



Names

Kefa – Peter
Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ
in the Greek means to be smudged
Mishkan – Tent of Meeting in the desert
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Yeshua – Jesus' real name
Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)
Yochanan – John

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
Menorah – 7 candle Israelite lamp
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Mishkan – tent of meeting in the desert
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the
Torah
(We also use transliterations from Hebrew)

There are sometimes worldly things that draw our attention in greater ways than we are drawn to God. I will look back on some of the things I thought were so important. Some of these things were not as much an issue of sin, but the feelings I had.

At times, we can be led by feelings. Sometimes this is good; consideration for the feelings of others and for our own feelings needs to be considered. But our feelings can sometimes cause us to overlook evil when we should not. We are to identify evil, and we are not to accept evil. Life can produce challenges in this area.

In most cases, a gentle approach is the godliest approach to life's situations even if we do not feel like responding in that way. A gentle approach can often bring more resolution than a hard line towards a situation. Nevertheless, we must stand our ground spiritually. We always want to have a good attitude toward the things of God no matter what. Psalms 40:8 NKJV says, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

We should realize that God's ways are not mankind's ways. That includes philosophy; theology is a branch of philosophy that interprets the Bible. Modern theology makes up man-made doctrine and takes the Bible out of its Jewish context. For example, they will take one mistaken doctrine, or one scripture taken out of context to form their man-made doctrine. They then form a wrong understanding of what the Bible is saying based on their mistaken idea so that they no longer have God's word. Yeshua said **their made-up doctrine is worthless and negates God's commandments (Matthew 15).**

Made up doctrine is worthless. Matthew 15:9 says, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

Also, we need to stop interpreting the Bible with our own values or that of politics. I have heard people share political rhetoric as though it is God's word. Do not be offended by God. There are people who think that killing others who are a burden to society is God's will. What makes them think that thou shalt not murder has been done away with. They put their own politics and ideals over God's word.

Be at peace in yourself and inspect what is drawing you toward something. Perhaps ask yourself why you are feeling that way about what you are being drawn towards. Using the 3rd person can be helpful. If your name was Andre, perhaps you could say to yourself, "Why is Andre feeling that way?"

At one time in my life, I allowed football to control my feelings. I became heavily invested in the success of my team even though it had little to do with God. Sports are fun, but they are just a game. There are many ways in life where we can become emotionally involved over something that has nothing to do with our spiritual life? These things can be hidden to us because of our emotions. We need to be aware of what is driving us. Are our lives spiritually driven? Do we allow non-spiritual things at times to take precedence over our lives?

Also, appearance is not everything. It is a good thing to take good care of ourselves and have a good presentation; it is not a bad thing, and it can be helpful in life. The desire to work at something and do what is right and godly speaks much more loudly than just appearances. That is because our actions tell others what we value. I should note though that dressing inappropriately can degrade who we are and our message. Always err on the conservative side. We are not trying to impress a small segment of deviant people.

Proverbs 4:23, 26-27 NKJV says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. ... Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil." We are to be diligent to protect our thoughts. We are to not in any way be diverted from God's truths and begin to accept evil and sin in our lives.

There is a lot of interconnectedness in life. What appears simple at first may have a lot of elements to it. We make one decision and that influences other areas of our life or the lives of others.

What is most important spiritually?

How will our decisions help us or others to walk with God?

To believe in God and trust in His commandments.

To do what is right and good.

Other people will follow our attitudes and actions.

Take one step at a time to develop a godly life.

Make a concerted effort to make sure your decisions are godly. Watch out for impulsive acts that could lead to negative consequences. Make long term decisions that honor God and be committed to doing what is right in all you do. This is how we love others; by keeping God's commandments. Yochanan said in 1 John 5:2-3 NKJV, "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." Whatever we face in life, keeping God's commandments is the most important and loving thing we can do.

This week is a double portion. Tazria means "she conceives." Metzora means "leper." The portion Tazria begins with laws concerning the birth of a baby boy. If a woman conceives a boy, he is to be circumcised on the eighth day. Shaul (Paul) taught that male babies should be circumcised in Galatians 5:11 NKJV; he says, "I still preach circumcision." Adults did not have to be circumcised because of the danger involved. Yeshua said that saving life supersedes other commandments. Luke 14:5 talks about saving life even though it is Shabbat, a day of rest. The people of Shaul's time who were telling men they should be circumcised were putting new believers at risk and people were dying because it was dangerous to do at that time.

The woman is to have a 40-day period of purification if it is a boy, 80 days for a girl and make a sacrifice for her purification. Often people are anxious about resuming activities. Why not be patient and listen to God.

When someone has a skin sore, boil, burn, or sore on their head or under their beard that could turn tzara'at (leprous), they are to be examined by the Cohen (Priest) and the Cohen is to determine if they are leprous or not. The person can be isolated for seven-day periods to determine if they are leprous. Being bald does not make a person unclean. People with tzara'at must identify themselves by wearing torn clothes and by voice and live outside the camp. The Cohen will also examine clothing for tzara'at (leprosy) and if it is infected the garment must be burned up.

We see God's protection over women in the purification period for women following childbirth giving her time to recover. Also, there were many instructions given for watching out for leprosy. It shows us that the commandments of God are there to protect us and help us. We can learn from this that it is appropriate to not to spread disease and the idea of quarantine is biblical. We should always remember that God is for us and cares about people and we should care about others too.

Back in the 1950s, quarantine was still practiced in order to protect others. Who wouldn't save the life of someone in their family if they could? Be patient and thoughtful in your approach to life. Years ago, some of the guys I worked with did not like wearing eye protection. If I had not been wearing eye protection, I would have lost an eye. A large piece of hot metal hit my eye protection hard.

A note about leprosy and speaking evil. Myriam, Moshe's sister, was saying bad things about Moshe and ended up with leprosy. When she repented, she was healed. We know there is a connection between speaking evil and emotional problems. Often people who focus on the negative become sick or emotionally sick. The ancient Rabbis saw a connection between speaking evil (lashon harah) and sickness in the Bible. They said that is it wrong to commit lashon harah (have an "evil tongue"). Shaul said, "If there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things;" Philippians 4:8 NKJV. He also must have believed that lashon harah (an evil

tongue) was wrong. So, watch your attitude and what you say. I am not saying to be a Pollyanna and think everything is great when it is not.

Again, this is a double portion today. Metzora means "leper." This portion begins with the purification rights and offerings for someone who has been healed of leprosy. It then talks about a possible infection being in the walls of a house and what to do if they find an infection in the house. Part of the house may be removed or if it is a contagious tzara'at (leprosy) then the house must be destroyed. People who were in the house also need to be observed for signs of leprosy. If the tzara'at is removed and the house is now clean, then a purification ceremony is observed.

The portion next talks about anything or anyone coming in contact with someone who has a discharge from their body and what to do about it; they are also unclean. Also, it talks about what a person is to do if the discharge stops; they are to make an offering. The portion talks about what to do if a seminal emission occurs, bathing after sexual relations, and a woman having her period. If a woman's discharge of blood lasts longer she will be unclean during that time and in both cases, it talks about how that makes other people or things unclean. An offering must be made for an extended time of niddah (discharge of blood). This is done so that they will not die for defiling the Mishkan (the Tent of Meeting in the desert, the Tabernacle). Also, we should again see God's protection in these commands.

In this portion, God again makes provision for the protection of the people from disease. It is obvious that people with leprosy or a discharge could be contagious and cause others to be sick. We should remember that God intends good for us and not evil. His rules were never intended to burden us. Also, the Mishkan (the Tabernacle) was to be a carefully guarded and revered place and no one with anything contagious was to come near it. It was a spiritual picture to Israel for them to be a holy people. This can also be spiritual picture of us guarding our lives and spiritual walk so that it is pure and free from sin. Just like the Temple was a special place, Shaul (Paul) tells us to glorify God because the Holy Spirit is in those who believe in Yeshua. We are temples with the Holy Spirit in us.

The Haftarah for the portion Tazria is 2 Kings 4:42-5:19. This portion in 2 Kings begins with the school of the prophets being miraculously fed. Then the captain of the armies of Aram, Na'aman, is healed of tzara'at (leprosy). Na'aman went to king of Israel first and the king was despondent, but Elisha heard about it and told the king to send Na'aman to him. Elisha tells him to dip in the Jordon 7 times and he did so and was healed. Elisha took no reward, but his servant disobeyed Elisha and Geichazi asked for the reward and he and his descendants ended up with the tzara'at after he did that. We should remember that God wants obedience for our benefit. After Na'aman put off his pride, he received healing from God.

The Haftarah for Metzora is 2 Kings 7:3-20. This portion tells the story of 4 lepers who said, 'why should we sit here until we die' and they went into the camp of the army of Aram and found it deserted because God had caused the army to flee with fear. They went back and reported it to the gatekeepers of the city. The king found that the army of Aram had fled, and the people went and ransacked the camp. The man who had scoffed at Elisha's prediction was trampled to death at the gate.

This story should remind us that God can use anyone if they are willing to start doing something for the kingdom. Shaul compares the believers in the Messiah to a body whose parts function together as they serve each other and the Messiah Yeshua. Also, we should be careful to have good attitudes about God. The man who had a negative attitude about what God was about to do ended up being trampled to death. We need and want truth, or we will end up with wrong ideas and wrong doctrine. Wrong doctrine will lead to our eternal demise.

Follow God
(an accompanying teaching to the Torah portions)

God is bigger than false doctrines. False teachers think they are going somewhere. They are not going where they think. Shaul (Paul) said in 1 Timothy 6:3-4 CJB, "**If anyone teaches differently and does not agree to the sound precepts of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and to the doctrine that is in keeping with godliness**, he is swollen with conceit and understands nothing." To live right and live godly lives, we need to follow God's commandments and understand the Bible in its Jewish context.

Some people think they have sound precepts and doctrine, but they are far from God. If they are not teaching others to do what is right and be godly, the Bible essentially said that they are just big swollen "wind bags" (swollen with pride) that do not understand a thing. A wind bag is someone who has a lot to say, but what they say is worthless, just a lot of air. Think about it; if what they teach lacks understanding and truth, then what they have to say is worthless.

Wearing fancy clothes does not mean someone teaches truth. Their clothes are just baubles. A bauble is something of little value that is used for show. Anyone can wear a funny hat and some ridiculous outdated attire from ancient times. There are so called Christians who wear red hats and clothes and call themselves cardinals. Their attire comes from a pagan cult that used to dance around a fire with red clothes on. Perhaps they think they are birds. Ridiculous costumes do not qualify someone for ministry; those who follow the true God are the true people who are equipped to serve others. Do not follow man; follow God. So, what is true doctrine?

What the Bible says is true doctrine.

2 Timothy 3:14-4:3 NKJV

3:14-15 "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

In verses 14 and 15, Shaul (Paul) says to Timothy to continue in what he learned since he was a child. He was to continue in the Holy Scriptures. His mother was Jewish ("And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed;" Acts 16:1). She would have taught him the Old Testament. **Since there was no New Testament at the time**, Shaul must be talking about the Old Testament.

3:16-17 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."

So, then Shaul says that the Old Testament was, "Given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work;" 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NKJV. So, the people that say the Old Testament is done away with are and are not keeping the properly applied commandments "understand nothing." Again, 1 Timothy 6:3-4 CJB, "If anyone teaches differently and does not agree to the sound precepts of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and to the doctrine that is in keeping with godliness, he is swollen with conceit and understands nothing."

What is so bad about doing what is right? Don't we all want that? Evidently, some just want to be foolish. The Bible says that those who do not want to do good, think they know everything, but in fact they know nothing (doing good in Jewish thought is keeping God's commandments).

4:1-3 "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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine."

It says that Yeshua will judge us so preach with urgency, "Convince, rebuke, exhort." This does not sound like the all you have to do is love mumbo jumbo, wishy washy, anything goes lies we here about how to follow God. It is true, isn't it; people are not teaching God's laws and commands from the Old Testament or the New Testament. There are some 1,050 laws in the New Testament that have come from interpretations of the Old Testament. I am not talking about misapplied man-made laws. For example, the Old Testament says to have honest weights and measures. If we did not have that as part of our law, our country would fall apart. God's laws are intended to help us; why not keep them; God is God, and we are not.

Some people think they can do what they want, but someday they will have to stand before God. Jude 1:4 NKJV says, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness." These false teachers think they can teach whatever they want instead of teaching people to keep God's commandments and do what is right. It says they turned the favor of God into sinful disgusting behaviors. These false teachers say it does not matter if we keep what it says in the Old Testament.

Again, it says about the Old Testament scriptures in 2 Timothy 4:1-3 NKJV, "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. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine."

God will judge those who do not keep the Old Testament. Shaul tells Timothy to teach the Old Testament all the time because there will be a time when people will not keep the Holy

Scriptures; they will not keep sound doctrine. I know that I shared this before; but we need to understand these scriptures, Hebrews 10:29-31 NKJV says, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

God will judge His people for the wrong they have done. He is not judging them on what they think is right, but on what God says is right. In these scriptures in Hebrews, it is talking about believers. It is through the truths of the Holy Scriptures from the Old Testament that we will find true light and be at true peace. Yeshua said in Matthew 5:17 NKJV, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets." So, quit making excuses. "I didn't know," will not work with God at the judgment. Hebrews 12:14 NKJV says, "Pursue peace with all people, and **holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.**" Without being a holy separate people who keep God's commandments, we will go to another place where we will not see God. I do not know about you, but I want to be on God's good side. Instead of spreading the leprosy of sin and hate, be a messenger of truth and blessing.

God gave us the laws in the Old Testament portion to protect us. The quarantine practices in the Old Testament still apply today. When we do what God tells us, we can be blessed by God. When we serve others, God can use us for His purposes. God even used lepers who discovered the invading army had left without taking their supplies with them. False doctrines are of no consequence to God. Just because someone wears weird clothes, it does not qualify them to teach about the true God. Timothy was taught the Holy Scriptures from the Old Testament and God will just us by His truths. He wants us to live by them because He is an all-knowing God and are good for us. We will find true light and peace in God's holy words in the Bible.