



ואתחנן *Va'etchanan* / And I Pleaded

[Deuteronomy 3.23—7.11](#) / [Isaiah 40.1—26](#) / [Acts 3—5](#)

טו באב *tu b'av* 15th of Av usually falls during this week. In Temple days unmarried girls would dress in simple white clothing, so that rich and poor were indistinguishable, and go dancing in the vineyards together. In 2009, **טו באב** fell on August 5th/6th. August 6th was the most intense lunar eclipse since 580 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar set up his image in the Temple after conquering Jerusalem in 586 BC.



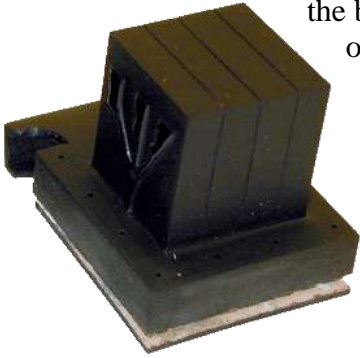
Moses' Last Sermons **משה** *Mosheh* Moses gives three sermons in the area of Mount Nebo, just before he dies and **ישראל** *Yisra'el* Israel crosses into the Land to take Jericho, their first battle.

Shema [Deuteronomy 6.4](#) is probably the most important prayer in the Tenach, what Christians call the Old Testament: "**שמע** *Shema* hear/listen/obey, **יהוה**: *YHVH* The LORD our God, **יהוה** is one." Since each Hebrew letter is a word picture, **שמע** has another meaning, made up of **שמ** *shem* name, as in **השם** *HaShem* the Name, a title for God, and **ע** *ayin* eye/see. So **שמע** can mean "See the Name." Unlike the Greek mindset, in which we can say we are listening but not bothering to obey, in the Hebrew mind the two are connected. When we listen to God's Word and obey it, we see the One who is the Word.

The Answer is "NO!" This portion starts in [3.23-26](#) with **משה** recounting **ואתחנן** with God to cross over the Jordan. God answered not only no, but don't even talk about it anymore. God always answers prayer. Sometimes "Yes," sometimes "Wait," and sometimes "No."

Live and Possess **משה** gives two reasons in [4.1-2](#) for Israel to obey the Law. 1) so they will live 2) so that they will possess the Land. A gift of a home is generous, a home plus land or a town more so. Here God is giving **ישראל** an entire country! *IF* they **שמע**.

תפילין [Deuteronomy 6.8](#) says to bind the **דברים** on our hands and to keep it between our eyes. This is literally done with **טוטפות** *totafot* bands/phylacteries/frontlets, [Exodus 13.16](#), [Deuteronomy 6.4-9](#), and [Deuteronomy 11.13-21](#). Jews wear **תפילין** *tefillin* phylacteries, worn on the left arm (closer to the heart) and the forehead.



In [Revelation 13.16-18](#), the beast forces everyone to wear his name/number on his or her right hand or forehead to buy and sell. Compare God's more generous offer in

[Isaiah 55.1](#). Many Christians think **ישוע** considers the Jews hypocrites for wearing

תפילין. But in [Matthew 23.5](#), **ישוע** criticizes the teachers of the Law and the

Pharisees not for wearing them, which **ישוע**

Himself almost certainly did, but for making their **תפילין** large and the tassels on their prayer shawls long. Like the **מזוזה**, the **תפילין** have a **ש** *sheen* which, when combined with strap knots tied in the shape of **ד** *dalet* and **י** *yod*, spell **שדי** *shaddai* Almighty (God).



Keeping Commandments In the context of Deuteronomy and especially while discussing something which seems as odd to Christians as the **מזוזה** and the **תפילין**, now is a good time to take another look at keeping the commandments. The Church often considers keeping the commandments legalistic (or “judaizing,” a crime developed about the time of Constantine and often punishable by death) at worst and unnecessary at best. Commandments are often considered chores. But God intends them as a way to bless us.

Believers may follow this growth of faith:

1. **Fire Insurance**—staying out of hell
2. In maturing, begin to see **Rewards**
3. The ultimate goal is
God's Law Written in My Heart

[Hebrews 8.8-12](#), quoting [Jeremiah 31.30-33](#), says the **תורה** *Torah* Law/Instruction written in our hearts *is* the New Covenant.

Judges All Over Again The Church tends to dismisses תורה as if, since ישוע fulfilled it, we don't need it anymore, even though ישוע says in [Matthew 5.17](#) that He did not abolish the Law or the Prophets. "That's Old Testament" and "We're not under Law, we're under Grace," are common sound bites. According to this reasoning, "We don't have to keep the Law. Except the Ten Commandments, of course. But not the 4th, about Sabbath. That one doesn't apply anymore. And we shouldn't have sexual relations with animals, either. I'm not sure where that is, but we need to keep that one, too. And there are a few others that *I think are important.*" Someone who tries to keep the Law is called a "legalist." Unless he or she is trying to keep pure in marriage, for example. That's called "faithful." Wearing a wedding ring to remember the 7th commandment is OK. Wearing a prayer shawl to remember all 613 commandments is not OK. Just like in the book of Judges, everyone does that which is right in his own eyes.



David asks and answers in [Psalm 119.9](#), "How can a young man keep his way pure? By שמר *shamar* keep/guard/observe/give heed according to your Word." In fact, David talks about the need to שמר the Law twenty-one times in Psalm 119 alone. David even says in verse [136](#) that he cries because of those who *don't* keep תורה!

When we שמר God's Law, the nations will recognize wisdom and understanding. The opposite is also true: when a nation is full of scoffers of God's Law, other nations recognize corruption.

Trying to keep תורה is almost always confused in the Church with trying to earn righteousness through obeying תורה. But ישוע makes an interesting point in [Luke 17.7-10](#). In that story, a servant must take care of his Master's needs before his own. When he has done everything he is supposed to do, *he does not get any thanks, because he is just a servant!* We who are פדה [padah](#) redeemed from sin by God's mercy are like that servant. Even if we keep the whole Law and never sin, all we would ever be able to say is, "***We are unworthy servants. We have only done our duty.***"



New Testament Support for Keeping the Law

- [Matthew 5.16](#) Let men see you perform good works.
- [Matthew 6.1](#) Perform good works, but don't let men see them.
- [Matthew 5.18-19](#) The smallest stroke of the pen of the Law will last longer than heaven and earth. Keep and teach even the least commandment.
- [Matthew 15.7-9](#), [Mark 7.9](#) יִשׂוּעַ rebukes the Pharisees and teachers of the Law for setting aside God's commandments in order to keep their own traditions.
- [Acts 10.34-35](#) Peter learns that God does not show favoritism but accepts everyone who fears Him and does what is right.
- [Romans 6.1-2](#) Stop sinning. We died to sin—how can we live in it any longer?
- [Hebrews 8.10](#) The New Covenant is God's Law in our minds and written on our hearts.
- [James 1.22-27](#) The one who continues in the perfect Law will be blessed. James then refers to [Deuteronomy 24.17,19,20](#) about caring for widows and orphans.
- [1 Peter 2.11-12](#) Abstain from sinful desires and live such good lives that God gets the glory.
- [Revelation 12.17](#) The dragon (Satan) makes war against those who 1) obey God's commands and 2) hold to the testimony of יִשׂוּעַ—not just believing the Gospel, but building obedience on that faith.
- [Revelation 14.12](#) Describes the patience of the saints who keep:
 - 1) the commandments of God
 - 2) the faith of יִשׂוּעַ.



The God Stalker A stalker is one who is infatuated with another and shows up unexpectedly. The one who is stalked doesn't feel loved because the attention is according to the stalker's wishes, not his or her own. If we make our own rules about how to approach God and ignore His commands, we become a God stalker.

In [Deuteronomy 7.7-12](#), משה says that יהוה chooses ישראל not because they are great in number, but because He loves them. In His love, He redeems them from Egypt. Those who love יהוה in return and keep His commandments, יהוה will love for a thousand generations. Those who hate יהוה He will destroy.



Were You There? In [Deuteronomy 4.9-13](#), משה reminds ישראל how they stood before God at Horeb/Sinai and saw the darkness, cloud, and fire. Most listening to משה at this point were children under 20 at Sinai, since everyone over their age died in the last 39 years, except Joshua and Caleb. Still, משה addresses them all as being at Sinai, listening to God. Since then, each generation of ישראל sees themselves as slaves in Egypt, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and receiving תורה at Sinai. Were you there too?

Idol Worship משה warns ישראל in [Deuteronomy 4.23-31](#) that after he dies and they enter the Land, they will turn to idols and God will scatter them among the nations. But if they repent, God will forgive. God is merciful and doesn't forget the covenant.

In [Revelation 9.20](#), even after six plagues, the survivors refuse to give up their idols and their sin. In America, we tend to shun idols of wood or stone, opting instead for idols of money, success, or pleasure. Anything of these can be an idol that keeps us from God.

Comfort, Comfort The Haphtarah portion for this Shabbat is [Isaiah 40.1-26](#), which begins, נחמו נחמו, עמי—יאמר אלהיכם, Comfort, Comfort, My people, says your God. The root of the first word is נחם [nacham](#) comfort (also the root for the prophet נחום [Nachum](#) Nahum). So this day, the first Shabbat after תשעה באב *tisha b'av* the 9th of Av, is called שבת נחמו, *Shabbat Nachamu*, Sabbath of Comfort. This Haphtarah portion begins a series of seven Shabbat Haphtarah portions of comfort for ישראל in their sufferings.

Eternal נהם [Isaiah 40.3](#), a voice of one crying in the wilderness, is quoted in [Matthew 3.1-3](#) at the arrival of John the Baptist. John says later in Matthew 3 that his mission is to prepare the way for the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire—**ישוע**, the One who gives *eternal נהם*. [Isaiah 40.6-8](#) is quoted in [1 Peter 1.22-25](#). All men perish, but the Word of God stands forever.



Here is Your God! Compare these excerpts:

[Isaiah 40.9-11](#)

You who bring good tidings to Zion,
 go up on a high mountain.
 You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem,
 lift up your voice with a shout,
 lift it up, do not be afraid;
 say to the towns of Judah,
 "Here is your God!"

See, the Sovereign **יהוה** comes with power,
 and His arm rules for Him.
 See, His reward is with Him,
 and His recompense accompanies Him.

He tends his flock like a shepherd:
 He gathers the lambs in his arms
 and carries them close to his heart;
 he gently leads those that have young.

[Revelation 22.11-20](#)

"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!"
 And let him who hears say, "Come!"

He who testifies to these things says,
 "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

God's Hope for Us In [Deuteronomy 5.25](#), God tells Moses, “Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear Me, and keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!”

God's promise is that if we keep His commandments, we and our children will be blessed. Even if we were to keep the whole Law, however, all we could say would be, “We are unworthy servants. We have only done our duty.”

The goal of the New Covenant is to have this Law placed in our minds and written on our hearts. But since we always fail in keeping it, God sends His Son to keep the Law for us, so that we can be righteous in Him, [2 Corinthians 5.21](#).



Glossary, in order of appearance:

ואתחנן	<i>va'etchanan</i>	and I pleaded
טו באב	<i>tu b'av</i>	15 th of Av
משה	<i>Mosheh</i>	Moses
ישראל	<i>Yisra'el</i>	Israel
שמע	<i>shema</i>	hear/listen/obey “See the Name”
יהוה	<i>YHVH</i>	The LORD/God's Holy Name
שמ	<i>shem</i>	name
השמ	<i>HaShem</i>	the Name
ע	<i>ayin</i>	eye/see
ישוע	<i>Yeshua</i>	Jesus/salvation
דברים	<i>devarim</i>	words
מזוזה	<i>mezuzah</i>	scroll in case posted on doorways
טוטפות	<i>totafot</i>	bands/phylacteries/frontlets
תפילין	<i>tefillin</i>	phylacteries
ש	<i>sheen</i>	
ד	<i>dalet</i>	
י	<i>yod</i>	
שדי	<i>shaddai</i>	Almighty (God)
תורה	<i>Torah</i>	Law/Instruction
שמר	<i>shamar</i>	keep/guard/observe/give heed
פדה	<i>padah</i>	redeemed
נחמו נחמו, עמי—יאמר אלהיכם		
Comfort, Comfort, My people, says your God		
נחם	<i>nacham</i>	comfort
נחום	<i>Nachum</i>	Nahum
תשעה באב	<i>tisha b'av</i>	9 th of Av
שבת נחמו	<i>Shabbat Nachamu</i>	Sabbath of Comfort