



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"When God Says 'No' – Then What?"

Va'etchanan (וַאֲעֲתָנָן) "And I Pleaded [for favor]"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts: Deut. 3:23-4:40; Numbers 20

There's something painfully human and beautifully honest about Moses' plea in this week's portion, *Va'Etchanan*—"And I pleaded." Moses, the faithful servant of ADONAI, who had led Israel for 40 years, who had interceded for them, who had spoken to God face to face, now stands on the edge of the promise... but he doesn't get to enter. He pleads with God, "Please, let me go over," and God says, "Enough. The answer is no."

What do we do when we plead with God and the answer is no? When our hopes don't match His instructions? When our faithfulness doesn't yield the outcome we expected? Moses shows us how to respond—not with resentment, but with obedience, with legacy, and with renewed commitment to the next generation. *When God says no, then what?*

1. WHEN GOD SAYS NO, DON'T GET STUCK IN WHAT COULD'VE BEEN

Moses' words in *Deuteronomy 3:23-25* are deeply moving: *"I pleaded with ADONAI... Please, let me cross over."* But God says no—not because Moses wasn't loved, but because God's the LORD said so. We have to trust even when we don't understand. It's hard not to feel Moses' pain. He even blames the people, saying, *"The LORD was angry with me because of you"* (v. 26). But we know from *Numbers 20* that Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock instead of speaking to it. Still, we get it. He's human. He's hurt. And many of us have stood where Moses stood—on the edge of a dream that won't come true.

But here's what's powerful: Moses doesn't let that no define him. He doesn't derail. He climbs the mountain, he sees the land, and he turns to bless and commission Joshua. In other words, he moves forward. When God says no, we can either wallow in the wilderness of regret, or we can trust that His no is part of a greater yes—one we may not fully see yet.

2 When God Says No, Cling to What He Has Said Yes To

Moses turns from his own disappointment to urgently plead with Israel to cling to God's instructions. In *Deuteronomy 4:1-2*, he says: *"Now, O Israel, listen... so that you may live."* He reminds them not to add to or subtract from God's word—not to mold it to their comfort, but to obey it for their survival. And in verse 4, he gives this anchor: *"But you who held tight to ADONAI... are alive today—all of you."*

This is a call to cling. When your story doesn't go the way you imagined, don't let go of what you *do* know: God's character, His covenant, His commandments. Moses urges Israel to remain welded to the LORD—to walk in His ways, not just for themselves, but so that the nations will see their wisdom and know that ADONAI is near. God's "no" doesn't cancel His nearness. In fact, it's in our disappointment that He often draws even closer.

3. WHEN GOD SAYS NO, PASS ON WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

One of the most striking parts of this passage is Moses' repeated call to remember and to teach. *"Only be watchful... and teach them to your children and your children's children"* (Deut. 4:9). Over and over he repeats, "Be watchful! Shema!" Moses may not get to enter the land, but he pours his soul into preparing the next generation to thrive there. He knows his time is up, but his impact is not.

Sometimes, the most significant thing we do won't be stepping into the promise ourselves—but preparing others to do so. Moses, though disappointed, becomes a legacy builder. He commands Israel to pass on what they've seen and heard: the fire, the voice, the covenant. **"You were shown,"* he says, *"so that you might know... and take it to heart"* (4:35–39). When God says no, He's not shutting you down—He may be setting you up to raise up others who will carry the torch even further.

CONCLUSION

Moses shows us the way forward when our dreams die: trust, obey, and invest in what outlives us. Whether God has said no to a position, a healing, a breakthrough—or even just a hope—you're not abandoned. *"For ADONAI your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the covenant"* (Deut. 4:31). That promise is for you today.

So come to Him. Lay your disappointments before the LORD. Let go of what could've been, and take hold of what He's calling you to do now. It's not too late to obey, to teach, to leave a legacy. His instructions are still your life. His covenant still stands. And His heart is still near.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of a time when God said "no" to something you deeply wanted? How did you respond?
2. What are some ways we can "cling" to the LORD in difficult seasons?
3. Why do you think God was so strict with Moses about obedience?
4. What are you doing to pass on your faith to the next generation?
5. How can we encourage each other to keep trusting God when we're walking through seasons of disappointment or unanswered prayer?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Abba, thank You for being merciful—even when You say no. Thank You for not abandoning us when our hearts are hurting. Help us to trust Your wisdom, obey Your instructions, and cling to You with all our hearts. Forgive us for the times we've let disappointment distance us from You. Strengthen us to live for You fully, and to pass on Your truth to the next generation. We choose today to say yes to You, even when You've said no to us.

In Yeshua's name, Amen.