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MINISTRIES

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Parashah Points: Vayelech - God’s Presence

Welcome to another episode of Parashah Points—short thoughts from the weekly Torah Portion.

This week’s Parashah Point comes from Vayelech, which is Hebrew for “He went,” and it goes from Deuteronomy 31:1 to Deuteronomy 31:30.

In this Torah portion, Moses encourages Israel to be “strong and courageous” and reminds them that God will be with them as they enter the Promised Land. Moses also instructs Israel to read the Torah to all the people every seven years. The Torah Portion concludes with God telling Moses that he would soon die, so God instructs Moses to write a song as a witness against the people of Israel.

There’s a lot we can talk about in this Torah Portion. Today we’re going to talk about God’s presence.

Deuteronomy 31:8

It is the Lord [YHWH] who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”

In this section of Scripture, God twice promises not to leave nor forsake his people (31:6, 8). This promise is meant to comfort the people so they will “*not fear or be dismayed.*”

This means that God’s presence alleviates fear and dismay. His presence is our joy and delight (Psalm 16:11). The climax of the entire story of Scripture is that God will dwell among his people in fullness (Revelation 21:3). How wonderful it is to experience God’s presence even now, a foretaste of the eternal joy we will have in the world to come!

But this promise of God’s presence among the people is conditioned upon their faithfulness to the covenant. Just a few verses later, God tells of Israel’s eventual rebellion, which results in God forsaking them and hiding his face from them (31:17).

The word “face” is *paniyim*—literally “presence.” It’s the same word used in Genesis 3:8, which speaks of Adam and Eve hiding themselves from “the presence of YHWH” because of their sin. Adam and Eve

were exiled from the Garden in which God's presence dwelled. As we see all throughout Scripture, God's presence will not dwell among those who rebel against him.

So, sin caused God to hide his face—his presence—from us, which is a real tragedy. As Tim Hegg writes:

If the presence of God is a relationship wherein God reveals Himself more and more to those He loves, then the concealment of His presence is nothing less than *a lack of revelation of God's own character and actions*. God's presence is hidden from us when He no longer reveals to us who He is and what He is doing. In such a state, we are unable to grow in our knowledge of God, and therefore our relationship with Him ceases to be one of continuing communion and friendship, and becomes a distant, historical fact without any present reality. In the same way that we may remember eating, unless we continue to eat in the present, our bodies will die from lack of nutrition. So it is with the presence of God—the need for constant fellowship and growth in knowing Him is essential to our spiritual well-being—to life itself.

-Tim Hegg, *Studies in the Torah: Deuteronomy* (Tacoma, WA: TorahResource, 2016), pp. 198-199

What is the remedy for having a lack of God's presence in our lives due to our sin? It's simple: repent and receive. Repent of your sins and receive God's revelation of himself that he has graciously provided us in the words of Scripture. As you draw near to God, he will draw near to you (James 4:8).

Thank you for joining us for another Parashah Point!

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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