

Names

Cohanim - priests
Kefa - Peter
Moshe - Moses
Shaul - Paul
Shavuot - Pentecost, a spring feast of God
Yeshua - Jesus (in Hebrew it means "Salvation")
Yěhōváh - God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
Yochanan - John

Terms

#50 – the 50th portion
Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
High Holy Days – Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, & Sukkot
Parashah – (portion) one of 54 portions of the Torah
Shabbat – the 7th day of the week; we are to rest
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

The Torah portion for this week is Ki Tavo and means, "when you enter." We teach the Torah portions because it was instituted by God's holy prophets, perhaps Nehemiah. Yeshua would have taught from the portions and that is what He was doing in Luke 4:21. Gentiles are to also learn and keep the Torah. It says about the Gentiles in Acts 15:21 NKJV, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." The context there in Acts is about the Gentiles coming to believe in the true God. The leader of the early Messianic church expected the new believers in Yeshua both Jew and Gentile to go to synagogue and keep the Torah.

Tavo comes from the Hebrew word Bo which means to come. Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who **comes** in the name of the LORD!" He is quoting Psalm 118:26 which uses יהוה, Yĕhōváh, for LORD. It is interesting that in these times that the name of Yĕhōváh is being taught again. It is not true that we are not to use God's true name. The Bible says that this is his name forever. LORD in all caps in Exodus 3:15 is Yĕhōváh, יהוה. Referring to the name Yehovah in the Bible it says in Exodus 3:15 NKJV, "The LORD God of your fathers ... this is My name forever." Yĕhōváh is used over 6,000 times in the Bible! Most certainly we should be using God's true name at appropriate times.

We have a choice in life. Are we going to pass on the truths of the Bible or are we going to pass on our own ideas?

The first step for anyone who wants to follow the true God and creator of all that exists is to begin to learn and apply God's commandments and have a deep desire to make learning about God and the truths we need for life supreme.

Jeremiah 9:23-24 NKJV says,

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising

lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth." For in these I delight,' says the LORD.

Wise people are often drawn to learning and growing in knowledge but most of all, wise people need the wisdom of God through God's commandments. Knowledge and information are not enough to have a satisfying and good life. Some knowledgeable people have turned out to be murderous and cruel. Strong and imposing people often think they do not need to be afraid and are proud of the prowess. Might does not necessarily make a person right. It sometimes makes them cruel dictators. It is the ways of an all-knowing God that set us in the right direction in life. Some think that wealth is power and that by achieving that they can influence others. What are they teaching others? They may help others, but some have used wealth and ambition to the detriment of society. Some of the most important people to the planet have been spiritually minded people who have changed whole societies for the better through their dedication to God. Just about everyone in the world knows about Yeshua (Jesus) and millions have benefitted from His encouragement to follow God's commandments. Get to know the loving and good God and His "right" ways.

Perhaps the greatest secret in the world is that God gave us His commandments to help us, they our for our good. Deuteronomy 10:12-13 NKJV says, Fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good."

God's law is truth. God is right and will always be right. Psalms 119:142 "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth." We need God's truths for life they will always be true. They are from a good and loving God. Psalms 26:3 NKJV says, "For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth. God's ways can preserve us because they are good and are truth. Psalms 40:11 NKJV says, "Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O LORD; let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me." We need to apply God's truths to our life.

There are different ways that we present ourselves. Is God present in our actions? We have a personal life that is a combination of all that we do. Some go to school, some have jobs to do, we all have necessary chores that we do in order to take care of ourselves and even more so when we become an adult. There is a lot to life.

We can either bring God's goodness into our lives or make other priorities in life. As a parent, I communicated to my children the importance of God, of being good to each other, the importance of praying, learning, and growing spiritually.

I asked my children to try to make our home a home of peace and goodness through doing what is right. I communicated to them that we have a choice about how we relate and treat each other. If we do what is right, our home could be a satisfying, peaceful, and delightful place to live. I gave them the option of bringing goodness into our home, or stress and dissatisfaction. I challenged them to follow God's commandments and do what is right instead

of problems and bad attitudes. It is my hope they learned that they could choose to have that kind of life through God's good commandments and the Holy Spirit given by the Messiah Yeshua.

Let's talk about some of the things that God can give us through His commandments. God's commandments give us strength in life. We do not have to make up life each and every day, but we have a good standard to live by, so we do not need to guess what is best. Having a good standard can give us peace in life. Psalms 29:11 NKJV says, "The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace."

Since we know that God is good and His commandments are "right and good," we know that by following God's good ways we are doing good. Some think they are following good by someone's idea of what they think is good. I remember in the 1970s that the media was saying that an ice age was coming, and the northern United States would become uninhabitable. Now people are saying that the earth is warming, and we must do something about it. What is it? Is the ice age coming or is the world warming? I understand that a great number of scientists say that there is no reason for alarm. Why not trust in something sure and desire to keep God's good commandments first and foremost. Proverbs 11:23 NKJV says, "The desire of the righteous is only good."

People are often filled with their own ways. Being filled with God's ways leads to a more satisfying life. Proverbs 14:14 NKJV says, "The backslider in heart will be filled with his own ways, but a good man will be satisfied from above." The word "backslider" is the Hebrew word for turning away. When people turn away from God and His commandments, they must make up what they think is right or good instead of God's good and satisfying ways.

God's commandments put us on the right path in life. When we look back on our lives will we feel fulfilled for being a good person or an evil person? Knowing that we have hurt others because of our sin cannot be called satisfying. Some people have become deluded into thinking that their evil is okay or even good. Doing what is "right and good" assures us of having joy for living in the truth. Psalms 16:11 NKJV says, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

When we do what is "right and good" we can be happy and have joy about what we do. Psalms 16:9 NKJV says, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." We can have hope for our future in life and also for a future in the eternal kingdom of God which is for those who are wise enough to follow God and His commandments.

Daniel 12:2-3 NKJV says,

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

<u>Do not set your goals merely on an earthly empire. Set your central goals in life on spiritual things.</u>

Many people seem to think that learning information is what sets us apart in life. Parents often communicate success as being able to take care of ourselves and often think that our examples will be picked up automatically by our children. My uncle worked on nuclear reactors and was a meticulous and hard-working individual. Does that mean that his children will automatically be able to work on nuclear reactors? Our examples are not enough. We most of all need to communicate our spiritual values on a frequent basis and live out those spiritual values.

I knew of someone who could not stand learning and growing spiritually but did it anyway. What was he communicating to his children, his wife, his friends, and those at synagogue? Did he have a proper attitude towards his spirituality? It seems to me that he did not value the things of God but perhaps only wanted to pass a sense of belonging on to his children. A lot of parents are like that. They want their children to succeed at school, to relate properly to culture, to have attitudes that will make them successful, and to have a good life. Little do these people realize that they need truth, they need to have a good spiritual attitude, and they to keep God's commandments for a fully successful and good life.

1 Kings 2:2-3 NKJV says, Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn.

How do we prove ourselves as a true man or woman? Some think it is worldly success, some think it is fame or popularity. The Bible tells us to be strong spiritually. A real man is a strong spiritual man. A real woman is a strong spiritual woman. God's ways are intended to help us be who we are supposed to be. Psalms 103:17-18 NKJV says, "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, and His righteousness to children's children, to such as keep His covenant, and to those who remember His commandments to do them."

Strong's says that covenant can mean alliance. We are aligning ourselves with God. In other words, it means we make an agreement to believe in and follow God. Will we agree to follow God and His commandments? Some make a theology out of the word covenant. When they read the word covenant, they think of it as mankind having an evolution of relationship with God. They think that mankind did not know much about God at the beginning and then God gave mankind the law. Then God gave mankind grace when Yeshua came, and some think they have arrived because they have the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has always been a God of grace and has given mankind his favor.

Mankind was perfect in the beginning and then began doing things their own way. God gave Noah and his family grace because Noah did what was right. Genesis 6:8 NKJV says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Noah followed God's commandments. Genesis 6:9 NKJV says, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." Also, God has always given mankind grace. Psalms 84:11 NKJV says, "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD will give grace and glory; no good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."

Doing what is right according to God is to keep His commandments. Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "Diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good." That is why Abraham was righteous, he did what was right. Genesis 26:5 NKJV says, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." It says here that Abraham knew the law and followed the law. The law was passed down to the early believers like Noah until it was written down.

Those who believe in God and keep His commandments are in the line of believers like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, King David, the faithful of Israel, and the faithful who follow the Messiah Yeshua with the help of the law and the Holy Spirit. Yeshua said in John 14:15-17 NKJV, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth." The Holy Spirit is another helper, and it does not mean that you have arrived spiritually. Yeshua said he will reject those who do not follow the law. Matthew 7:23 NKJV says, "I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" It says in 1 John 3:4 NKJV, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Those who are not following the law are living in sin. We need to hear this often because of false teaching. It is not just by faith as some say (also see James 2:18-20).

As we engage spiritually in life, we will often engage well with the mundane things of life, and have a deeper sense of who we are and what we need in life. It is as though God touches our life in a multiplicity of ways that we could have never imagined. My uncle who worked on nuclear reactors had a strong spiritual conviction in life and perhaps because of that, he was able to help develop the usability and capability of nuclear reactors at the inception of their use in several ways. He told me that one of the last things he did for NASA was to take apart a nuclear reactor that he had put together for cancer research. It gave him great satisfaction that he was able to be part of that project. Anytime I talked to him, he always made it a point to let me know that his spiritual life was the most important thing in his life.

When we follow God's commandments we are following God's directions for life. Following God will give us satisfaction in life. Isaiah 58:11 NKJV says, "The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail." God satisfies in life physically and spiritually. Psalms 107:9 NKJV says, "For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness." Those who have hope in Yehovah will be strengthened. Isaiah 40:31 NKJV says, "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." Following God will help us to rise up in life, is renewing so we do not weary in life. We not only experience goodness because we follow truth, it is renewing and satisfying to know that God's commandments are such a blessing and a help in life. Deuteronomy 6:24 NKJV says, "And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us."

We literally experience the goodness of God when we trust in God's commandments. God

always has good intentions for mankind. We just need to begin trusting in Him. Psalms 34:8 NKJV says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!"

Torah Study

After Israel came into the land that God provided for them, they were to present their first fruit to the Cohen (priest) at the place where God chose to place His name and recite a message of humility; the people were to have joy for what God has given them. We too need to be mindful that God is over all and that He provides for us. Every time I pray for my food, I am reminded that God provided for us. Deuteronomy 8:10 NKJV says, "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you."

We often read right over the scriptures on the first fruit without thinking; God's people are to make themselves humble before God. We are to confess that we are a pagan Aramean. It teaches us that we were all at one time sinful people. That was our heritage. I remember my dad reciting that scripture about us being Aramean; it was quite startling for me. "We are what?!" It is about our ancestors originally being sinful idolaters and not about our victory over Laban as some say. It teaches us to be a humble people.

Shaul talks about humility in Romans 3:10 NKJV; "There is none righteous, no, not one." He is quoting Psalms 14:1-3 NKJV where it says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one."

As we can see, Psalms 14:1-3 is talking about someone who does not believe in God. Shaul uses these verses because it is Jewish practice to be humble. In this case, Shaul is talking about being humble enough to accept the help of the Holy Spirit. Those reading his letter would have understood this. Most people quoting this verse do not share the true context of this verse because they do not understand how to read the Bible in its true context. Shaul means in Romans 3:10 that although we work at doing what is right, we know intuitively that we still make mistakes and sin.

Some people flippantly use Shaul's scripture in Romans 3:10 to say we can do nothing good. That is ridiculous and not true; The Bible says in Genesis 1:31 NKJV, "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." Their "nothing good" man-made philosophy is a non-biblical philosophy that they apply to God's word. They are practicing self-abasement which is not biblical. Some religions practice things like whipping themselves or hurting themselves; that is wrong. God asks us to do what is right and good, but we still sin at times. We need to be humble enough to accept that. Humility is to be part of our thinking.

God brought Israel out of Egypt so they could do what is "right and good." Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is **right**

and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you." They could actually do what is good the Bible says and so can we. When I say we are to do what is "right and good," I am actually quoting scripture.

God also helps us to live right, to be righteous, through the help of the Holy Spirit. We are given the Holy Spirit through the Messiah Yeshua to help us live holy lives. If we follow God's commandments with the help of the Holy Spirit, some day we will be part of His future eternal kingdom. Hebrews 12:14 says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

The portion continues; after they presented their first fruit, they were to have joy in what Yĕhōváh had given them. They were also to set aside every 3rd year a tenth for the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows; after they did that, they were to say a prayer and ask for a blessing from God. They were to give a little over 10% every year. On the 3rd and 6th years they were to give to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows. The other years except for the 7th year they took their giving to Jerusalem.

Every 7th year the land was to rest, and debts were forgiven, see Exodus 23:10-11 and also Deuteronomy Chapter 15. People were to share with others who had need. The shmitah year of course poses a problem for those who need income and food in the 7th year. Farmers now rotate their crops and leave some of their land fallow and therefore give their land rest. Not leaving land fallow makes the land barren and unable to grow anything. Perhaps this is why God had them do this. Some Jews follow a complex concept of shmitah; one of the things they do is to only buy from Gentiles on the 7th year. God's commands were never intended to be complex.

There is a lot that can be talked about regarding the shmitah year. Canceling all kinds of debt could make it impossible for a person to own a house because it would call for full payment within 7 years. That is because all debt then becomes relative to the 7-year shmitah. Owning a house and making payments is considered an asset and not so much a debt. So, it does not apply to the shmitah year. Perhaps only incurring other debt to last over 7 years would be an applied practice for the law of shmitah. Certainly, having good foresight and careful money management would be a good way to apply shmitah. Setting proper borrowing limits would enable people to keep a short-term clean slate financially.

Obviously, lenders are not practicing proper borrowing limits, and the individual would need to take charge of their own limits. Taking some extra time off on the shmitah year could be a way to observe the resting of the land, but the commandment is not a rest from work; the land is at rest. Most certainly, rotating crops would be a proper application of the practice of shmitah. We should not overthink this commandment and make it convoluted in practice. We do not live in an all-farming society anymore as they did. Farmers can find other ways to provide for themselves in a year the land is at rest. We call this diversifying.

This portion goes on to say, by agreeing to obey God's commands and be holy, God would make them His treasured people. This is often mentioned in the Old Testament portion (see Exodus 9:5; Deuteronomy 7:6, 14:2, 26:18; and Psalms 135:4) and it is also quoted in 1 Peter 2:9.

Therefore, Messianic believers are also God's treasured people when we obey God's commandments. They were to write the Torah on stones on Mount Ebal after they crossed over, set up an altar, make offerings, and rejoice.

After they crossed over to the promised land, curses were to be given from Mount Ebal and blessings from Mount Gerizim. Then Moshe told them cursed is anyone who makes an idol, mistreats their parents, moves a landmark, mistreats the blind, or pervert's justice. Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with his father's wife, or an animal, or his sister. Cursed is anyone who takes a bribe or does not agree to the Torah.

This portion talks about the curses for not doing what God commands and the blessings for obeying God. We also can be cursed if we are not obeying God's commandments. Those who are willfully sinning can incur consequences for their sin which includes sickness, losses of various kinds, and God releasing His protection over them. Continuing intentional sin will also result in the loss of eternal life.

Understand though that Yeshua said we will all experience trouble; it is wrong to think that just because someone is having trouble that it is something that they are doing that is causing that. Yeshua said in John 16:33 NKJV, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." We know that living godly and good lives blesses our lives even though we all may suffer troubles at times.

We all suffer, but doing wrong often brings more troubles. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) also associates curses with sin in the New Testament portion. Romans 1:26-27 NKJV says, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." Shaul says they received a penalty for their sin. He says it was something that believers saw happening to those who were committing these sins. Even in our modern society, 25% of homosexuals have the deadly disease AIDS. As of this writing, 31 million people have died from AIDS; most of them participants in sexual sin. They have brought this terrible consequence on themselves.

If they obey the law, God will bless them wherever they are; He will bless them in conception, against their enemies, with their stored food, their livestock, and rain. They will be an exalted nation. If they disobey God's commands, they will lose these benefits and they will be struck with sickness, plague, war, loss, and blight; they will be destroyed and they will be scattered. The people respond and affirm various commandments in this portion. Notice that the 10 commandments are not all of God's commandments. Moshe closes by relating about their time in the desert and by telling them that they should obey God's commands so they will prosper.

The Haftarah for Ki Tavo is Isaiah 60:1-22. This Haftarah portion says that the nations will see the glory of God through Israel and that the nations will acknowledge that and bless Israel. The nations that do not will perish. It says shalom will be Israel's leader, they will do what is right, and God will be their light.

This portion is talking about a future time when the Prince of Peace (namely Sar Shalom) will be their leader (the Prince of Peace or Sar Shalom is another name attributed to Yeshua the Messiah). Likewise in Revelation 22:5, Yochanan says that God will be their light in the new Jerusalem.

Even in the present we see God's blessings on those who do what is right and good. Someday those who love God will be with Him forever and experience God's goodness and blessings forever.

Isaiah 60:1-3 CJB from the Haftarah says, "Arise, shine [Yerushalayim], for your light has come, the glory of ADONAI has risen over you. For although darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples; on you ADONAI will rise; over you will be seen his glory. Nations will go toward your light and kings toward your shining splendor."

When I read this, I sometimes think about the pillars of light that we can see sometimes coming down from the sky. I enjoy looking at amazing sunsets, clouds, and beautiful skies. The pillars of light sometimes give me thoughts of God's divine light coming down from heaven. It is a nice spiritual picture, isn't it? Do we actually allow God's light into our lives? That is what is important.

For fun, what kinds of things in the natural can sometimes make us think about God?

Pillars of light – God giving His light from heaven.

A rainbow – God's promises are true.

A dry field – life without God is barren and difficult.

A beautiful sunset – in the end, we will be blessed for being faithful to God.

Flowers – God's creation is beautiful and amazing.

What other things in nature might relate to God or make you think about God?

Commandments, Implied Commandments, Permissions, and other Concepts. (We can also understand commandments are being implied from other scriptures in the Bible. There are other possible concepts than what is shared here.)

We are to recite a statement of humility on the Day of Firstfruits. We are to declare to God we have given the proper tithes (10 %) to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow on the 3rd and 6th years and the Temple on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years. The Temple is not standing so we should give to those who teach and lead us, to our congregation, to teaching organizations that are helping us, and the like instead of the Temple. We should keep track of our giving so that it reflects the above. Deuteronomy 26:2-10, 13.

We are not to eat of the tithes in Jerusalem while in mourning or while unclean. Deuteronomy 26:14.

We are to be holy. Deuteronomy 28:9

In closing, let us say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:

We need to explain why we use God's real name in the Aaronic blessing. Some believe we are not supposed to use God's name, but they are mistaken. ADONAI or LORD in all caps in our Bibles is the name for God which is pronounced Yĕ-hō-váh. Yĕ-hō-váh is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament portion. Since God's name is used that many times, it is evident that we should be using His real name.

According to Exodus 3:15, Yě-hō-váh is God's true name forever. Of course, we should use His name with respect. Yě-hō-váh is an acronym formed from the Hebrew verb hayah. Yě-hō-váh means, He existed, He exists, and He will exist. I want to honor God's name. Won't you also honor God's and use His true name with respect at times. The ancient rabbis say that Yě-hō-váh (יְהוָה) is God's name. 2,363 different manuscripts of the Bible point God's name as Yě-hō-váh, once as Yě-hō-věh, never as Yahweh. The church Fathers said God's name is Yě-hō-váh.

Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!" Yeshua is quoting Psalm 118:26; the word "LORD" in that verse in Psalms is Yĕ-hō-váh (יְהוָה). Numbers 6:27 says we are to put God's name on His people.

Let's say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26: יְבֶּרֶכְךְ יְהֹוָה, וְיִשְׁמְרֶךְּ יָבֶרֶכְךְ יְהוָֹה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךְ, וְיחֻנֶּךְ יָאֵא יִהוָֹה פָּנָיו אֵלֵיךְ, וַיְשָׁם לְךְּ שַׁלוֹם יָשַׂא יִהוַֹה פָּנַיו אֵלֵיךְ, וַיְשַׁם לְךְּ שַׁלוֹם

Yĕ-hō-váh bless you and keep you. Yĕ-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. Yĕ-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.