. Again, in a sense, Moses would be present by virtue of ordaining Joshua as successor.
  - b. Moses says to Joshua that he must be “strong and of good courage.”
7. Verse 9: Moses delivered the written Torah unto the Levites.
8. Verse 10: Moses commanded them that they were to read the Torah to nation in the *sh'mittah* during the Feast of Tabernacles (*sukkot*).
  - a. In later generations, reading was performed by the King while nation was assembled.
  - b. In days of Josephus, it was read by the priest.
9. Men, women, children and strangers were instructed to hear the words of “this law.”
10. Note that small children were to be present to hear these words with their parents.

- a. We send them to “children’s church.”
- b. We might be surprised at how much a small child can ingest spiritually.
- 11. Notice that the stranger was to hear the words of the law – full participation.
- 12. Verse 12: “That they may hear, learn and fear the LORD.’
  - a. Hearing was only a step to learning and that led to fear of the LORD.
  - b. Fear of the LORD is “beginning of wisdom” – wisdom helps us in our walk.
- 13. If God intended to discard the Torah later, why did He place such importance on it here?
  - a. He obviously intended that the people should hear and learn – i.e. study it.
  - b. To study it means to internalize it.
- 14. Verse 13: This was to impact future generations who would then hear, learn and fear.
  - a. Hearing truth is first step in propagating truth throughout the generations.
- 15. This is the theme of Paul’s comments in Romans 10.

**“For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace; who ring glad tidings of good things!’ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ‘LORD, who has believed our report?’ So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” – Romans 10:13-17**

- 15. When Paul writes this, there is no New Testament – but hearing is first step towards faith.
  - a. What is faith? In Hebrew אמונה *emunah* – root is אמן *aman* or *amen* – “so be it.”
  - b. Faith is “hearing” and “doing.”
  - c. Hearing the words of the law was to prompt the people to do the law.
- 16. So, later generations of rabbis determined that reading every seven years was not enough.
  - a. Torah divided in 156 portions; one portion read each Shabbat over 3 year period.
  - b. Other customs condensed it to a year.

## **CHAPTER 31: ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE**

- 1. Verse 14-15: Moses and Joshua go to tent of meeting that Joshua can be charged by God.
- 2. Verse 16: “This people will rise up and go astray after the foreign gods of the land.”
  - a. They will forsake God and break the covenant.
  - b. This is predicted before they enter the land.
- 3. Verse 17: As a result: “I will hide My face from them...and evils and troubles befall them.”
  - a. Because of their sin, His anger is great enough to cause His face to be concealed.
  - b. The root word is סתר *satar*; is repeated in verse 18 – “surely conceal” – הסתר אסתיר
  - c. When His face not directed toward them, צרות *tzarot* (troubles) come upon them.
  - d. *Tzarot* is plural form of צר *tzar*; phonetically related to שר *sar* or “prince.”
- 4. These troubles provoke Israel to realize God is not in our midst.
  - a. As a result of Golden Calf, God was going to remove His presence from midst.
  - b. Had it not been for Moses’ intercession, He would have not been in the midst of them.
- 5. Purpose of the Sanctuary was that God would be in the midst of the people.

**“And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” – Exodus 25:8**

6. Yet, verse 17 tells us that He would remove His Presence and hide His face.

7. Has He continued to hide His face?

a. Consider that צרות *tzarot* (*tzar*) is troubles and evidence of removal of His presence.

8. In Isaiah, Scripture hints that He is indeed “hiding His face” but there is hope He will turn His face back toward His people.

**“And I will wait on the LORD, who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him.” - Isaiah 8:17**

9. Might it be that this is what the Sh'ma is all about?

**“Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: ‘The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.’ So they shall put my name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”**

**– Numbers 6:23-27**

10. To make His face shine, to lift up His countenance is opposite of “hiding” His face.

a. His purposes for Israel require that His face be turned toward us.

b. Israel’s mandate is to be a light (His light) to the nations.

11. If He is the greater light (sun), Israel (moon) is the lesser light

a. Moon doesn’t generate its own light, but reflects the light of the sun.

b. Most noticeable when it is dark.

12. At the end of days – as it is getting dark – His people begin to turn their face toward Him.

a. He then begins to turn His face toward them.

**“When you are in distress (“tribulation” in KJV, Hebrew is צר *tzar*), and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice (for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.” – Deuteronomy 4:30-31**

13. It will be necessary to seek Him that He may turn His face back toward Israel.

a. Principle of concealed and revealed.

**“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”**

**- Proverbs 25:2**

14. If we do seek Him, we will find Him.

**“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” – Matthew 7:7**

**“And you will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart.”**

**– Jeremiah 29:13**

15. There are times when it seems God is nowhere to be found – always there but concealed.
16. Verse 19-21: “So now write this song for yourselves...it shall be a testimony to them.”
  - a. Song is in the next chapter.
  - b. Will not be forgotten – hinting that Torah will never be forgotten completely.
  - c. There will always be potential for restoration when there is repentance.
17. One lamp of the menorah was to always remain kindled – picture of Israel as light.
  - a. The light might ebb low but there will always be a flame.
  - b. In the evening, menorah was kindled so that all branches burned.
  - c. Indicating that in the “evening” Israel will return to Him and will shine.
18. Elijah’s mission was to call Israel to return to the Torah.

**“Remember the Law (*torah*) of Moses, my servant, which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.” – Malachi 4:4-6**

19. Verse 24-26: Moses finished writing the words of the Torah and placed it by the Ark.
  - a. It is placed there as a constant witness to provoke Israel to repentance.
  - b. In 2 Kings 22 in days of Josiah, the Priest found the Book of the Law.
  - c. It prompted a time of repentance and revival.
20. Verse 26: That it was placed by the Ark was also to ensure that no one would successfully add to or take away from the Torah.
  - a. Even if people disobeyed or tried to misinterpret, His Word would remain.
  - b. Man would not be able to erase what was written – He watches over His Word.

**“So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**  
 – Isaiah 55:11

21. That the Word is placed at the side of the Ark – God’s throne on earth – is interesting.

**“ ‘What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him LORD, saying: The LORD said to my LORD, sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’?”**  
 – Matthew 22:42-44

**“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.” – Mark 16:19**

22. Verses 27-29: Moses warns them of their rebellion after he will die, knowing their tendencies even when he was with them – nevertheless, God intends to lead them into Canaan.
23. “Evil will befall you in the end of days.” – setting the stage for the return to the LORD.
  - a. The light to resurge – to turn our faces to Him that He will turn His face toward us.
  - b. In that day, Israel will begin to fulfill the mandate to be a light to the nations.