



#45 VaEtchanan Deuteronomy 3:23-7:11
Torah teaching and teaching,
By Moshe Schwab

Names

Kefa – Peter
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Yeshua – Jesus
Yochanan – John

Terms

Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
Parashah (portion) – one of 54 portions of the Bible from the Torah
Rabbi – Jewish leader
Tanakh – Old Testament portion
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

VaEtchanan means, “and I pleaded”. Moshe begins by relating that he asked God if he could go into the promised land; he would not be allowed to go. Instead, Joshua would lead Israel into the land. In this portion, the 10 commandments are listed again.

I would like to begin by talking about prayer. Be thoughtful in life and pray. Of course, God expects us to do our part in every situation, but do not minimize what God can do. Whatever you are dealing with, be specific about how you are going to work things out and pray to God and ask God for help about what you intend to do.

We are not just talking about spiritual things although it is always a good idea to talk to God about the spiritual things you intend to take on. Since believers in the Messiah receive the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit can help us to work out many of the details of both our spiritual life and any and all things in life.

I like to talk about my one cousin who became a believer and began praying to God for help with the computer systems, mostly the mainframes he was working on. Mainframes are computers that are used by large companies for their computing tasks, so they are very important. This one time he went to help these two men who had been working on a mainframe for 24 hours straight. He prayed and he had the mainframe working in 10 minutes. That is the power of prayer. It was a combination of knowhow and God that got things going.

I remember my cousin telling me a story about this one mainframe that was malfunctioning at random. It turned out that a huge machine in the neighborhood would operate at random during the day and inject noise into the electric line. Imagine trying to figure that one out. No task or problem is too big for God. Isaiah 40:28-29 NKJV says, Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength."

God will sometimes help us in the moment even without us asking. It makes sense that we should trust in God and ask for His help and God will also help us at times. Jeremiah 29:11-12 NKJV says, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you." God is a good and caring God. Do not forget to pray and ask God for help. God wants good things for us, but we should also really need God's help and not just be serving our selfish desires. James 4:2-3 NKJV says, "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Stay under God's peace where we live in joy and not by the pettiness of the world. Do not be consumed by worldly thoughts that can steal your joy. I have talked to people who are more concerned about a situation than they should be. They hold onto something like it is a matter of life and death when it is not. I am not saying that we should not take some things very seriously. Yet do not let things wear you out.

I knew someone years ago that was so consumed by his job that he ended up having stomach problems from it. He then could not stop his worrying and died young because of his anxiety. He was a really nice and kind person; it was too bad that he was not able have peace and joy in life. Sure, we need to take life seriously, but God also wants us to enjoy life. Psalms 16:11 NKJV says, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

First of all, follow God's commandments. They teach us how to live life. Then have joy and enjoy life. God's commandments bring joy into our lives because they are good. Psalms 119:47-48 NKJV says, "And I will delight myself in Your commandments, which I love. My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on Your statutes. He is talking about the Old Testament commandments.

Have you ever known someone without joy? Jeremiah 15:16 NKJV says, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart. God's commandments sustained him in life. Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV says, "Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'" The context is keeping God's feast of Rosh Hashanah. The Old Testament feasts are God's feasts and not just Jewish feasts. If you believe in the true God, then God's feasts are also for you to keep and have joy.

Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts." God's feasts are connected with times of joy. That is why Shaul says in Philippians 4:4 NKJV, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!" We are supposed to be observing God's times of joy.

Our era seems to be a time skepticism. People lack God's truths and they do not keep God's feasts. When we have truth and live in the truth, we can have the joy and strength of Yehovah to move forward in life. What is the basis for your life?

Do not take on too much so that your life is one unending life of tasks. We have a choice. We can either have a balanced life or overwork ourselves. It is our choice. Psalm 118:24 NKJV says, "This is the day the LORD has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it." Do we take the time to rejoice, or do we ignore the joy we are supposed to have in life? Psalm 119:93 NKJV says, "I will never forget Your precepts, for by them You have given me life." God gave us life and life it is made up of many things and not just perpetual work. Isaiah 40:31 NKJV says, "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Notice it doesn't say we are to keep running until we faint. I am all for being industrious. Accomplishing tasks can be fun and rewarding. Rest is a good thing especially on God's days of rest that He gave us. Everyday does not have to be a day of unending tasks.

The weekly day of rest is the 7th day our Friday evening to Saturday evening, "Evening and the morning were the first day;" Genesis 1:5 NKJV. This was instituted at the time of creation. It is not just a Jewish day of rest. Genesis 2:3 NKJV says, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." Exodus 20:8-11 NKJV says, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Notice that the commandment in Exodus Chapter 20 references the day of rest that God made holy at the time of creation.

Sunday was made a day of rest by Constantine to the pagan Sun god Mithras and passed down into Christianity. God does not want us to mix pagan practice with our faith. Deuteronomy 12:31 NKJV says, "You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods." The word abomination means disgusting. If it is disgusting to God, it should be disgusting to us. We should have a heart for what God says and not do things our own way.

If you have to leave your brick building where you go to church, it is only made of stone. Yeshua said in Matthew 5:13 NKJV, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." If your church is following pagan practice, it is only worthless stone you are leaving. Have joy in God's times and not pagan practices absorbed by some of Christianity.

Overworking or doing anything without having a balanced life can cause problems in life. I knew this person would come into work in the morning and often not leave work until 7 PM. She got a lot of thanks for her work, but she was sacrificing her life to the company she worked for. Is giving up your life for work worth it? Is giving away your joy worth it?

Ecclesiastes 2:20-24 NKJV says,
 Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.

Life contains a balance of many things. No one thing is all there is to life. Notice that the intense labor and striving of his heart brought him sorrow and a burden. There is more to life than just work. Sometimes when a company folds, people will lose their identity. Perhaps they have given away their life and then the job that gave them an identity for 30 years is no longer there. This is even true of some parents after their children move out. They have given their life for their children, and they feel an emptiness in their lives after the children are all moved out.

Be thoughtful in life and pray. Stay in God's peace and live in joy and do not live by the pettiness of the world. Do not take on too much in your day-to-day life so that your life is one unending life of tasks. Overworking or doing anything without having a balanced life is a misdirected life and can end up being a burden instead of a life of peace and satisfaction.

More to Consider

There is a spiritual reality to life. Some think there is nothing more to life than what we manufacture (what is made) or search for (as perhaps science). The Bible says there is more to life than what meets the eye. Isaiah 40:25-26 NKJV, "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things." 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."

Since God is the creator of all, He understands and knows all. Isaiah 55:8-9 NKJV, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." No matter who we are, we cannot conceive of all that God has created and all the intricacies and complexities of His creation and life.

But there is a time coming when we will know and understand all. Shaul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 13:9-12 NKJV, "For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face." Shaul likens our ability to understand as that of a child. For example, even the smartest people know very little about the universe. That will change though. Those who believe in God will grow up, they will no longer have the understanding of things as a child. We will be given an understanding of everything.

It will be an amazing time and experience. Shaul quotes part of Isaiah 64:3-4 NKJV which says, "The mountains shook at Your presence. For since the beginning of the world men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, nor has the eye seen any God besides You, who acts for the one who waits for Him." Shaul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." It is too bad that some of those who are so driven to know the secrets of the universe will not be allowed to know them because they will be in the lake of fire (see Revelation 21:8), but that is their choice. I say some because there are many godly believing scientists who understand that their self-realization (their ability to think) does not mean they are God. Some may think they are an Emperor god, but that does not mean they are a god. Just because a person thinks they are George Washington (the 1st president of the United States in the late 1700s), it does not make them George Washington.

These obstinate scientific people who think they know everything, do not know, and understand God and refuse to understand the truth about the universe. Kefa says in 2 Peter 2:10 NKJV, "Those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil." They live only by their 5 senses and are self-aggrandizing – they must think they are special, but they are presumptuous and have a strong self-will. They can say what they want to in the present, but these unbelievers will never be allowed to know the great secrets of the universe. That is their choosing by their own rejection of God and truth.

Some people think they know everything.

Kefa said that these people who think they know everything are not afraid to speak evil. Some in science have made up stories because they hate God. They say that Christianity opposed science. They will say things like Galileo was tortured and scientists were persecuted. Galileo had agreed to not share some science that the Catholic church questioned, but he did anyway. The Catholic Church had universities where they taught science. That's right, Christianity was pursuing good science. They put Galileo on house arrest for something they were not sure was right (we could say he was suspended for a short period of time); he was allowed to visit with family. He was an honored member of the scientific community and treated well during his suspension.

In fact, scientists were never persecuted. It is all made up. Didn't these lying scientists ever figure out that their lies wouldn't be checked up on? David Lindberg, a noted historian, wrote: "There was no warfare between science and the church." There has been anti-Christian prejudice by the scientific community and still is. So, do not be deceived by their lies. There is no war between science and believers in God. An 1874 book by John Draper called, History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science is filled with lies! I thought science was supposed to be up to date; 1874 indeed.

When I worked in research, I used my abilities in my field of study. I did not decide to enter into the field of theology at work, but some in science have no qualms about trying hurt good people who are trying to follow God. Some in science say we will have better world through

science. Science has helped countless people. My work in research helped people who were sick. My uncle's scientific work helped people with cancer and he did much more in his work at NASA.

Science is not the end all answer for mankind. The most informed century to date was the 20th century where we had two world wars and millions of people died as a result. Hitler accounted for 11 million deaths by extermination and Stalin perhaps more than 20 million. That occurred in supposedly an intelligent and informed era. The true hope for mankind comes from a good, caring, and loving God and the wisdom of His commandments. Some people think they are smart because they know a lot of information. A computer has a lot of information in it, but no wisdom. As the world becomes more secular, it lacks the wisdom of God. I once heard a quote where someone said they would sooner be ruled by the first 2,000 people in the phone book than the 2,000 faculty of Harvard.

The message of God brings healing, blessing, and joy. The worldly send out background noise of no real consequence. God can give us health and healing. Jeremiah 33:6 NKJV, "Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth."

God can give us His grace. He is a good God. Isaiah 33:20 NKJV, "LORD, be gracious to us; we have waited for You. Be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble." God was a God of grace in Old Testament times and still is. This was witnessed by those who lived at the time of the Messiah Yeshua. Matthew 15:30-31 NKJV about Yeshua, "Then great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus' feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel."

God is still at work today!

God is still at work and will do wonderful signs, wonders, and healings for us. Yeshua said in John 14:12 NKJV, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." God is able to do that because He is God. Have any of these unbelieving scientists healed you instantly? Isaiah 40:29 NKJV, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength."

The worldly do nothing by comparison. They don't keep the world going, they often think they should be worshipped for their miniscule accomplishments. They are just noise that will cease and end up in the lake of fire for eternity. Those who love God will continue on and enjoy the wonders of God's creation and love. Yet since God is bigger than their insolence and rebellion towards Him, He will forgive them if they believe and follow God's truths. 1 John 1:9 NKJV says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Make no mistake though, Yeshua said, "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven;" Matthew 10:32-33 NKJV.

Seek God and know His goodness. We worship the creator of the universe and not worldly baubles. We've established that God is good and not evil as some people say. Those who say that the Old Testament God is not good are lying to you. Exodus 34:6-7 NKJV, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." What do the baubles of this world have to offer? Can science or your government offer you eternal life?

Choose the paths of righteousness and follow God's good commandments that lead to life and a future of eternal life, happiness, and tremendous wonder. Yochanan describes some of what he saw. God is the creator; eternal life will be amazing. Revelation 21:18-20 NKJV, "The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst."

Psalms 34:8 NKJV says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" We trust in God by keeping His commandments of 'wisdom and understanding,' see Deuteronomy 4:6. Psalms 107:8-9 NKJV says, "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness."

Won't you trust in our God. He wants you to let Him into your life. 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."

Torah Study

VaEtchanan means, "and I pleaded". Moshe begins by relating that he asked God if he could go into the promised land; he would not be allowed to go. Instead, Joshua would lead Israel into the land. In this portion, the 10 commandments are listed again, we find the command to love God with all our heart, and the command to put up scriptures at our entrances. Moshe tells them to listen to the commands of God and do not add or subtract from them. He says that if Israel keeps God's commandments, all the nations would see their wisdom and understanding.

It is important to understand that the commandments in the Tanakh (Old Testament portion) give us a good life. Some say His commands are done away, but God says the wisdom of the Old Testament commandments would be a witness to the nations. In this portion it says in Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV, "Therefore 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;'" So why are some people saying that God's commands in the Old Testament portion are not for us?

God does not change; therefore, His commandments still help us.

They have been taught a system of man-made philosophy that has been passed down to us. It says in Numbers 23:19 that, "God is not a man, that He should lie." So, who is lying, God or man-made theology and philosophy? These people who are subtracting from God's commandments will have to face God someday. It also says in this portion in Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV, "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."

Since God's commandments give us the wisdom of an all-knowing God, we ought to be hanging on every word. I know someone who played pro basketball and I still remember almost every word they told me on how to play basketball. That's how we should be listening to God. The Shema is also in this portion where it says in Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." How do you 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." The Old Testament portion commandments are good and keeping God's commandments shows God that we care about His heart for us.

Why wouldn't we want to listen to an all-knowing and good God that has our best interests at heart?

We have enough troubles in life let alone doing things contrary to God's commands. The consequences of not keeping God's commands brings evil into the world. There are at least 39 words of encouragement to keep God's commandments in this portion, maybe more. Do you think it is important to keep God's commands! Shaul tells Timothy, "I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. 2 Timothy 4:1-2 NKJV. There was no New Testament at the time; he is talking about the Old Testament portion! 2 Timothy 3:15 NKJV says, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures." Timothy's mother was Jewish (see Acts 16:1); the Holy Scriptures being talked about are the Old Testament commandments.

It goes on the says that Yeshua will judge us; He will also judge those who are teaching false doctrine. Teach people to keep God's commands. In today's portion it also talks about God being merciful if we return to Him (see Deuteronomy 4:30-31).

Also in this portion, Israel was to tell their descendants about all the events that took place from Egypt until their entering the promised land. We too should talk about the goodness and power of God both in the Bible and from our own experiences.

Moshe then tells them about when they stood before Yĕhōvāh¹ and what they experienced at Mount Sinai. The mountain was ablaze and they heard God speak from the sky. He says they

¹ Ye-Ho-VAH is pronounced as, "Yĕ" like the word "yes," "Hō" like "home," and "Vāh" as in "pah;" Yĕ-hō-vāh. The accent is on the -VAH. Exodus 3:15 says that this will be God's name forever. It means, He existed, He is, and He will be. We are to pray using God's real name: "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them;" Numbers 6:27 NKJV. If we are not using God's real name, we are not putting His name on His people.

are not to make any representation of God to worship. They were to be an inheritance to God. Moshe tells them not to forget their covenant by worshipping idols. Israel would be destroyed if they worshipped idols. If they repent though, God will not forget them.

Moshe tells them that Yĕhōváh is God and there is no other so keep His commands. Moshe then creates three cities of refuge for the unintended killer to flee. Again, Moshe tells them to listen to God's commands and then repeats the 10 words they heard at Mount Sinai; he again talks about their encounter at Mount Sinai. He says listen to God's commands so that they may have a long life and then he gives them the Shema in Deuteronomy 6. Part of the Shema says in Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." Yeshua quotes this in Matthew 22:37. Since Yeshua quotes this, why do some say the Old Testament is done away with?

Moshe tells them again to observe God's commands and to tell their children all that God did for them. He says observing God's commands will make them righteous (in other words, it will help them to live right; righteous means to live right). Some don't understand what the word righteousness means and treat it more like a stamp of approval instead of what it really means. It means to live right. Also, Israel was to go and take the land and get completely rid of the idolaters there and their idols. Yĕhōváh kept his promise to their ancestors (so he will keep His promise to them), and therefore they were to obey God.

This Torah portion is often read near Tisha B'Av which is a day morning for the loss of the of the first and second Temples and the date of other Jewish disasters. It would be an appropriate day to fast on. We are not commanded to fast on Tisha B'Av (the 9th day of Av on the Jewish calendar). It is connected with this portion because Moshe tells them that they will be scattered among the nations in this portion. It also says in this portion that God will not forget His covenant with Israel. God will restore His people to Him when they repent.

Over and over in this portion, we see Moshe reminding them to keep God's commandments. The writer of Hebrews says the same thing (in Hebrews 3:5 to 4:2). As Moshe says there are dire consequences for not following God, the writer of Hebrews says the same. Hebrews 3:12 NKJV says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Contrary to what some say, we can depart from our relationship with God. It is important to maintain our relationship with God. Watch out for people who may give exciting or interesting teachings, but don't bring you in relationship with God. Shaul also talked about those with itching ears; watch out that you are not one of them (see 2 Timothy 4:3). Have a deep faith, not a superficial one.

The Haftarah for VaEtchanan is Isaiah 40:1-26. In Isaiah 40, Isaiah says that Israel is to take comfort. The glory of the Lord will be revealed. Isaiah says that mankind is like the grass that dries up, but the word of God stands forever. 1 Peter 1:23-25 NKJV quotes from this: "Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever.'" We are to live by God's commandments in this age which stands forever. Those who keep God's commandments will be with Him forever. Psalms 111:7-8 NKJV says, "All His precepts are sure.

They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." They were truths for life in Old Testament times and they are still truths for life.

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.)

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NKJV says,

"Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore 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.'"

Deuteronomy 4:15-19 NKJV says,

"Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that is in the water beneath the earth. And take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage."

Deuteronomy 5:6-21 NKJV says,

6 I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

7 You shall have no other gods before Me.

8 You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; 9 you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, 10 but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

11 You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

12 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

16 Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may be well with you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

17 You shall not murder.

18 You shall not commit adultery.

19 You shall not steal.

20 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

21 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.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NKJV says,

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 7:2-6 says,

"You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Rise Up Spiritually

(An accompanying teaching for this Torah portion.)

We begin to live a new life through God's commandments and the help of the Holy Spirit that God gives to believers in the Messiah Yeshua. We **have not** arrived yet; we need to grow up spiritually. It says God's word lasts forever. Congregations today think that leading people to a building will save them. They are leading them to wood and stone. Psalm 138:2 NKJV says about the Old Testament scriptures, "I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and Your truth; for **You have magnified Your word** above all Your name." Notice that **it doesn't say**, "I will worship your Temple for you have magnified your Temple above your name. It is God's word that's important.

It says we are born again through the word of God. Those who live a changed life and follow God's commandments (God's word) will endure forever. Born again means to live a changed life. Life is short, isn't God's promise of eternal life amazing.

Some use these verses in 1 Peter to mean it doesn't matter what they do; they think they will be in the future kingdom of God no matter what. That is not true. It is God's word and His commandments that will endure. We will endure too if we keep God's commands. It's plain to see this in Ephesians 5:5-6 NKJV, "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. **Let no one deceive you with empty words.**" An unclean person refers to a person who lives a sinful life. Shaul says, "Let no one deceive you." Don't be deceived by these people who are taking the scriptures out of context. They are going to the lake of fire (see Revelation 21:8); don't go to the lake of fire with them.

Also, Isaiah said Israel was to cry from the mountain tops that "here is your God." This is a Messianic scripture. After Yeshua came, many Jews and Gentiles believed. The Jews told the world about their Messiah. It's not true the Jews did not believe; that was a lie produced by the false pagan religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine was the leader of the Mithras cult which celebrates Sunday as the day to the pagan sun god. When Constantine produced his false church mixed with idolatry, the Empire even made keeping God's feasts illegal including the true day of rest (Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are My feasts.**")

The real day of Shabbat is our Friday night at sunset to Saturday at sunset.

Saying Sunday is Shabbat is an inappropriately applied man-made law. Yeshua said in Matthew 15:9 NKJV, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Deuteronomy 4:2 says we are not to add or change God's commandments. We can end up with almost anything by adding and changing God's commands. That's how some ended up with thousands of extra commands from the Old Testament. There are appropriately applied commands. We even see some commands appropriately added in the Torah itself. It is okay to apply appropriate commands to the Old Testament commands. That's how we got 1,050 New Testament commands; they are appropriately applied commands from the few hundred commands of the Old Testament. Many of our laws in the United States have their basis from the Bible; we've expanded the law in the United States now to over 2 million laws.

I use the following as an example a lot because it is simple. Shaul says that we are not to muzzle the ox while it is at work (see Deuteronomy 25:4); he uses this to mean we should support our leaders (1 Timothy 5:17-18). That is a properly applied commandment. Some say that the day of Shabbat changed because that is when Yeshua rose from the dead. Yeshua actually rose on our Saturday, perhaps near sunset. Since the 7th day was the day God rested from creation, keeping Shabbat as a day of rest recognizes God as creator. Genesis 2:3 NKJV says, "God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created."

God blessed the 7th day and separated it as a holy day (holiday, feast day). So, those who say otherwise contradict God. These Messianic verses say we are to keep Shabbat: Isaiah 56:1-2 NKJV says, "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of

man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." Stop defiling the true Sabbath; if you believe that God is the creator, then honor Him on Shabbat. Believe what the Bible says and do what the Bible says to do. Yeshua said that in vain you worship God with your man-made commands. Don't go along with inappropriate man-made commands. Keeping God's command demonstrates that you believe in God.

It said in Isaiah 40 that humanity is like the grass that withers away and is gone. There was a popular song years ago that said something like, let's sing and dance because life is short. The Bible also says that life is short, but we have good news; those who follow God's commandments and believe in Him will have a glorious life with Him for all eternity. Those who keep God's commands will endure forever.

In the present, we don't know all the goodness of God; at present we live our lives to the glory of God in a dark world. To compare even the good times we have now, to what we have waiting for us can't be done. Shaul quotes Isaiah 64:3 in 1 Corinthians 2:9 NKJV and says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

Shaul obviously bases his teachings on the Old Testament.

We've talked about the evil eye in previous portions; it is a standard Jewish teaching. First of all, there is a good eye, "... If there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things;" Philippians 4:8 NKJV and context; and there is an evil eye that is contrary to the way God wants us to view life and live life. The evil eye views things with mistrust, evil intentions, envy, resentment, and can even see others as threats. It produces greed and arrogance. Yeshua talks about the good eye and the evil eye. Luke 11:34 NKJV says, "Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness." People in the United States are filled with an evil eye these days. Yeshua said that those with an evil eye are full of darkness.

Mankind needs to hear the teachings of the Bible and start living right.

I should also mention that in some cultures, people will curse others with their eyes. That can be another meaning of the term evil eye. The good eye comes from an application of loving your neighbor. Yeshua was properly applying the commandment to love your neighbor. So those who have an evil eye are disobeying God's commandment to love your neighbor. We need teaching on how to apply the Torah properly. People have not learned how to discern between good and evil. Hebrews 5:14 NKJV says, "Those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." We use the Torah as the basis for life and use the Torah to discern how to act.

We need to rise up spiritually and get our lives in order and move forward to win the spiritual race. Shaul tells us to get disciplined so we do not get disqualified from the race. Live life in such a way so we receive eternal life.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV:

"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

I don't want to be disqualified, and I don't want you to be disqualified either. We are to keep God's commandments; we don't behave in a worldly fashion, but we are to be disciplined and spiritually pure. We don't run the spiritual race with worldly shoes. Shaul is using an example from the culture of his time. Those who competed in physical games worked hard to win a prize. It's the same in our era. People work very hard at sports so they can win. We are to discipline ourselves spiritually.

Money is not evil in itself and can be a good thing, but our goal in life is not just to accumulate things and money. Money is not our goal. We look at the plan of life in spiritual terms. It is so easy to get caught up in worldly things. I'm not sure why this is, but people are often drawn to songs written by foolish people. Ecclesiastes 7:5 NKJV says, "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise than for a man to hear the song of fools." It's difficult to hear that we've done something wrong, but it's much much better for us than some of the music that is out there.

Psalms 141:5 NKJV says, "Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. and let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it." Oil was used for anointing God's holy things; namely, those implements that were separated to be used at the Temple. God's holy people were also anointed and those who were anointed were to be respected. Being willing to follow God's commandments and be a people of God separates us to be God's anointed people; namely, we are to be a holy person who is separated from the ways of this world to be used by God.

We don't let worldly things dictate how we live; make God a priority and seek what is right and true. We are to act like we are God's people. Deuteronomy 7:6 NKJV says, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth." Yochanan said we are to follow God and not worldly things. 1 John 2:15-17 NKJV says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

*Our goal is to live in the future kingdom of God; we don't
make worldly things god over our lives.
We are true subjects of our God and King
who keep the laws of the kingdom.*

It is not always easy to always forge forward spiritually, but there is nothing better than doing what is right. We see what the world has to offer; hatred, sin, and lies. Instead, we long for

blessings, goodness, and truth. We are in the arena of life; waiting our turn to step in and fight spiritually. Again, Shaul said in 1 Corinthians 9:26-27 NKJV, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

We most certainly are to run towards our God; we are most certainly in a spiritual fight to do what is right. We will not give up; we will not fall short. Psalms 37:27 NKJV says, "Depart from evil, and do good."

Shaul told us in Ephesians that we are to stand strong, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might ... stand against the wiles of the devil. 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;" Ephesians 6:10-11, 13-14 NKJV.

In this portion, Moshe tells the people over and over that they are to keep God's commandments. They will give them wisdom and understanding. The Haftarah tells us that God's word endures forever and if we follow God's word and His commands, we will endure forever in an amazing future kingdom that is unimaginable. Rise up spiritually and forge ahead and be disciplined. Our main goal in life is not just to collect things and money, but to live for our King. We are to fight spiritually and resist doing evil. We are to be God's holy anointed people who do what is right and good and are available to be used for God's kingdom purposes.