



**#12 Vayechi Genesis 47:28-50:26
by Moshe Schwab**

Names

Kefa – Peter
Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one;
Christ in the Greek means to be smudged
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Shlomo – Solomon
Yeshua – Jesus' real name
Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)
Y'hudah – Judah

Yochanan – John
Yosef – Joseph

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the
Torah
Vayechi – the 12th Torah portion

Vayechi means, "and he lived." This portion begins with Ya'akov dying at the age of 147 after living 17 Years in Egypt. He asks Yosef (Joseph) to swear to him that he will bury him in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron. That is the cave that Abraham bought and was thought to be where Adam and Eve were buried.

We read from the Torah because the prophets instituted reading from the Torah weekly. Perhaps it goes back to Moshe. Acts 15:21 NKJV says, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." The leader of early Messianic Judaism (Ya'akov) understood that the Torah was to be read on Shabbat every week. Ya'akov is Yeshua's half-brother and is sometimes referred to as James. The scripture that we read in Acts 15 refers to the Gentiles learning and keeping the Torah. As Messianic believers, we seek a more authentic belief and therefore want to keep all of God's good commandments. How the Torah is read on Shabbat should be done with respect but does not have to be done exactly like the Jews do it. The rituals they practice are perhaps some of the ways to do them, but they are not commandments of God.

The Jews have made extra laws that even make it difficult to read the Torah. They believe that the Torah must be read from a Torah scroll that is handwritten. Many years ago, this was the only way to read the Torah, but that is no longer true. If you do not have a lot of money to buy one, then you cannot fulfill their made-up commandment. It is fine to read the Hebrew from a manufactured scroll or even from a computer or phone.

We often read these scriptures to make our point. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." We are not to add or subtract from God's commandments. Sometimes the commandment can be properly applied to something, but if not, we are following something made up by a person and not God. Isaiah 29:13 NKJV says, "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with

their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." Saying a ritual is a commandment of God when it is not misleads people.

I have been around people who say we have to keep the commandments of the Rabbis. They insist that these made-up commandments have to be kept. They will argue about what spoon is right to use. Also, take for instance the months that Israel keeps. They use a standardized calendar for conveniences sake instead of their month beginning when the Moon reappears. The beginning of the biblical months begins when the first crescent of the Moon reappears. Because they use a standard calendar, the feasts they observe are sometimes even two days off from when they are to be actually kept. So, what is better? Should we keep God's feasts of the right day, or make sure our not commanded ritual be kept a certain way? We are supposed to be reading the Torah on Shabbat, but how we do it is not as important as keeping the commandments. Again, our ritual should be done with respect towards God's word and God. I enjoy many of the Jewish rituals and prayers because they are meaningful to me. The Torah service can include any appropriate ritual. Just recognize for what it is and not a commanded ritual.

Have a spiritual focus to your life. Seek authentic truths and doctrine. Here are some important things to understand as we seek the roots of our faith, a more authentic faith. Some people believe we are supposed to be keeping all the extra laws made up by men. They will cite the translation from the Greek for Matthew 23:2-3 NKJV which says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do." According to this scripture, we are supposed to be keeping all the extra laws of the Rabbis.

It does not say this in the Hebrew. The Greek text tells us to keep the extra laws, but the Hebrew tells us to keep the law of Moses according to Nehemiah Gordon's translation from the Hebrew Matthew.

Based on this scripture in Matthew 23 and some other scriptures, some Messianic believers come up with a complex doctrine. They will say that the Jews that believe in the Messiah must keep the law of Moses and the extra laws, but the Gentiles do not have to keep the law.

They will say that the Gentiles just need to keep the things listed in Acts 15. Acts 15:19-21 NKJV says, "I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The things listed in Acts 15 for the Gentiles were things they needed to do to be able to go to Synagogue and not all they needed to do. What about committing murder? We all know that murder is wrong. By keeping these basic commandments, the Gentiles would be able to attend synagogue and then be able to learn the Torah. Acts 15:21 NKJV says, "For Moses has

had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." New believers are supposed to learn the Torah. The Torah contains our basic doctrine. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." The Bible tells us what is doctrine which takes the guess work out of it. Some say that doctrine is what they decide it is. They are making up what they think is doctrine, namely, the right way to believe and act.

This is important because we have people saying they do not have to keep God's commandments. The word lawlessness in Matthew 7:23 is the Greek word *anomia*. *Nomia* was the Greek word used by the ancient Rabbis for Torah, God's commandments. The "a" in front of *nomia* negates the word, so Yeshua is saying that he will reject those who do not keep the law. It is God's law and not just for the Jews. Matthew 7:23 NKJV, "Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" All the letters of the New Testament portion say in one way or another that we are expected to keep God's commandments, or we will be excluded from God's future kingdom.

I shared this one time with someone and they came back with the context.

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!'

They went on to say that there are a number of churches that believe in prophecy and healing, but they are not keeping God's commandments. Yeshua will reject those who are not keeping God's law, God's commandments.

For another example, Yochanan uses the same word *anomia* for lawlessness which means not to keep the Torah. 1 John 3:4 NKJV says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." People have actually told me that keeping God's Torah is of the devil. Guess what, the Bible says that not keeping God's commandments in the Old Testament portion are of the devil. 1 John 3:8 NKJV says, "He who sins is of the devil." 1 John 5:2-3 NKJV says, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome."

We love God by keeping His commandments. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always." We are also supposed to care about God, but it is through God's commandments that we honor God. We love our neighbor by keeping God's commandments. This is the scripture that Yochanan is most likely referring to in 1 John Chapter 5. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." Most people stop after love your neighbor but that is not the whole context. The context changes after "keep My statutes." When Yochanan says God's commandments are not difficult, he is most likely referring to Deuteronomy 30:11 NIV which says, " Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach."

Also, another thing that is important to understand is that the Israelites kept God's commandments that were passed down to them verbally from Noah and Abraham. Genesis 6:9 NKJV says, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. **Noah walked with God.**" To walk with God means Noah kept God's commandments. Deuteronomy 5:32-33 NKJV, "Therefore you shall be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. **You shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God has commanded you**, that you may live and that it may be well with you." Noah kept God's commandments.

Abraham kept God's commandments. Genesis 26:5 NKJV, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." As I often say, this verse is emphatically saying that Abraham kept God's commandments through repetition. So, early believers passed on God's commandments verbally. They were written down at Mount Sinai. We see that the Jews originally got God's commandments from the Gentiles, so it makes no sense that they are just Jewish commandments or Jewish feasts. They are God's commandments and God's feasts. For example, in Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are My feasts.**" It says, "These are My feasts." Those who teach otherwise are misguided.

Some are keeping all the extra commandments of the Rabbis, but we are not supposed to follow laws that micromanage life. The Jewish writings say we are to put a fence around the Torah. These extra laws are just laws of men, and they are following men. Again, Isaiah 29:13 NKJV says, "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." Some Christian denominations make up extra laws too that make it difficult to follow God. Some teach that some believers cannot get married or that dancing is wrong.

1 Timothy 4:1-3 NKJV says,

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

Did not Yochanan say in 1 John 3:4 and verse 8 that sin is not keeping the law and is the devil. So, telling people that the law has been done away is a doctrine of demons.

Also, we need to understand that the Jews say the ancient believers did not follow God's commandments and they often cite Abraham eating meat with milk when he ate with God and the 2 angels in Genesis Chapter 18. It says in the Hebrew that one of them was God and it uses God's exclusive name. Not eating meat with milk is an extra law made up by men. The command was not to boil a goat in its mother's milk. It sounds disgusting, doesn't it? The Jews say they keep the commandments better with their made-up laws, but that is not true. Also, Christians say that they have a better law, and that God's commandments are done away with. They call the Old Testament commandments Jewish commandments. We just saw that the Jews originally got God's laws passed down from Noah and Abraham, the Gentiles!

When Moshe went back to Egypt to set them free, he had his sons circumcised because they were following God's commandments. We see Yosef getting visions from God and also avoiding sexual sin with his master's wife. He most likely picked the land of Goshen for his family because the pagan Egyptians did not live there, and they could keep their beliefs in the true God intact. They were keeping God's commandments.

Seek God's commandments, learn them, and do them. They are the commandments given by an all knowing and good God for mankind to follow for our own good. God pleads with us. Deuteronomy 5:29 NKJV says, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" Christians may say they have a better doctrine, but the Bible says that the law is doctrine. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law."

There is a difference between being at peace and living a comfortable life.

We have talked about getting involved with spiritual things in the past. People will often base their life only on things that they perceive as fun, interesting, exciting, family, or any number of things instead of making God a priority in life. While God wants us to enjoy life, we need to make God more real in life by including spiritual activities in our life. Matthew 22:37-40 NKJV says, "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.'"

Giving is one of the ways that we can get involved doing spiritually. The Torah teaches that we are to give a little more than 10% of what we earn. It is a little more because we are also commanded to leave the corners of our field for the poor and the stranger (see Leviticus 23:22). Manage your life so that you can also be a giver and not just a taker.

There are many ways that we can use our time and many ways that we can use our time spiritually. Getting directly involved with a spiritual activity can be very gratifying even if it is only something you occasionally do. Do not try to overload yourself. Start out slowly and try different things that you are attracted to. You may find something that you would like to do on a more permanent basis. My wife enjoyed serving kids in the inner city. She volunteered for 5 years once a week. The possibilities for serving are endless. We can feed the poor, help people with their homes, pray for people, and many more things. One pastor told me years ago that there were about 50 different ways that the people in his congregation served God through the things they did.

For example, one couple cleaned homes for the elderly besides their regular jobs. They helped the elderly and sometimes they had the opportunity to share what they believed. When I asked him if they had an opportunity to share about God, he told me that 1 or 2 people a year would come to faith in Yeshua. I know they had been doing that for about 10 years, so perhaps they helped some 10 to 15 people believe in the Messiah Yeshua. How many people have you helped to believe? One person I know played golf just for the chance to talk to people about God if they were interested. God told me to go on some nature walks once and I met someone who was desperate to find some good Bible teaching.

A person I knew years ago said he was struggling and asking God over and over what he should do. One day, God told him to just do something. We all can do something. We do not have to do everything.

Some people focus their life on just being comfortable. Being comfortable through different activities is a blessing from God but it should not be our main focus in life. Enjoyment can take the form of relaxation, doing something we like, doing something restful, or something that is easy to do. Here are a few more things you can do to be more content. We can take a walk or exercise. We can enjoy some humor, nature, our pets, hobbies, music, some good food, or play a game. Relaxation and sleep can help us feel refreshed. There are many things we can do and enjoy.

Of course, we should never engage in a sinful activity. Some people get comfort from sinful activities. Sin brings evil into this world and is therefore wrong. God does not want us to bring pain and evil into the world and separates us from God. Isaiah 59:2 NKJV says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you." A person who is living a life of sin will end up "in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" for eternity and "everlasting contempt" (see Revelation 21:8 and Daniel 12:2).

As you can see, enjoying what God has given us is good, but making that your goal in life can be counterproductive and sidetrack us from obtaining goals; it can strain our relationships because we do not give those we care about their proper attention; it can take time from the important things we need to do; and most of all, it can take precedence over the spiritual matters in life. I once invited someone to learn more about God, but they said they were too busy watching TV. Sometimes people put a lot of effort into a nonproductive activity and think they are accomplishing something.

I once heard a Russian political figure say that everyone in the United States was only concerned with sports. Perhaps that was his way of explaining why Russia did so poorly in the Olympics. What he could not understand is that the freedom we have in the United States creates motivation and therefore people are more motivated in sports and other things in life including innovation. The Communist Religion teaches that everything belongs to all the people and therefore it squashes motivation and innovation. People who follow Communism rely on the government for everything. The people in the United States do better because they have a free society where the people can earn and retain what belongs to them and help one another instead of relying on the government. The United States has a more biblical at present.

Financial Giving.

This is a good time to talk about our financial giving. It is typically 10% of our gross income. Genesis 28:22 NKJV says, "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

There is a blessing to giving financially and also giving of one's time. Malachi 3:10 NKJV says, "'Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour

out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." God promises to bless our giving. At this time, there is no storehouse in Jerusalem so giving of this portion of our finances can go to support the congregation or ministry we learn from, much like the Temple in Jerusalem was the spiritual center for the people when it still stood. The entire tithe did not go to Jerusalem though.

Some take the verse in Malachi to mean we are to give everything to our congregation, but that is not biblical. Every third year we are to give our tithe to the local Levites, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widows. In other words, those who need our help and support. This would amount to one-third of our tithe because they gave their tithe to the needy every three years. Also, they had an agricultural society so they gave their tithe when they harvested which would be similar to when we get paid. So, we should give our tithe as we get paid. The Bible says we are to help the poor. Proverbs 3:27-28 NKJV says, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it.'" Ya'akov refers to this verse in James 2:14-17.

Synagogues were typically funded by extra giving since the tithe went to Jerusalem on some years and for the poor on other years. Luke 7:4-5 NKJV says, "And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, 'for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue.'" Deuteronomy essentially tells us that one-third of our gross income should go to the needy. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 NKJV says, "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do." Levites could be understood as those who serve us spiritually.

Some have trouble giving because they do not manage their money well, so they are not able to give. I would suggest beginning with what you can give and work towards giving what you should be giving. Pay off your debts, live within your means, and make giving part of your budget so that you can fulfill this commandment. Some give all their money to their congregation and some give all their money to the poor, but that is not what the Bible says to do. Some ignore the poor. Proverbs 22:9 NKJV says, "He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor." We will always have the poor with us. They need our help. Deuteronomy 15:11 NKJV says, "For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall open your hand wide to your brother, to your poor and your needy, in your land.'"

Those who only give to the poor are suppressing the support work done by those who teach us. You may have a group or congregation that supports you spiritually or you may have several of these. Sometimes, you may also be able to give to the poor through your congregation. We give the portion for those who support us spiritually to those who teach the basic truths of our Messianic faith and to keep our congregation going since we have our own congregation. We give our one-third to the poor mostly through good Messianic organizations that help the poor. I should note that some organizations only help people to believe in the

Messiah. That is also helping others, but we do not exclusively give to an organization like this. It is something to consider though. There are also scam organizations. One such organization in Israel asks for money for the poor and uses some of their money to hire people to work against those who teach about Yeshua.

Also, those who farm were to give a little extra by leaving the corners of their field for the needy. They did not grow anything in the seventh or Jubilee years and could not give on those years. That commandment referred to crops so the best way to give financially is based on a 3-year cycle. Namely, we are to give one-third of our income to the poor. Two-thirds goes to those who teach and support us spiritually. That does not mean you cannot give more than the tithe if you are able. I have heard of one such person who has a lot of income and gave 80% of what they earn. We currently give more than 10%.

Now, let's talk some about the satisfaction we can have in life through God and the Bible.

There is a scripture that says we can have perfect peace by trusting in God. That would seem to be the ultimate satisfaction for life. Isaiah 26:3-4 NKJV says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever." This scripture in Isaiah says we will find "perfect peace" through God if we trust in Him. The context then reveals how we are to trust God.

It goes on to say that those who are just, do what is right, they are upright. The word upright means to have integrity and do what is right. The upright do what is right in life through God's commandments. God is also upright. God knows what is best for mankind because He is the creator. He judges people according to His good laws.

Isaiah 26:7-9 NKJV says,

The way of the just is uprightness; O Most Upright, You weigh the path of the just. Yes, in the way of Your judgments, O LORD, we have waited for You; the desire of our soul is for Your name and for the remembrance of You. With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek You early; for when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

God desires the people of the earth to keep His law, His commandments, and do what is right. Righteousness in the Bible means to do what is right and doing what is right is to keep God's commandments. Deuteronomy 6:17-18 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."

Isaiah then refers to God's commandments as grace which is God's favor. There are a lot of people who want God's grace, but they fail to see that God has given us grace through His commandments. Some people believe they have grace to sin and not follow God's commandments but that is a one-way ticket to the 'lake of fire' for eternity. It goes on to say that the wicked will not learn to do what is right and will not keep God's commandments and they will not see the majesty of God. Isaiah 23:10 NKJV says, "Let grace be shown to the

wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD."

Not seeing the majesty of God can be understood as the wicked will not have eternal life in God's future kingdom. It can also mean that the wicked will not see the benefits of doing what is right in the present. So, they will not see the benefits of keeping God's commandments both now and their disobedience to God will result in a loss of eternal life with a good God.

True peace, satisfaction, and comfort in life comes from keeping God's commandments. Those who are just and righteous keep God's commandments. We may do things at times that give us comfort, but the ultimate goal of life is not just to spend all of our time seeking the pleasures of life. You can feel satisfied in life but be a completely deluded person. Ecclesiastes sums it up best. Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 NKJV says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil."

We derive our proper place in life by how we act out life.

We could focus on any number of things in life. Here are some things that people focus on. People can tend to make their life all about them. The reason I am sharing this today is to help you develop spiritual goals and not just have a life of personal satisfaction:

Establishing good Relationships.

Having a purpose.

Making plans.

Giving of their time or resources.

Having good virtues.

Seeking good advice.

Having money or wealth.

Achievements including intellectual achievement.

Having thoughtful dialogue.

Trying out different activities.

The list of things that people set as goals for life can be very extensive. We are talking about some pursuing these things at the expense of our spiritual life. Notice that some of the above can even be applied spiritually. First and foremost, seek what is right and good. As you should see, making these things a priority in life is not the ultimate goal. We need to put God first. That is why the Bible tells us to put God first. Yeshua quotes the Torah in Matthew 22:37-38 NKJV and He says, "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment." And how do we love God? Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always."

Be authentic spiritually. Listen to God's advice and the godly advice of others. Grow spiritually by reading the Bible, praying, by being committed to keep God's commandments, or by finding ways to give of yourself and resources to help others change and follow God. Perhaps you could come up with something that you can do. We cannot do everything but do

something. Think about how you can do what is "right and good."

Also, when you fail, think about how you could respond differently. For example, if you are irritated by someone, think about being patient and understanding. If you fail, try to rectify the situation and be committed to responding differently the next time. Plan on keeping God's commandments and think about how you can apply them to your life.

Some people are in constant anxiety. The solution to their anxiety is to reach out and seek what is spiritual. In order to receive almost everything in life, we need to make some sort of effort. In our era, even turning on the TV requires that we at least push a button. Some things in life are easy to accomplish and other things are accomplished through considerable effort or time. It took me 7 years to get my engineering degree because I had to work while going to school. After that I got 2 Bible degrees and did some work towards my doctorate in Religious Studies. I am saying this to encourage you to also use your abilities and begin not only using them for yourself, but for God.

Anyone can be lazy in life. Also, anyone can find a way to be accomplished in life if they are willing to put forth the effort. Proverbs 10:4 NKJV says, "He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." People who are lazy sometimes think they are getting away with not working, but what they do not realize is that they are losing the opportunity to live out life and succeed at different things in life. Some even lose out on providing for themselves and the opportunity to improve their living conditions.

In all we do, do not forget to keep God at the forefront in life. Deuteronomy 6:17 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you." We are to be diligent to keep God's commandments. 2 Timothy 2: 15 NKJV it says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God." As we have already talked about, a lot of people seek the other things of life, but it is most important to be approved to the creator of the universe.

Be strong, be resilient, in every part of life.

Be diligent and strong spiritually. Exodus 15:26 NKJV says, "Diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes." The Bible makes quite an emphasis on following what God says. God knows what is best for us.

We are not to let to turn away from God's good commandments, Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV says, "Be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" We are to be careful to observe God's commandments. Then it says in Deuteronomy 4:9 NKJV, "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren."

We are to diligently keep ourselves, so we do not turn away from keeping God's commandments. The word for keep in verse 9 could also be translated as guard. We are to

diligently guard our life, so we keep God's good commandments. Look at the language in this verse. We are to "take heed," and 'diligently guard' our life.

Seek a more authentic faith and keep God's commandments and feasts. Have a proper focus in life and make God a priority in life. We can focus on any number of things in life and forget about our spirituality. Why be consumed with being anxious? Seek most of all what will give you true peace and help you to be content by putting God in His proper place. Stay strong spiritually and keep working at being a godly person in all you do.

Torah Teaching

We now close out the book of Genesis also called Beresheet which means in the beginning. God has mercy on mankind as Adam and Eve repent. God again has mercy on mankind because of Noah who taught what was right and did what was right. That's what righteousness means; to do what is right. God protects Abraham and Ya'akov, men of faith. God saves the whole region of Egypt through Yosef, a believer in the true God. Archaeologists have found the grain bins where the grain was stored during the famine at the time of Yosef. Also, they have found Yosef's tomb that held his bones until Israel was able to go back to Canaan. This portion finishes the history of Yosef and Ya'akov.

Vayechi means, "and he lived." This portion begins with Ya'akov dying at the age of 147 after living 17 Years in Egypt. He asks Yosef (Joseph) to swear to him that he will bury him in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron. That is the cave that Abraham bought and was thought to be where Adam and Eve were buried.

Jacob says that El Shaddai (God Almighty)¹ appeared to him at Luz (Bethel), blessed him, and God said that the land of Canaan will belong to Jacob's descendants forever. Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh, and he blesses the younger Ephraim first and tells Joseph that he is not making a mistake (even though his eyesight was bad). We should understand that Ya'akov was listening to God; Ya'akov relied on hearing from God, just as his fathers did. Also, he says that Israel should invoke a blessing that God would make His people like Ephraim and Manasseh (see Genesis 48:20). It is thought that they were examples of getting along well.

Perhaps Ya'akov chooses to bless Ephraim first to let us know that God chooses who He wills to choose. God has chosen Yeshua Hamashiach to be the Messiah regardless of what mankind thinks. Perhaps God saw the heart of Ephraim and chose Him because of his godly heart instead of just becoming a greater people than Manasseh as it says in the Bible. Later in the portion, Jacob prophecies that Ephraim will be greater than Manasseh.

For example, God knew that Ya'akov would be a spiritual person and that Esau would be a worldly person. That is why we previously talked about Ya'akov being the descendent who would carry on God's line of believers. God chose Ya'akov as the first born. We learned that the promises of God are greater than what the world has to offer.

Ephraim and Manasseh were adopted by Ya'akov in Genesis 48:5. Yosef is appointed as the

¹The ancient rabbis believed that El Shaddai meant mighty God.

first-born son that receives the double portion and the double portion is passed on to Ephraim and Manasseh. There will still be 12 territories given to Israel. The tribe of Levi will act as priests and not get a territory. Also, Yosef will not get a territory, but his 2 sons will get a territory and therefore replace the tribes of Yosef and Levi.

Jacob prophetically says that God will bring them back to Canaan and then speaks to each of his sons and includes some words of prophecy to them. Some of these prophecies were words of correction. Perhaps they were meant to tell them to get with it spiritually. We should also understand that God knows our thoughts and sees all we do and is not removed from mankind as some think.

We saw that Judah becomes the spokesman for the brothers as the 4th in line. For example, He is the one who pleads for Benjamin. Reuben (the firstborn) had slept with Bilhah and Simeon and Levi (the 2nd and 3rd children) in anger had killed the men of a town. So, the leadership of the clan passed on to Judah.

Anger

Anger can be good or bad. Anger can protect us when we see something that is wrong. Anger can also cause us to sin as was the case with Simeon and Levi.

Here are some thoughts about anger:

Define what you are angry about. Identify and control your reaction.

Did your anger come from expectations, lies, feelings of entitlement, or being selfish?

Think about your motives for being angry. Perhaps ask yourself why you are angry.

Act appropriately. Psalms 4:4 NKJV says, "Be angry, and do not sin."

Get control of your anger. You may need time to cool down.

We must learn to control our reactions in life. Channel your anger to produce good.

God controls His temper and is patient and merciful towards us. Psalms 103:8 NKJV says,

"The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."

When Ya'akov prophecies about Judah, he prophesies that Judah's rulership will continue until the Messiah comes. Genesis 49:10 NKJV says, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people." Yeshua Hamashiach is that Messiah that was born at the time of the Roman appointed King Herod and the false high priest that was installed by Rome. Yeshua is our king and someday, He will reign as king in the future kingdom of God (see Jeremiah 23:5-6). Ya'akov's prophecy of the Messiah coming before the Israeli kingship being ended was fulfilled.

It is interesting to note that if we take the dalet out of the name of Y'hudah, it spells the exclusive name for God, Yud-Hey-Vav-Hey, namely, Yĕhōvâh. Dalet means door in Hebrew. Yeshua said in Revelation 3:20 NKJV, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." If we open our heart to the Messiah, we can have a relationship with Him. Yeshua said in John 4:22 NKJV, "Salvation is of the Jews." How wonderful and interesting!

Also, Y'hudah means praise and that is from where we get the word Jew. Shaul says in Romans 2:29, "He is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God." Jew "inwardly and praise from God" is a Hebrew word pun. We are to be a praise (Y'hudah) to God inwardly and therefore a praise (Y'hudah) to God. Having a circumcised heart refers to Deuteronomy 10:16 NKJV, "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer." In other words, cut out sin from our life and stop resisting God.

*We are to be a
praise to God inwardly.*

Then Ya'akov dies, he is embalmed, and they mourn for him for forty days. The Egyptians mourn for him 70 days. Yosef asks Pharaoh if he can go bury his father at the cave of Machpelah and a great number of people go up with him and mourn for him for 7 days there in Canaan and then return to Egypt. Yosef's brothers are concerned that Yosef will retaliate for their mistreatment of Yosef, but Yosef tells them not to be afraid and that God used the situation and turned it around for good.

Forgiveness can bring peace.

Yosef seemed to forgive his brothers. Forgiveness is a good way to bring peace. It is not always possible to reconcile but we should try. Romans 12:18 NKJV says, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."

Forgiveness requires making a decision to forgive and not hold on to what someone did. We let go of what they did. Our emotional peace is restored by being willing to forget. Also, we do not keep track of their offenses. Typically, we can forgive someone, but we may have difficulty forgetting and so we then treat the other person differently. For example, if someone takes advantage of us, we may be on friendly terms again, but we may be less apt to let them take advantage of us again.

If you remember, Yosef's brothers were tired of Yosef meddling in their affairs and in the favoritism shown by Jacob. Then on top of that, Yosef had dreams of his brothers bowing down to him. Yosef's brothers not only schemed to kill Yosef and then sold him as a slave, but earlier, we learned that they could not speak peaceably to him. His brothers were mistreating him over and over even before they sold him as a slave. Yosef forgave his brothers for their continuous mistreatment, for scheming to kill him, and for selling him as a slave. It is possible that Yosef was giving them a difficult time for what they did. Perhaps he was testing them to see if they had changed. In the end, Yosef seemed to forgive them.

Perhaps he saw that they had changed, and they seemed to be remorseful. Also, God worked out the circumstances to the favor of both Yosef and his brothers. Perhaps he saw them as being vulnerable just as he was vulnerable. We seem to need to come up with a good reason to forgive someone. I would suggest that instead of thinking of reasons not to forgive someone, think of some reasons to forgive them even if it is only for their sake.

Forgiving someone can restore peace with them and it also can bring some emotional peace.

The Bible says we are not to hold onto grudges but treat others the way we want to be treated, and we are to even love them. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." It appears that Yosef also decided to love his brothers in spite of how they mistreated him.

The portion ends as Joseph dies at 110 and he gets to see the third generation of Ephraim's children. He asks to be buried in Canaan when God takes them back to the land of Canaan sometime in the future. Joseph was a true believer, a holy one, a saint. We see him keeping God's commandments.

In this we perhaps can see a picture of our future hope; it prefigures the picture of God returning all His people to Him some day in the future and raising His people from the dead. Ezekiel 37:4-6 NKJV says, "Again He said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, dry bones, hear the word of the LORD! Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.'" This refers to Israel, but God will raise up all believers to live together in a future glorious kingdom.

In this closing portion of Genesis, we see the death of two of our great spiritual leaders, Ya'akov and Yosef. What do the stories in the Bible tell us so far? Mankind fell from their relationship and fellowship with God. The sin of man without God becomes so severe that God relents creating mankind. For the sake of Noah who kept God's commandments, God saves the world through a believer. Noah listens to God, and he also builds an ark that saves mankind from annihilation. May we all be like Noah who saved the world.

*Those who keep God's commandments
give this world hope.*

Abraham becomes the father of believers in the true God and God tells Abraham that the world will be blessed through him. Isaac and Jacob carry on the line of believers and each encounter God. They are led by God just like the believers before them. Even though the believing prophet Joseph suffered as a result of his brothers' jealousy, Yosef ends up saving his family from a deadly famine. God prospers and protects His people of faith who keep His commandments. The prophetic is important and Shaul tells us to love each other and to desire the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit; we are also to be led by God through the prophetic. 1 Corinthians 14:1 says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy."

We see God saving mankind because of those who live in faith towards God, who follow God's commands, and who are led by Him. Let us also be people who bring God's blessings to the world. Let us be a people who listen to God's voice and follow Him just as our patriarchs did. True believers who keep God's commandments make the world a better place. The world needs us. The people who say they don't need God are mistaken. Without God,

there would be no life left on earth because evil would eradicate life. It is the propensity of evil people to be destructive.

As believers in the true God, we have lots to celebrate. We can be thankful for the past saints of the Old Testament portion who brought us to this time. No wonder God's feasts are times of celebration. Mankind may celebrate their own works, their own accomplishments, their lives, and their special times, but without God, mankind would not exist. Celebrating God's feasts keeps us in touch with reality. We would have nothing without God so don't be deluded (tricked or brainwashed) into thinking otherwise; all things exist because of the creator God.

Let us be people who bring God's blessings to the world. Let us be a people who listen to God's voice and follow Him just as our patriarchs did. We can make the world a better place.

The Haftarah for Vayechi is 1 Kings 2:1-12. We read about the deaths of some of the great leaders of Israel in the portions of scripture for Vayechi. King David is about to die and so he commissions Shlomo and tells him to do things God's way; namely, according to the Torah. David asks for specific favors against Joab and Shimei, and for Shlomo to be kind to the sons of Barzillai. David then dies after reigning over Israel for forty years.

We see Ya'akov giving farewell words to his children. Both Ya'akov and Yosef die in this portion and Yosef asks for his bones to be taken back to Canaan when they return. Yosef firmly believes in what God is able to do and so should we. Remember to be faithful to God.

*Remember to believe in what
God is able to do and will do.*

We will close our Torah study with an ancient encouraging Jewish saying. We don't have to reinvent things in pagan terms. Tradition is not a commandment of God, but some tradition can be useful and encouraging. The Jews use this saying at the conclusion of each book of the Torah. Be strong in our God, Yĕhōvâh.

Hazak, hazak, v'nit'chazek! 3X
Be Strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened! 3X

**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.)**

It is good to make preparations for your death. Genesis 47:29-30

We may adopt children into our family. Genesis 48:5

We may give prophecies over our children at significant times. Genesis 48:20-49:28

It is good to observe a time of mourning for our close family members when they die. They spent 7 days mourning for Ya'akov. Genesis 50:10

God may intervene to thwart evil and turn it around. We see God often revealing Himself to those who walk with Him. Genesis 50:20-21

We are to keep our convictions about God's promises to the very end just as Yosef did. Genesis 50:24-25

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 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 name 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. What an honor it is to be a people of the creator and true God.

Let's say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ
 יְאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֶלְיָךְ, וַיַּחֲנֶךָ
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֶלְיָךְ, וַיִּשֶׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

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.