



#46 Ekev Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25
Torah Teaching
By Moshe Schwab

Names

Kefa – Peter
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Yeshua – Jesus
Ya'akov – James
Yĕhōváh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
Yochanan – John

Terms

#46 – the 46th portion for the year
Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
Mezuzot – plural of mezuzah; it contains scripture
Parashah – (portion) one of 54 portions of the Torah
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

The Torah portion for today is Ekev and means, "because" or "if" (pertaining to "if you follow"). This Torah portion begins with Moshe telling Israel that God will bless them for being faithful to His commands. Isn't that great! God blesses us with His good commandments that give us wisdom and understanding (see Deuteronomy 4:6), and also gives us special blessings for keeping His commandments. I would like to begin by encouraging you to stay faithful.

Look to God always. Avoid spiritists, palm readers, tarot card readers, mind reading, fortune tellers, and other so called curious arts that are often devil spirit backed. The Bible says there is devil, and the devil tries to influence us to follow false signs and to sin. James 4:7-8 NKJV says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."

Watch out for manufactured signs and wonders. Sometimes we only trust in what mankind can do, but we should also trust in God and pray to God. And also, like I just said, the devil will try to get people off track and get them to believe in things like spiritualism. It leads people away from God's love and power and to seek various false signs and the paranormal. Anything that takes the place of God breaks the 1st commandment of the 10 Commandments and anything physical that takes the place of God breaks the 2nd commandment. Stay in the truth of God's word where we find understanding for life and light for life. Believe in the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a wonderful gift from God in this Messianic age. Rely on God's help and trust in God.

Be strongly attached to spiritual truths and to living them out. As we have discussed many times. People think the way to life is by just learning facts, but that does not make you connected to God or a person who does what is "right and good." When you learn facts from observation and deduction, you are learning things that anyone can come up with, and we do not need God for that. God gave us minds to use for that.

Joshua 1:7-8 NKJV says,

Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right

hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Find ways that help you establish your spiritual life, be faithful. What are some of the ways that you can do that? Pray every day and talk to God and acknowledge God each and every day. Read the Bible and understand the Bible and learn how the Jewish roots of our faith effects the context of its understanding. The Israelites were in the process of trying to follow God. Some did, but others failed. This scripture tells us that it was not all who failed (24,000 failed, see Numbers 25:9) out of the some 2 million who were in the desert. Deuteronomy 4:3-4 NKJV says, "Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you."

It seems evil can have a great influence on society and even cause society to break down and deteriorate. Do not be one of those who do evil and who do not follow God's commandments. The Bible talks about their failures in the Old Testament portion to teach us to not make the same mistakes. The fact that it contains their failures lends to its credibility. Let's begin talking about the Messianic gift of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Holy Spirit can be exciting. The Holy Spirit is powerful when compared to the efforts of man. Yeshua the Messiah said that the Holy Spirit that He gives to believers is powerful and useful. Acts 1:8 NKJV says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." Much of Christianity denies the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet Yeshua said the opposite. Many say that the Holy Spirit only acts as our conscience. The Holy Spirit is much more than that.

The Holy Spirit can give us words from God in the form of encouragement, comfort, prophecy, inspiration, faith, information, how to do things, warnings, in the moment inspiration, ideas, peace, purpose, and direction in life. The Holy Spirit can empower our lives by producing miracles, healings, and special abilities like empowered teaching or through the power of the prophetic. Let's read about a few of those things from the scriptures.

Romans 12:4-8 NKJV says,

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

These spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (*charisma* in the Greek) are empowered by God. They are not just our abilities. Some work in conjunction with our abilities, but others like prophecy have nothing to do with our ability to discern but are words that come from God. Trying to develop prophecy on our own is not prophecy and is wrong because they are our words and not God's words.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 NKJV says,

"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one."

Notice how it says that these evidences that are called gifts in Romans are given to every believer. Some of us may use these gifts only occasionally, but some of them can be available as much as we want. For example, Speaking in Tongues is a supernatural prayer language that seems to be available to anyone who seeks it and can be done at will. Shaul tells us to desire God's spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts."

You can read more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in our Divine Healing Prayer Class at: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class>.

These are some other common spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:11-12 NKJV says,

"He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry."

Note that apostles (which means sent one) is a common spiritual gift so there have probably been millions of sent ones over the millenia. Some say that their church is based on the apostles. There were apostles, sent ones, in the Old Testament portion, for example Moshe, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. They were also prophets who gave us the scriptures. So, this scripture is talking about them. Ephesians 2:19-20 says, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Notice how it says they were no longer foreigners but have become citizens with the holy ones (the saints). Namely, they have become part of the citizen believers of Israel. The foundation of our faith came from those who gave us the scriptures before the Messiah came and also through the Messiah Yeshua and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

We should remember that Jewish lists are not intended to be complete lists. Lists in the Bible are intended to be representative lists, so there are more gifts that the Holy Spirit can empower. In the Old Testament portion, God even empowered people's work. That is why we have different lists associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We also have different lists stating that

certain sins will keep us out of God's future kingdom. You should learn what they are! They are also not intended to be complete lists.

It has been my experience that God gives people the Holy Spirit despite our weaknesses. New believers can receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but they still need a lot of spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit should be a catalyst to help us follow God's commandments, but some ignore the goodness of God's commandments and do not repent of their sin.

Matthew 7:21-23 NKJV says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

Yeshua will reject those who do not keep the law it says. Lawlessness in this verse is the Greek word used by the ancient rabbis that means not to keep the Torah, God's Old Testament portion commandments. Those who do not keep the Torah are in danger of not making it into God's future kingdom. I would do all that I can to make sure I keep all God's pertinent commands. Yeshua must be talking about believers who continue to live in sin in Matthew Chapter 7, and it sounds like Yeshua is talking about those who are operating the powers associated with the Holy Spirit.

Those that continue to live in sin is one of the reasons some people reject the Holy Spirit. Yeshua said in Matthew 18:6 NKJV, "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Those who are not teaching people to keep God's commandments will be judged accordingly.

God's goodness should lead us to change our lives. Sadly, those who do not do what is righteous (namely, do what is right) and do not keep God's commandments will end up in the lake of fire (see 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, and Revelation 21:8). It is very plain in the New Testament portion. Some though twist the scriptures to their own destruction, namely their eternal destruction and say that we do not have to keep God's good commandments (see 2 Peter 3:15-16). Again, these lists of sins are intended to be a representative list of sins that will keep us out of God's future kingdom.

Mankind's works are designed to please us, but their usefulness is nothing compared to the usefulness of what God has created and made. Like I said, facts and information to not give you the how of life. Mostly what school teaches is facts. You have to make the effort to learn about and follow God. God created the world and everything in it. Nehemiah 9:6 NKJV says, "You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You."

Mankind cannot create anything from nothing but must use what God has created to make things. Although what people make can be useful and good, they are not necessarily from God.

Some think that what they design or do makes them like a god, but they are not God. Some think that their success gives them power, but it is only temporary power. All the so-called great people in history are dead and gone and are only a brief mention in the history books if at all. God's ways are best and are intended to help us in life.

Those who oppose God are often worldly and their life is often only a shell of what they should be. Think about this. Those who seek worldly power often do it at the expense of others. Those who want to do what is right and keep God's commandments bring goodness into the world. Have you ever been taken advantage of? It does not feel good, does it? Have you ever known someone who brought goodness into your life? From their acts comes joy.

It is important to always understand that God and His commandments are intended to bring the goodness of a caring God into the world and help mankind with life. God has no agenda other than to help us and He is a loving God who has our best interests at heart. There are more than 10 commandments, but just think that if everyone kept just the 10 commandments, the world would be a much better place. Doing what God tells us to do brings goodness into our lives. Not following the commandments of God brings evil into life because God knows what is best.

People think they can do anything they want, but in doing so, they bring evil into their life and the life of others. Do you want what is good or evil? God gives us the choice. It is up to us. When you stand before God, He must judge you for what you did in life. The Bible says God will forgive us if we decide to change and do what is "right and good." Psalms 103:11-12 NKJV says, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."

Anytime that I realized that what I was doing was wrong I changed my mind and told others and God I was wrong and began doing what is right. Do not be too proud to admit you were wrong and begin doing what is right. God will forgive you.

The usefulness of what mankind has made is only meant to get us by in life. In contrast God lifts up our life. Sometimes we make everything in life about knowledge and what we own. People go to school and learn information and do not learn how to treat others because they have never learned the lessons the Bible teaches us.

For example, Joseph gets sold into slavery by his brothers because Joseph's brothers had trouble dealing with Joseph. His brothers should have been able to put up with their younger brother. A lot of times we think that life is all about us instead of being considerate of others. Joseph's brothers let their thoughts get out of control. How much pain have we inflicted on others because of our selfish thinking? We may not agree about everything, but we do not have to sin and cause others pain.

I watched a video years ago about this incredibly intelligent person who could speak a number of languages. One of his ideas was to put to death anyone who was a burden to society. Besides killing the Jews, that was one of the things that Hitler did. Hitler put to death 11 million people. This supposed very smart person in the video I watched had no compassion or

consideration for others. He was just another Hitler and there are a lot of other people who have no wisdom and goodness in their lives. They may have a lot of information, but their ideas are based on a personal agenda that has been founded on shortsightedness and not what is good.

So, mankind keeps making the same mistakes over and over instead of doing what is right. The Bible says the Old Testament commandments give us wisdom and understanding (see Deuteronomy 4:6). Don't we want what is "right and good?" Why wouldn't people want what a good, caring, and loving God wants for us through His word and His commandments? People make themselves into a god and reject the true God. They are deluded.

God's ways help us in life and are better than the ways of this world. Those who oppose God are often doing so for selfish means. They could have a much better life through God and His truths for life. The selfish ways of mankind do not produce what is 'right and good.' God's commandments would make the world a so much better and fulfilling place. God has given us the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age and the Holy Spirit can do so much for us. The Holy Spirit is powerful and can be exciting.

Torah Study

Ekev means, "because" or "if" (pertaining to "if you follow"). This Torah portion begins with Moshe telling Israel that God will bless them for being faithful to His commands. If Israel obeys Gods commands, He will keep His covenant of mercy with them; God will love them and bless their lives, family, work, and health. The same is true in this Messianic age. If we obey God, He will be merciful to us.

The 10 Commandments continued.

Let's begin by talking about the last 5 of the 10 Commandments that we did not talk about last week in the 45 portion VaEtchanan.

The sixth commandment, Deuteronomy 5:17 NKJV says, "You shall not murder."

"Murder is the unlawful killing of another human without justification or valid excuse committed with the necessary intention," definition from Wiki. There are whole societies that follow foolish ideals and make murder part of the political or religious system. Psalms 73:7 NIV says, "From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits." In communism and other abusive cultures, they must murder their own people to maintain control. Murder and coveting are the cause of many wars. If people decided not to murder and not want what others have (covet) there would be fewer wars. These commandments are important so learn them. In ancient times, commands that came from the king were often to make sure the king got what he wanted. Instead, God's commandments are given to mankind to help mankind.

Genesis 9:6 NKJV says about murder, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man." Those who murder are to be held accountable. Murder is wrong because people are special and have special abilities given them by God like

the ability to create, to think and decide, to learn, to be good and kind, and of course many many more abilities. It makes sense that murder is wrong in the natural for many reasons. Isn't it enough that people are special and deserve dignity and life.

Exodus 21:12-14 says, "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. However, if he did not lie in wait, but God delivered him into his hand, then I will appoint for you a place where he may flee. But if a man acts with premeditation against his neighbor, to kill him by treachery, you shall take him from My altar, that he may die." Those who commit premeditated murder are to be put to death. Even if they go to a safe place (as what the reference to the altar means) they must be taken from there and put to death. Deuteronomy talks about someone fleeing for safety. Deuteronomy 19:11-13 NKJV says, "But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you."

The foolish ideals of communism.

One of the concepts of Communism is to focus on intentions. They will pick issues that sound like good things to support so people think they are doing good. They say they can bring equity. It sounds good, but how do they end up doing that? After they murder everyone who does not like their abusive system of government, they have enforced equity.

Humanists and atheists often support communism. For example, humanists say they want to improve society. So, in atheist countries they suppress and murder people that believe in God because they wrongly believe that atheists make a better society. Like communism, their ideas come at the expense of others. Communist societies have turned out to be the most murderous people that ever lived, and it is still going on in our era every day. Just 2 atheist countries murdered some 90 million in the 1900s. By far, their evil has been greater than any good they think they accomplish. They will say things like Christians killed people during the Crusades, but that happened some 900 years ago. Christianity only did that for about 200 years of their 2,000-year existence. Atheists will exaggerate and say that millions were killed in the Spanish inquisition. I have read that it was about 32,000. While that is terrible, it does not compare to the millions killed by atheist countries. Even atheists would do better in a society that follows the truths of the Bible. Also, atheists and humanists that support communism are not exempt from the persecution put on their society by communism.

Defending oneself.

People are allowed to defend themselves. Exodus 22:2 NKJV says, "If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed." Countries are allowed to defend themselves against evil murderous aggressors. Sometimes as in the case of World War 2, countries may go up against murderous countries and murderous dictators like Hitler. The United States was able to stop the murderous aggressors of North Korea and Iraq. Iraq was killing its own people with poisonous gas, and North Korea is communist and kills its own people to keep them in line, but the United States was unable to stop the murderous regime of North Vietnam mostly because of communist sympathizers in the United States.

I do not believe most people knew what was going on and why the Democrat, President Kennedy, tried to help the people of Vietnam stave off the evil of the communist regime of North Vietnam. President Kennedy was assassinated by a communist. I once heard a pastor say that the Iraq war was unjustifiable, but he was ignoring the terrible murder that was going on in the country of Iraq. For some reason, a lot was made in the news about weapons of mass destruction instead of the real reason a lot of countries felt Saddam Hussein should be stopped, namely his murderous agenda. Also, the news fails to report the murderous agenda of communist regimes. When 2 million people were being killed by the communist regime in Cambodia, I did not hear anything about it on our news. The murderous regimes of Russia and China seemed fine with the murder of 2 million people for the sake of communism.

Capital punishment.

Some say that a good God would not keep anyone out of His good future kingdom. I once heard a story about a man who survived the killing of his wife and children and the rape of his daughter by escaping from his house. If you were the one who had to experience the terrible pain and loss caused by this callous killer, would you give the murderer a pass to God's kingdom? God must hold everyone accountable. God has given us each the choice on how we will live and act. Those that do evil must be held accountable for their actions. A good God would not leave those who inflict pain and evil without any consequences. He will accomplish this through a future time of judgement. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."

A person can repent, but it must be a true repentance. I once talked to a murderer who blamed his victims. He had not repented of his murder. I heard a story once about a murderer who said, 'I feel terrible about what I did, but not as bad as the family who had to endure the pain for what I did.' I believe he was on death row and to be executed for the murder, so he had nothing to gain by being defensive. It seems he repented; God is the judge.

Murderers were to be put to death, but there had to be more than one witness to a crime. The commandment to put to death the murderer helps prevent murder. Deuteronomy 19:13 NKJV says, "Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you." Those who oppose capital punishment are opposing good justice. The Bible says we are to protect life (see Genesis 9:6) and in opposing just punishment, they are encouraging murder. A weak justice system is an evil to society. Also, the Bible says we are not to support murderers. Proverbs 28:17 NKJV says, "A man burdened with bloodshed will flee into a pit; let no one help him." While all this may seem like a lot to digest, it is important commandment.

The seventh commandment, Deuteronomy 5:18 NKJV says, "You shall not commit adultery."

Adultery refers to extramarital sex. Single people who engage in extramarital sex undermines the establishment of marital relations. It is rampant in our society. Those who are engaged in

this behavior or who have done this in the past can repent and be forgiven. Psalms 103:10-11 NKJV says, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him."

Sexual relations with those who are not your spouse cheapens marriage and often destroys the feelings one has for the person who committed the adultery. It can cause the breakup of the family unit. This brings harm to both husband and wife as well as any children and is detrimental to society. Both in Jewish and Christian circles, the troubles encountered by multiple wives and stepbrothers and sisters has led many Jews and Christians alike to believe that the Bible teaches that having multiple marriage partners is wrong.

I should add that some think this commandment only applies to the extramarital affairs of those who are married. As you can see though, any extramarital sexual relations weaken the family unit.

**The eighth commandment, Deuteronomy 5:19 NKJV says,
"You shall not steal."**

To steal means to take from others what belongs to them, often by stealth. We often think of stealing as done by an individual, but it can be done by businesses and other entities as well as countries who take what belongs to the people. Another word for stealing is the word theft. Wikipedia says that, "Theft is the act of taking another person's property or services without that person's permission or consent with the intent to deprive the rightful owner of it." A person can not only steal personal property but can steal things others provide such as claiming other's work, ideas, writing, etcetera as their own for the purposes of their own personal gain. A person can also steal by deceitfully making themselves look good and others as bad. They are stealing the other person's character.

Some societies can impose themselves on its people and treat people unjustly. The Bible says that those who work are to be given a wage for their work and that they can have their own property, house, and belongings. People are allowed to have the dignity of having a family and raising their own children. Communism tries to enforce equity and takes away people's rights, land, and belongings.

People's lives can be stolen as in the case of kidnapping. The penalty for kidnapping in the Bible is death and the Bible says that will stop this evil in society. Deuteronomy 24:7 NKJV says, "If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you."

**The ninth commandment, Deuteronomy 5:20 NKJV says,
"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."**

"Bear" is the Hebrew to speak or testify as a false witness. Some say this only refers to making false testimony about someone, but it should be understood to apply to slandering others. Slander damages a person's character whether it is their work or reputation. Libel is the word

used for slander that written in some form whether that is on paper or electronically posted. Speaking falsely about someone or giving false testimony can cause others damage financially, personally, emotionally, and many other ways. Lying is a form of false testimony. Sometimes people will say that it is not a big deal that they lied, but it can cause the above damage and is wrong.

I should note that it is okay to lie in some circumstances in order to save life. Many believers lied in order to save the lives of those endangered by Hitler. Genesis 9:6 NKJV says, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man." Life is special and God created mankind in His "likeness" with special abilities such as the ability to be creative, think and decide, be kind and good and a lot more. In lying to protect life we are protecting people who are special just by the virtue that they are human. The Bible says we are not to protect the life of a murderer though. See the commandment on murder.

**The tenth commandment, Deuteronomy 5:21NKJV says,
"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."**

To Covet means to want what someone else has, to desire what they have. It does not refer to wanting to work and obtain things legally. We may like what someone else has and go and work for it. Coveting what others have has led to war, various forms of stealing, lead to deceitful behaviors, or taking advantage of others. It can hurt others emotionally when they realize a person's intentions. A testimony to the wisdom of God's commandments is that if people did not covet and did not murder, that would lead to the elimination of most wars.

More can be said about God's 10 Commandments, and they need to be taught and explained and not just memorized. Start by memorizing them and then learn how to apply them. If the world just followed the 10 Commandments, the world would be a better place. We also need God's other commandments as well.

Back to the Torah portion for today.

We began today by saying that in this Messianic age, we also can have God's blessings and mercy just as Israel was told in this portion. I have personally experienced blessing in my life because I was faithful to God. That is a promise to all who will keep His commandments. Israel was to go and take the land that God had promised them; that required trust in God and action. Ya'akov tells us that our faith requires action in James 2:17 NKJV, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

They were not to bring any idols into their houses. Bringing an idol into their house can bring a curse with it since devil spirits can attach themselves to idols. They were to remember their time in the wilderness; how God tested them and provided for them; Israel should learn that we don't live by food alone, but also through what God says. Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV says, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." Yeshua (Jesus) quoted this in Luke 4:4. We must always remember that our spiritual life

is just as important as our physical life. This life is short compared to the eternity that is promised by God for those who keep His commandments.

The devil tempted Yeshua in Luke 4 and Yeshua used the scriptures to fight off the devil. We are to follow God and use His scriptures to help us have good godly biblical thoughts. Shaul said we need to get control of our thoughts. 2 Corinthians 10:5 NKJV says, "Bringing every thought into captivity." We are in a spiritual battle, and we need to take control of our thoughts and put the right thoughts into our mind. Some people use the term spiritual warfare to describe our fight against the suggestions and things that devil spirits promote.

Yeshua used the scriptures to stand against demonic powers as an example to us and we should also stand against any wrong thoughts that may enter our minds. Also, Ephesians 6:12-14 NKJV says, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore." So, stand strong. We are in a spiritual battle.

God was bringing Israel into a good land. They were not to get proud and forget Yĕhōváh. They were to remember that God was blessing them. What does it mean to be proud? A proud person wants to do things their way. We should want to do things God's way. Being proud spiritually is thinking our thoughts and ideas are better than God's ways. It says that if they didn't keep God's commandments, they would perish like other nations had perished because of their sin; namely, because they followed their own ways instead of God's good ways. God will help them to defeat nations greater than them if they follow God. They were not to think their success was because they were so good, but because the nations they displaced were so evil. These evil nations even sacrificed their children to the pagan god Molech. Also, God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham to return Israel to their land which is still in effect to this day.

In this portion, God tells them to pray for their meals. The order of the command implies that we should thank God for the bread from the land, after we eat. 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." Some have the habit of praying before their meal. Whether it is before or after the meal, it is important that we thank God for being our provider, after all, He created everything. Christians often pray for God to bless their food, but the commandments tell us to thank God for being our provider. The typical Jewish prayer thanks God for the bread they have received from the earth.

The typical Messianic prayer (we use God's real name Yĕhōváh):

Baruch ata Yĕhōváh Eloheinu melech ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz.

Blessed are you, Yĕhōváh our God, king of the universe who brings forth bread from the earth.

Moshe reminds them of some who rebelled in the desert and his prayers for them that saved them; they should stop rebelling. God set apart the tribe of Levi to serve Him. In this portion He then tells them to follow God's commands for their own good and to circumcise their hearts see (Deuteronomy 10:16). Just as circumcision reminded Israel of their agreement to follow God,

their hearts needed to be circumcised and committed to follow God. Shaul quotes this and says we need to have circumcised hearts. Romans 2:19 NKJV says, "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart."

Some say Shaul is saying that circumcision is no longer necessary; it is of the heart. He is quoting a scripture from the Old Testament portion that says we are to have circumcised hearts. He is not saying circumcision is no longer necessary; he taught circumcision, Galatians 5:11 NKJV says, "I still preach circumcision." He taught the circumcision of male babies. The Bible says we are to protect life even on Shabbat (see Deuteronomy 22:4; and Luke 14:5). Circumcising adult males is dangerous and should not be practiced. It was especially dangerous in ancient times. Shaul opposed adult circumcision based on the Torah.

Those in the 1st century who were pushing for adult circumcision were disobeying the Torah's command to save life. **They were Torah breakers.** Saving life means we value life and do things that protect life. For example, we should take our medicine unless we are healed. Watch out that you do not get caught up in superstitions against medicine. We had a foster child in our home that was being treated with vapor rub on her feet for her asthma by her abusive parents. She could have died! Be sensible. Consider the consequences of your thinking; could the superstitious values that you are passing on cause someone to die? I would not want that on my conscience. Also, we are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1:27), so human life is precious.

God is good and just; they were to also be good to foreigners because they were once foreigners in Egypt. In ancient times, strangers to the community could be a drain on resources and some people groups mistreated strangers. Israel was commanded not to mistreat foreigners. They have seen the power of Yĕhōvāh so they should keep His commandments. We know the correct pronunciation of God's name from 2,363 different manuscripts as Yĕhōvāh. Exodus 3:15 NKJV says, "This is My name forever." The context refers to Yĕhōvāh. When we learn something, we begin to practice correct doctrine. Those that are saying we cannot say God's name are treating God's name with disrespect. Believers used Yĕhōvāh's name appropriately in the Old Testament portion. Ruth 2:4 NKJV says, "Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, 'The LORD be with you!'" The word LORD in that verse is God's real name, Yĕhōvāh. Some call God Hashem which means, "the name." It is like calling God "it."

The eyes of Yĕhōvāh are always on the land of Israel it says, and He will prosper the land if they keep His commands and put God's words in their heart. Do you want the eyes of Yĕhōvāh to be upon you? Keep His commands and put God's words in your heart too. Putting God's words on their forehead meant they were to always have God's words before them; it was not meant to be literal as some take it. This literal practice of wearing tefillin did not begin until the 1st century AD. Also, they were to put God's words on the door frames of their houses.

As this portion comes to a close, Deuteronomy 11:18-19 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you

rise up." As we walk, we are to be mindful of God's commands and teach them to others, especially our children. This portion ends with telling them that their territory would extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Sea to the Euphrates.

The portion for this week talks about God's mercy, forgiveness, and willingness to bless; this should give us great comfort. Moshe tells them that God gave His commands for their good and that they should circumcise their hearts. Shaul said in Rom. 2:29 that a real Jew (believer) has a circumcised heart. Believers in the Messiah considered themselves Jewish in the 1st century. They were a Jewish sect called Nazarene Jews.

Jewish people were to treat foreigners well and it is a misconception (a lie) that they do not. For example, Israel sent Gaza food, supplies, and medicine and Gaza sent rockets into Israel to try to destroy Israel. Palestinians as of this writing think it is okay to lie to spread their hate. The Bible says that liars will go the "lake of fire: (see Revelation 21:8). They could easily take care of themselves if they instead focused on doing what is right. Yeshua said you will know what kind of people they are by their works.

Israel has seen God's power, and we will too says Yeshua in John 14:12. Israel should have remained faithful based on their witness. Believers in the Messiah should also remain faithful based on our personal witness. Many of both Jews and Christians have failed though. They make God into their place of worship or say they believe in God, but do not listen to His commands. Since they do not listen to God, they disrespect God. Believing in God means we also believe and trust in what He says and do what God says.

Putting up scriptures on our entries is a commandment of God. Mezuzot are a practical way to put scriptures up at your entries and they remind us to obey God. As Messianic Jews we understand that just because the New Testament portion does not mention something, that does not mean we shouldn't do it. For example, honest weights and measures are not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, but that does not mean we shouldn't do that. The practice of treating a mezuzah like a rabbit's foot as some do is wrong. A mezuzah which contains scripture is to remind us to keep God's commands for when we leave our home and when we return (or we could put up a scripture instead of a mezuzah containing scripture). The man-made practice of touching a mezuzah and saying something to God when you touch can help the mezuzah from becoming invisible to us. Some man-made practices are practical, but they are not commanded.

The Haftarah for Ekev is Isaiah 49:14 to 51:3. In this portion it says that God will never forget Israel; He has engraved them on the palms of His hands. In their captivity God will still help them and save them. They lost their land because of their sins. Yēhōvāh will not be put to shame though, and if Yēhōvāh helps us, who can condemn us it says? Yēhōvāh called just one person, Abraham and that blessing turned into many. God will once again turn Israel's desert into a garden (like Eden) and there will be joy, thanksgiving, and music there.

Shaul sees the Messiah in this section of Isaiah. He also says in Romans 8:31 NKJV, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" He is obviously also relating Israel's travail to his travail and

God's blessing to what God is accomplishing in us through Messiah. Just like God will never forget Israel, He will never forget us.

Isaiah 50:7-10 CJB says,

"For Adonai ELOHIM will help. This is why **no insult can wound me**. This is why I have set my face like flint, knowing I will not be put to shame. My vindicator is close by; let whoever dares to accuse me appear with me in court! Let whoever has a case against me step forward! Look, **if Adonai ELOHIM helps me, who will dare to condemn me?** Here, they are all falling apart like old, moth-eaten clothes. Who among you fears ADONAI? Who obeys what his servant says? Even when he walks in the dark, without any light, he will trust in ADONAI 's reputation and rely on his God."

We have seen a number of verses from the Old Testament portion quoted in the New Testament portion in our studies. This portion also has verses from the Old Testament portion of the Haftarah that are quoted in the New Testament portion. The New Testament believers' reference for life is the Old Testament portion – that's why they quoted the Old Testament portion. If the Old Testament portion was of no consequence, they would not have used it to substantiate what they believed.

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 not to benefit from anything that an idol is made of or own an idol.
Deuteronomy 7:25-26 and Deuteronomy 13:18.

We are to thank God for food after we eat. 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 are to be kind to strangers, especially the stranger who is new to our faith.
Deuteronomy 10:19.

We are to have reverent fear of our God, stay close to God, and pray and take oaths (swear) to Him. Deuteronomy 10:20.

We are commanded to teach and think about God's commandments in all of life.
Deuteronomy 11:18-22.

The Aaronic Blessing.

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 Yě-hō-váh. Yě-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 (יהוה) 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 Yě-hō-váh (יהוה). 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:

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּ
 יְאָר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹמִים

Yě-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

Yě-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yě-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.