



#22-23 VaYakhel-Pekudei Exodus 35:1- 40:38

Torah Teaching By Moshe Schwab

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
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the
Torah
Vayakhel – the 22nd Torah portion
Pekudei – the 23rd Torah portion
(We also use transliterations from Hebrews)

Our portions for today are Vayakhel and Pekudei. Vayakhel means "and he assembled." Today it is a double portion. Sometimes portions are doubled up because there are 54 portions each year and there are also portions that are taught on God's feasts which makes for a few more portions each year. In Vayakhel, we see the people acting together for the work of the Mishkan. They were making the effort to do what God told them to do.

The people were being generous with their time and money. Do not underestimate what they had to do to survive in the desert. Although God provided water and manna, they still had to take care of all the details of life including gathering the manna. In this era, we also must take care of all the things we need to do for life, but that should not stop us from being generous towards the things of God both with our resources or our time.

I would like to begin by talking about, Following God helps to deflect wrong thinking and wrong practice. I was talking to a very accomplished and smart person, and he told me that God's commandments have helped him to have a good life. We could say that they are a shield that is readily available to those who keep His commandments. Psalms 18:30 NKJV says, "As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him."

I can attest to that too. God's commandments have helped me to have a satisfying and good life that is unmatched by the philosophies of the world that are ever seeking for truths in life but never able to find them. Often, people just go from one idea to another, one accomplishment to another, and from obtaining or doing one more thing in life only to never find full satisfaction. They must talk themselves into the concept that their pursuits are the only value of life. King Solomon who was one of the wealthiest kings of his time gives us some inspired words from God regarding this.

Ecclesiastes 1:8 NKJV says,

All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.

Ecclesiastes 4:8 NKJV says,

There is one alone, without companion: he has neither son nor brother. Yet there is no end to all his labors, nor is his eye satisfied with riches. But he never asks, "For whom do I toil and deprive myself of good?" This also is vanity and a grave misfortune.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 NKJV says,

He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 NKJV says,

All the labor of man is for his mouth, and yet the soul is not satisfied.

How is it that something like God's good commandments which are so readily available, ignored by so many? Many people do not believe there is a creator God who has provided for us and given us good ways to live, otherwise they might come to know the truths they can have to live a good life, so they can be satisfied and content in life. This applies to our regular activities as well as spiritually. My conversation with this very accomplished person turned toward the existence of God. He said there must be a God because our bodies are so complicated that it is impossible that we just sort of happened to come into existence by chance. I responded that I know of scientists who do not believe in God who think the same thing. I think that is amazing. Some come to believe, but some remain in doubt.

Those that believe in a creator God sometimes come to understand that God deserves our great respect and love. We should understand that fearing God means that we realize that God is greater than our own ideas on life so that we trust in God and what He teaches us. Psalms 115:11 NKJV says, "You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield." God is our help because He knows what is best for us and wants what is best for us. He is our shield because God's good commandments deflect and keep away the things in life that work against having a satisfying and good life. It is the Creator's commandments that were given for our good.

Deuteronomy 4:39-40 NKJV says,

Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. You shall therefore keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you today, **that it may go well with you** and with your children after you, and **that you may prolong your days.**

Those who do not want to follow God but follow evil, are always searching but because they deny the existence of God and do not want to follow His good instructions, they follow good intentions and their own thoughts and not truth. Well did Rabbi Shaul say of them in 2 Timothy 3:7 NKJV, "Always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." Some may object to using Shaul's good title. The word rabbi in our modern times does not mean what it meant in Shaul's time. It often only means teacher in our era and is not intended to be a term associated with someone who is great as it did in ancient times.

Yeshua had trouble with those who made themselves on the level with someone who considers themselves as great. Anyone who puts themselves on the same level as a god is proud and disobeys Yeshua's admonition to not call themselves great. Yeshua said in Mark 10:18 NKJV, "No one is good but One, that is, God." Some use titles just to describe what they do, but others

consider themselves as a great one because of their title, their position they hold, or their accomplishments. I know of a number of very accomplished people who have a modest concept of themselves and are not proud. Some unfortunately are very nasty and condescending though. We all came from the same blood line.

Acts 17:24-26 NKJV says,

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth.

Some would have us think that some people are inferior or defective because of their ethnicity or for some other reason, but that is not true. God made us in His likeness with special abilities such as being able to reason, being creative, being kind and caring, and so many other characteristics. Genesis 1:26 NKJV says, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'" Each person deserves our caring respect. We are not just an animal. The animals have the ability to think and take care of themselves, but do not have the same abilities as humans. God made us different and we are special beings.

How do we measure our life? We need to remove things from our life that are bad for us. Look good spiritually. I remember years ago that some of the young people I knew wanted to fit in with others, so they began smoking tobacco cigarettes because others were smoking. They did this even though there are warnings on packs of cigarettes that say that smoking tobacco can harm your health. You would think they are lacking some of their reasoning ability. This shows us that we can choose to do things that are not sensible. It is one thing to do something in ignorance, but it is another to do things that are contrary to our existence.

The same is obviously true for our spiritual life. Our spiritual life refers to how we act and behave, what gives us meaning or purpose, and our relationship with God. It is generally to be thought separate from the person, but our spiritual life reflects how we have decided to relate to life and to God, and it becomes part of us. God does not look at our spirituality as something separate from who we are. Proverbs 15:3 NKJV says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."

The true God wants us to be good people. This is an important verse. Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, **that it may be well with you.**" The creator God knows what is best for us and the commandments God has given us are, "right and good," and they are intended to help us in life.

We become a spiritual person with integrity and other virtues by our own free will that God has given us. It is the part of us that seeks truth. Without this ability, our ability to observe and come to conclusions would not become well developed. It is one of the reasons that we can form conclusions and also come to the conclusion that there must be a true creator and God.

To not follow God's good commandments works against having a good and satisfying life and can produce evil in life and society. Psalms 37:27 NKJV says, "Depart from evil, and do good;

and dwell forevermore." We are to stop doing evil and instead do what is good, namely, keep God's good commandments that are intended to help us in life. Just look at all the pain and troubles in this world. That is enough to demonstrate that we need the truths that God wants us to live by. Psalms 25:10-11 NKJV says, "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. For Your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my iniquity, for it is great." Do not be fooled by the word covenant. Strong's Dictionary says that covenant can also mean agreement. Each of us has the opportunity to come to an agreement to believe in God and follow His commandments that are truths for life. Some philosophers say the word covenant refers to Israel. In actuality, every person has the ability and chance to accept the true God or not. When we agree (make a covenant) to follow God, we also often keep His testimonies, His commandments. It would make sense that if we truly believe, we live how God tells us to live.

The psalmist asks for forgiveness. He understands that to not keep God's good commandments is to live wrong, to sin. God will forgive us if we are truly sorry for our sins and we are committed not to sin again.

Psalms 103:12-17 NKJV says,

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. but the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him.

Why does it say, "From everlasting to everlasting?" It is because God promises eternal life in His amazing and good future kingdom to those who keep His commandments and do good. Again, Psalms 37:27 NKJV says, "Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell forevermore."

We should want to look and behave like we are good people. Titus 2:7-8 NKJV says, "In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you." Have spiritual integrity, be respectful, use appropriate and good language, do not do evil. Again, what is good works? It is to keep God's commandments. 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 NKJV says, "Hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." We are to hold fast to God's commandments and do not do evil. I endeavor to be respectful and caring, and to keep all of God's good commandments. I also purposely try to look nice and look appropriate in my culture, so I avoid any appearance of evil to others.

Be a well rounded person spiritually. Remove unnecessary worldly things from our lives. We become well rounded spiritually by getting to know God's commandments and do them. Those who are "well rounded" have developed their ability to know the difference between what is good or not good. Hebrews 5:14 NKJV says, "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." We grow up spiritually by developing our ability to know what is wrong and by doing what is "good."

Often in society, a well rounded person has developed their abilities to function well in life. People will spend a lot of time and effort just working on their ability to navigate life, but they sometimes ignore their spiritual side of life. I challenge you to not only navigate life well, but to navigate spiritually well also.

We should be examples to others. That is one of the best ways to teach others. I remember learning how to drive a nail into a piece of wood. The person teaching me showed me how to hold a hammer and how to drive in a nail with only a few strokes. With practice I was able to do what he did. Shaul tells Timothy to be an example to others. 1 Timothy 4:12-13 NKJV says, "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Of course, these are only a few of the things we need to give attention to. We need to begin somewhere, and these would be a good starting point. When he says give attention to reading, he is referring to the weekly reading of Old Testament doctrine and keeping God's Old Testament commandments. The context in Acts 15 is about Gentiles coming to know and keep God's Old Testament commandments. 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." Also, the Bible tells us what doctrine is. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV says, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." So, do not forsake God's good Old Testament commandments.

Take protective measures spirituality in all areas of our life. Think through what is good to do and watch our thoughts so that they follow what the Bible says. Wrong thinking can lead us in the wrong direction. Be committed to follow God and recommit yourself often. I recommit myself every morning and every time I am tempted. It is a good thing to be committed to God. Joshua 24:15-16 NKJV says, "'Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.' So the people answered and said: 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.'"

Far be it from us that we should serve sin. The wages of sin is eternal spiritual death. Instead, be holy and receive eternal life in God's good future kingdom.

Romans 6:19-23 NKJV says,

Just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, watch your thinking, grow spiritually, and be faithful.

2 Timothy 2:2-7 NKJV says,

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.

Following God helps to deflect wrong thinking and wrong practice. His commandments are like a shield that deflects wrong and sinful behaviors. Our spiritual life reflects how we have decided to relate to life and to God, and it becomes part of us. Look good spiritually. Grow up spiritually by developing our ability to know what is wrong and doing what is "good." Be faithful and watch our thinking.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 NKJV says,

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity.

Here is more to consider.

Also, I would like to talk a little about what it means to worship God. We do that most of all by treating God for who He is. For example, God is our provider because He is the creator. Also, God knows what is best for us because He is the creator and has given us His commandments. We have a good and kind God. Psalms 145:15-16 NKJV says, "The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing."

Also, the root word for the Hebrew word *baruch* means to kneel. Kneeling is a form of bowing down and worship. When we say *baruch* in our prayer to God it could also mean to worship God. Also, when God blesses us, we could say that God puts us on His knees like His little children to bless us. Yeshua blesses the children in Mark. Mark 10:14-16 NKJV says, "'Let the children come to me, don't stop them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Yes! I tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it!'" And he took them in his arms, laid his hands on them, and made a b'rakhah over them." Yeshua laid His hands on the children and blessed them.

When the people were to bring their offerings to the Temple, they were to rejoice in all that God had provided. Deuteronomy 26:9-11 NKJV says, "He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O LORD, have given me. Then you shall set it before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God. **So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the LORD your God has given to you.**"

We should give thanks verbally for all God has given us. Our thoughts should also agree with what we are saying. After they came and gave the first of their harvest from their crop, they were to then worship it says. In the Hebrew, the word translated worship is, Chavah (Strong's number, H2331) which means, "to live; by implication (intensively) to declare or show." The translators thought that the sense of the usage meant to worship but what does it mean to live before God? We are to recognize and behave like God is the creator. In the case of the firstfruits offering, they were to make the offering and rejoice to the creator God. In life, we are to have joy over all that God has provided for us and that includes His good commandments and also the Messianic gift of the Holy Spirit in this era. Every day when we eat, we are to give thanks for God's provision. Deuteronomy 8:10 NKJV says, "When you have eaten and are full,

then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you." In the giving of thanks for God's provision, we can see that we recognize God as the creator.

We are to have a thankful attitude towards our creator God's commandments. The Psalms were actually songs. There are different ways we can be thankful to God.

Psalms 19:8-11 NKJV says,

The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them there is great reward.

God did not give us His commandments to burden us, but to help us. They are more valuable than gold so be thankful for them.

We should also have joy because of God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 13:52 NKJV says, "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." Just like God's commandments help us in life, the Holy Spirit is another helper for the believers in Messiah Yeshua. John 14:15-17 NKJV says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth." Be thankful for God's gift of the Holy Spirit and just like we are to be diligent to keep God's good commandments (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18), we should desire the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 14:1).

Joy is an important element for life, and the lack of joy can cause problems in life and even cause us to desire sinful ways to achieve satisfaction. Deuteronomy 28:47-48 NKJV says, "Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies." God wants us to guard (keep) His good commandments; we are to live before God by keeping His commandments.

Shaul talks about this in Romans 12:1-2 NKJV: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." What is God's perfect will for us? It is to transform our lives through His good commandments that are worth rejoicing over, they are right and enlightening, they endure forever, and they can warn us and are worth keeping.

I would now like to begin our introductory teaching for today. God has a special way for us to excel in life. We are to be God's unique people. Exodus 19:5-6 NKJV says, "You shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Isn't that wonderful. God wants us to be His treasured people. We do that by being a holy 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." Deuteronomy 14:2 NKJV says,

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

What does the Bible say about how we can be God's holy people? Deuteronomy 28:9 NKJV says, "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways." We are holy if we keep God's commandments. That has not changed. 1 Peter 2:9 NKJV says, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." We are God's holy people by keeping His commandments. If we do not keep God's commandments, we will fall short of the grace of God. Hebrews 12:14-15 NKJV says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God."

Kefa felt that he would be negligent if he did not warn the people. 2 Peter 1:12-13 NKJV says, "For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you."

What did Kefa remind them of?

2 Peter 2:4-6 NKJV says,

For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly."

Also, 2 Peter 3:14-17 NKJV says,

Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked."

What scriptures is Kefa talking about? There was no New Testament portion at the time. People were twisting the Old Testament scriptures to their destruction. God did not spare the ancient world that was full of sin. In order for God to be a good God, He must judge those who are wicked and do evil. Beware that you do not fall and be "led away with the error of the wicked." All the writers of the New Testament portion tell us to keep God's good Old Testament commandments. For example, 1 John 3:4 NKJV says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." It is a sin to not keep the Old Testament laws.

People will say that Shaul (Paul) was not Jewish but Christian. Shaul defends himself before the governor, Felix. Instead of saying he was now a Christian, he affirmed that he accepted the Old Testament law and believed in it. Acts 24:14 says, "I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." So, people who say that Shaul did not keep the law or teach the law is not true.

We should mention that Jerome, who translated the Bible into Latin, said the Greek manuscripts had been tampered with and they needed to be corrected. So, it is likely that some of our misunderstanding of Shaul comes from the scriptures being tampered with.

For example, in James 1:25, the Greek text adds the word liberty which is not in the Hebrew manuscript of James 1:25. Without the word liberty our Bibles should read, "the perfect law (Torah) and continues therein." In the Hebrew James, this verse says we are to observe the Torah. There is a lot of evidence that both Jew and Gentile are supposed to keep the Torah. Anytime we see something that seems to say otherwise we might be misunderstanding what it is saying, it could be an error in translation (the translators are human), or because the Greek had been changed in some places, it could be something that had been altered by heretics. Do not follow what the heretics taught.

Shaul's standard for life was the Old Testament law.

(We will repeat this short section in the Torah portion for today.)

We are to be those who follow truth. There are a lot of people who say they know what is best and there are many religions that say they teach the truth. What determines that we have the truth? It is the Old Testament portion scriptures that define who is to be the Messiah and the New Testament scriptures refer to the Old Testament scriptures to establish that Yeshua is the Messiah. We see Yeshua carrying out the prophecies concerning Him. When people deny the validity of the Old Testament scriptures, they are denying the validity of Messiah Yeshua. It is the Old Testament scriptures that contain the truths that identify the Messiah and give us truths for life. In fact, the Old Testament law is doctrine. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV says, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." The people who say that God's doctrine has been replaced are in effect saying that God's "good" law is somehow not worth keeping.

Shaul (Paul) said that the Old Testament scriptures were his standard for life. Again, Acts 24:14 says, "I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." He believed in the Law! This was an account from his later years as a believer in Yeshua, perhaps in the later 50s AD. He always believed in the law and he does not mean that the law is done away with in his teachings. Shaul says it is not done away with. Romans 3:31 NKJV says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." Shaul made certain that others knew that he kept and taught the law. Acts 21:23-24 NKJV says, "We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that **you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.**"

Shaul was not trying to trick anyone but let them know that he kept the Old Testament law and taught the Old Testament law. Christianity has developed a theological system that contradicts the Bible. When Shaul told them about the Gentiles accepting what he taught, they glorified God, and those listening to Shaul then also reported the good news that thousands of Jews were zealous for the law. Acts 21:19-20 NKJV says, Shaul, "told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Myriads is the word 10,000 according to Strong's Dictionary.

So, it also is not true that all the Jews rejected the Messiah. Many Jews accepted the Messiah and kept God's good laws, the Torah. Shaul also taught circumcision. Galatians 5:11 NKJV says, "I still preach circumcision." It was the circumcision of adult males that is against the Torah because it was dangerous for adult men to do. The Torah teaches us to protect life because we are made in the likeness of God with so many special abilities (see Genesis 1:26). Also, note that Yeshua said it was proper to even save the life of an ox on the Sabbath (even though it would be considered work to do so). Luke 14:5 NKJV says, "Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?"

We find out in the Old Testament portion what is truth. God's judgements are truth. Psalms 119:30 NKJV says, "I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me." God's truths give us hope. Psalms 119:43 NKJV says, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I have hoped in Your ordinances." The law is truth. Psalms 119:142 NKJV says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth." God is good and merciful. His good and true commandments are forever. Psalms 100:5 NKJV says, "For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations." Shaul kept and taught God's good commandments. God's commandments are for both Jew and Gentile and they endure forever.

God can give us great peace in all we do. Accept God's peace in every situation.

God's commandments and the Messianic gift of the Holy Spirit helps us in life and can impact us in significant ways. First, it is important to understand that the Old Testament laws are from a good God that has our best interests at heart. 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!" Again, we should understand that the Messianic gift of the Holy Spirit is also our helper. John 14:15-17 NKJV says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth." The Holy Spirit is another helper.

Instead of living in God's peace, we can substitute stress, dissatisfaction, and lies on how to live. Look for solutions that give you hope and use the scriptures to help you in life's situations. Be optimistic about our spiritual life. God can turn things around for us. Look at the life of Joseph and what he had to endure until God helped him to be 2nd to Pharaoh. Be faithful to God's commandments and to your faith until the end no matter what. Since God is the creator, He can reward us in eternity. Daniel 12:2-3 NKJV says, "And many of those who sleep in the

dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever." What do you want out of life? Do you want to shine like the stars forever or be in everlasting contempt for your sin? So, keep the Old Testament law.

God tells us to be a thankful people. God has given us so much. So, concentrate on being appreciative and thankful towards God as well as towards others. Also, treat others with patience and respect. Keep pressing forward spiritually. Shaul said in Philippians 3:14 NKJV, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Do not allow yourself to be so ingrained mentally with negatives that you cannot see all the good that God has given you. We can decide on a different agenda for life than the ways of the world. Be strong. 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." So, trust in God and all He has given you.

The world often puts pressure on us to conform to ideals or ideas that are contrary to the true way to live.

There are a lot of ideologies and religions. Many of them are convinced that they have the truths for life. Yeshua said that we will know whether they are of God by their fruits. Matthew 7:16-20 NKJV says, "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit."

For example, the religion of Communism is convinced that if everyone gave up their rights to the government and equity is created in their society, that everyone will be happy and content. Any ideology or philosophy of society can be termed a religion even if it does not believe in a god (see [The Stanford Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy](#)). One of the tenets of the Communist faith is to create dissatisfaction and discontent in a country and get the people to revolt to create this false concept of utopia. The Communist religions murdered close to 100 million of their own people in the 1900s according to some sources. It is one of the most murderous religions to ever exist. They are a false religion. They will talk about the crusades as if they were yesterday even though they were only for a short period in Christian history.

The Bible says that murder is wrong and those who commit murder will end up in the lake of fire for eternity. Just two of the 10 Commandments, do not murder and do not covet, would prevent many wars. That is a testimony to the truths of the Bible. The religion of Communism produces bad fruit. They believe that other religions are the opiate of the people. You could say that their god is their false ideology.

There are many religions, ideals, and philosophies on life that have nothing to do with biblical truths but with their own ideas and ideals for life. We need to be a discerning people and be able to resist their concepts and false beliefs and ideals. Deuteronomy 11:16 NKJV says, "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them."

Do not follow those who are not teaching truth. Do not follow false teachers even if what they say sounds good. The Communist ideal of equity sounds good, but not everyone has the same abilities or drive to be productive. The Bible says that those who work are to be paid. I once heard of someone who went into a butcher shop in a communist country and there was no meat. There was no meat because this false system produces a lack of incentive.

The Bible says that we should not follow false teachers even if they do some amazing things. Deuteronomy 13:1-3 NKJV says, "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' – which you have not known – 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams."

There are some people who say bad things about the God of the Bible often because they believe in some false system or false religion. Others commit sexual sins and their minds are controlled by the number of worldly things they can acquire. There are people who only care about what they want to do even if it is sinful. Some have false sinful ideals, and they try to entice people into believing in their false ideals. They have forsaken what is right and are driven by their desires or for the enactment of their false beliefs.

2 Peter 2:12-17 NKJV says,

But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.

Do not be confused by false religions and ideologies that can trap us into lies on how to live. Shaul talks about those who are trapped in foolish or ignorant disputes. People are often trapped by their desires, false ideas or false ideals, or sin that are contrary to God's commandments and truths that we need for a good life. Some of these people think that their truths are the truths we need for life and not the truths of the Bible. Some of their beliefs came from the devil. The devil is real and wants to mess up people's life.

2 Timothy 2:22-26 NKJV says,

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the

truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

Some people are trapped by the lies of the devil. We talked about this last week in a little more detail, but we need to teach about this more often.

We talked a little about the devil and spiritual warfare last week and it is good thing to be reminded of. There is a Jewish teaching about the way the devil deceives people. Adam and Eve were perfect beings before they were drawn away by their own desires and failed to keep what God told them to do. We should understand that the serpent was perhaps taken over by a devil spirit. The Bible says there are devil spirits. The Jewish people who lived at the time of Yeshua understood Yeshua was casting out devil spirits and they were amazed. They said in Mark 1:27 NKJV, "For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

Devil spirits were at one time good beings but rebelled against God. Isaiah 14:12-13 NKJV says, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." He wanted to be God and define what he thought to be true and therefore, the devil and the devil spirits that sinned with him disrupt the world and weaken the nations perhaps because they think they can get away with it or like some believe, the devil spirits are angry with God and trying to destroy God's creation and destroy the lives of mankind as an act of defiance. The fact that many modern Jews do not believe in a devil does not go along with what the Bible says.

In Genesis, we should understand that the devil through a serpent influenced Eve and then Adam to destroy their relationship with God. The devil thinks that he is god and says to Eve that she will be god. It is the same lie that the devil believes about himself. Genesis 3:4-5 NKJV says, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God." The devil is still trying to destroy our relationships with God, but we can resist the suggestions that the devil speaks into our minds because we have the power to do so. Some people have given themselves over to spirits and cannot resist the devil spirits as they should. They can be delivered if they resist the devil and since Yeshua is over all, they can resist devil spirits through His name.

The story of Adam and Eve sinning is thought to be a fable, but it is a real account of how Adam and Eve sinned. People just do not understand what the story is meant to convey. They are ignorant spiritually. The devil works behind the scenes to trick us. How did Eve get so tricked by the devil? First, the devil questions God's command and then the woman changed what God said.

Genesis 3:1-5 NKJV says,

Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God."

God's command was, Genesis 2:16-17 NKJV says,
 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Eve omitted the words "freely eat," and added the words "touch it," and then changed the consequences to a maybe. The devil said there were no consequences for sin. She then considered the sin instead of resisting it. Genesis 3:6 NKJV says, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate." What happened is just like what it said in James 1:14 NKJV which says, "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." We all have the choice in life to either obey God or suffer the consequences for their wrongdoing. Adam and Eve brought death on themselves. Before their sin they were perfect beings and would not die, but because they sinned, they would now experience death. "In the day" probably refers to their future death that their sin caused. There are other ideas on this, but that is the simplest answer for what the text says.

The same thing is happening today. People think they can be god of their life instead of following God's good ways for life. The devil can also tempt us and speak to our minds. For example, the devil could say, "Is there a God." Then the devil will say, "No there isn't because I cannot see God." Watch out that you do not succumb to his temptations as Eve did.

We can resist these temptations if we make the effort to. If you know it is wrong, do not do it. James 4:7-8 NKJV says, "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." God knows what is best for us, so His commandments are intended to help us in life. Do what God says and do not follow false belief systems. Deuteronomy 10:13-14 NKJV says, "Keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good."

The Torah Studies for today.

Our portions for today are Vayakhel and Pekudei. Vayakhel means "and he assembled" In Vayakhel, we see the people acting together for the work of the Mishkan. Vayakhel begins with Moshe (Moses) again reminding the people to keep Shabbat. This is just before they take up a collection for the articles and manufacture of the Mishkan (Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting in the desert). From the context this encouragement has to do with their place of worship. They might think that doing the work for the Mishkan was enjoyable and consider it no work at all; but God tells them not to do it. Perhaps that is a good rule to follow for Shabbat. I often say that if it can wait for tomorrow, don't do it. In life, we prepare to keep Shabbat and are ready to do it. Just like God rested on the 7th day, we rest on the 7th day because we believe He is the creator God.

In the context about work on the Mishkan, it talks about not starting a fire. We should probably understand that it has to do with the work on the Mishkan, like smelting and forming of metal. Starting a fire can also be arduous and we should be careful not to do any work like that on a

Shabbat. Use good judgment. Not turning on a light switch because it causes a spark is not work and neither is driving a car. Some people will walk a mile with their little children rather than drive their car Shabbat. Which is more work? Their man-made doctrine is just foolishness.

I once explained this to someone who kept all these little extra man-made laws that micromanage life. He said to me that my teaching was not enough to keep people from working on Shabbat. I understood where he was coming from. People make up excuses to work on Shabbat and we shouldn't do that. The Bible says that "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;" Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV. Adding misapplied commandments is wrong. God gave us a brain; stop making up excuses to work on God's days of rest and stop following misapplied man-made laws. Follow what the Holy Spirit is telling you to do if need be. God gave us the Holy Spirit to help us follow His commandments.

Shaul's standard for life was the Old Testament law (Did Shaul (Paul) Keep the Law?)

We are to be those who follow truth. There are a lot of people who say they know what is best and there are many religions that say they teach the truth. What determines that we have the truth? It is the Old Testament portion scriptures that define who is to be the Messiah and the New Testament scriptures refer to the Old Testament scriptures to establish that Yeshua is the Messiah. We see Yeshua carrying out the prophecies concerning Him. When people deny the validity of the Old Testament scriptures, they are denying the validity of Messiah Yeshua. It is the Old Testament scriptures that contain the truths that identify the Messiah and give us truths for life. In fact, the Old Testament law is doctrine. Proverbs 4:2 NKJV says, "For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law." The people who say that God's doctrine has been replaced are in effect saying that God's "good" law is somehow not worth keeping.

Shaul (Paul) said that the Old Testament scriptures were his standard for life. Again, Acts 24:14 says, "I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets." He believed in the Law! This was an account from his later years as a believer in Yeshua, perhaps in the later 50s AD. He always believed in the law, and he does not mean that the law is done away with in his teachings. Shaul says it is not done away with. Romans 3:31 NKJV says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." Shaul made certain that others knew that he kept and taught the law. Acts 21:23-24 NKJV says, "We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that **you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.**"

Shaul was not trying to trick anyone but let them know that he kept the Old Testament law and taught the Old Testament law. Christianity has developed a theological system that contradicts the Bible. When Shaul told them about the Gentiles accepting what he taught, they glorified God, and those listening to Shaul then also reported the good news that thousands of Jews were zealous for the law. Acts 21:19-20 NKJV says, Shaul, "told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have

believed, and they are all zealous for the law." Myriads is the word 10,000 according to Strong's Dictionary.

So, it also is not true that all the Jews rejected the Messiah. Many Jews accepted the Messiah and kept God's good laws, the Torah. Shaul also taught circumcision. Galatians 5:11 NKJV says, "I still preach circumcision." It was the circumcision of adult males that is against the Torah because it was dangerous for adult men to do. The Torah teaches us to protect life because we are made in the likeness of God with so many special abilities (see Genesis 1:26). Also, note that Yeshua said it was proper to even save the life of an ox on the Sabbath (even though it would be considered work to do so). Luke 14:5 NKJV says, "Then He answered them, saying, 'Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?'"

We find out in the Old Testament portion what is truth. God's judgements are truth. Psalms 119:30 NKJV says, "I have chosen the way of truth; Your judgments I have laid before me." God's truths give us hope. Psalms 119:43 NKJV says, "And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I have hoped in Your ordinances." The law is truth. Psalms 119:142 NKJV says, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth." God is good and merciful. His good and true commandments are forever. Psalms 100:5 NKJV says, "For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations." Shaul kept and taught God's good commandments. God's commandments are for both Jew and Gentile and they endure forever.

Moshe goes on to tell them in the Torah portion that God told him that they should take up a free will collection for the things needed for the Mishkan. Likewise in the New Testament portion, Shaul talks about taking up a free will collection in 2 Corinthians 8:6-10. We find out that the people were very generous towards the making of the Mishkan. It is good to be a generous person if we can just as they were for the Mishkan.

Then Moshe asks for the craftsmen to come and make the articles for the Mishkan and the clothing and adornments for the priests. The people came and gave freely for the work of the Mishkan. Women who could make fabric began their work and according to Exodus 38:8, the Hebrew text seems to be saying that some women came to the Tent of Meeting to fight spiritually in prayer. The leaders brought precious objects such as precious stones, incense, and oil.

The people seemed to be of one mind as they worked on the Mishkan. This reminds us that we are to be of one mind spiritually. Shaul refers to this in Colossians 3:2 NKJV, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." As they set their minds on the things of God and the Mishkan, they moved forward spiritually. We too need to be of the same mind spiritually.

Bezalel and Aholiab lead the work and they as well as others are filled with the Spirit of God to do the work. It is possible that God gave them instructions on how to do all the work and it wasn't just by natural ability. On more than one occasion, God helped me to accomplish the tasks I had to do. People sometimes diminish the power of God and God's ability to work in us and through us. This is incorrect doctrine. My cousin became a believer and after 2 computer

specialists worked for 24 hours straight to get a large company computer working, my cousin was called on. He prayed and within 10 minutes he had the problem fixed. That is God at work in us!

The people brought more than they needed so they needed to tell them they had enough. Then the making of the tent, planks and crossbars, and other items for its construction are described. The making of the ark and k'ruvim (cherubs) are described as well as the other items needed including the Menorah and the altar for the Mishkan.

The Haftarah for VaYakhel is 1 Kings 7:13-26 which is the Sephardim portion. King Shlomo (Solomon) sends for the Jewish bronze worker Hiram from Tyre to do some of the work on the first Temple. This portion describes the amazing work done on the first Temple. In both the Mishkan (the Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting) and the first Temple we see some beautiful work being done in the name of the true God, Yě-hō-váh. Perhaps this should remind us that we being the temple of the Holy Spirit, should strive to live lives that befit the beauty that God has bestowed on us. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Also, the Mishkan in the desert is a picture of our spiritual abode (life) with God. Israel lived in the presence of God in the desert with a fire over the Mishkan at night and a cloud by day. Yeshua said He goes to prepare a place for us – He means a place where we will also live in the presence of God. John 14:2-3 NKJV, says, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." We have an amazing future hope ahead for us.

The Torah Portion Pekudei.

The Torah portion for today is also Pekudei and means "accountings of." Today it is combined with the previous portion. Pekudei could also be translated records, namely in this case, the records of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. Paudie begins by giving an account of the offerings made and more descriptions are made of the items for the Tabernacle. They brought all the finished items to Moshe and then Moshe blessed the workers. Isn't that great! God gives us the power to bless through Him.

Also, when Moshe blessed the workers, it showed appreciation and validated the good that the people had done. Bezalel and Oholiab are given credit for leading the work on the Mishkan. At times, the Torah gives honor to people. The midwives who refused to murder babies were also mentioned by name.

Giving thanks.

It is good to be thankful to God and others. We should give God thanks for all His provision, His good commandments, the Holy Spirit, and all He has done for us. Also, good leaders are often in a demanding position, and it is good to give them credit for what they do as well, as was the case for those who led the work on the Mishkan and the midwives.

I am so thankful to my mom for teaching how to keep God's good commandments from the Torah. I am thankful for my dad who helped me to be a good listener. I am thankful for people like Rufus Moseley who was so influential in my early walk with God. I am thankful for people like Dennis Prager who taught about the evils of the Communist religion and on other biblical concepts. I appreciate some of the ministries that helped me to learn about the Holy Spirit.

Meaningful and specific compliments show heart and can impact others positively. So, think of specific things to be thankful for. Some say we lack humility by accepting compliments. They will say that attitudes like these are often associated with pride. It is good to accept praise without letting it get to our heads and make us prideful. Always be on guard spiritually to do what is "right and good." Do not think you are better than others. Romans 12:3 NKJV says, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly." We are to think right and be ready to resist doing evil. 1 Peter 5:8 NKJV says, "Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour." Do not be caught thinking wrong, it can lead you in the wrong direction.

Thankfulness to God and others shows that we value them. It is important to validate others, especially those who are closest to us: our spouse, our children, friends, family, and those who work for us. We should give honest and concrete words that show our feelings and validate their accomplishments.

Now back to the Torah portion for today. In this portion, an exact number of men is mentioned, 603,550 (see Exodus 38:26). That puts to rest the idea that a small number of people left Egypt. There are more specifics about the Mishkan and because of all these specifics, that would lead us to conclude these events really happened. The Mishkan was large enough and functional for the community. It was appealing and extravagant. Perhaps this teaches us that we should do good work, make our homes presentable, and take proper care of ourselves.

I remember going to a stilt house in the jungle and they took the time to scrub their floors and make their house presentable before I came. I saw them scrubbing their floors on their knees while I was there. They did not have much. All they had in the living room were bare floors and a battery operated clock that remained at a certain time because the batteries were dead. What they had they took care of.

The priestly line is talked about and only descendants of Aaron were allowed to be priests. Israelite identity came by faith in the God of Israel (take Ruth for example) or from paternal descentance from the line of the father. Modern practice is by the line of the mother.

The priestly line, privilege versus accountability and accomplishment.

The priestly line demanded accountability. Also, status requires capability. Those who served understood this. If they did not want to serve, they could decline their position. That did not stop some from abusing their position and their sinful behavior, but doing so could cause God to act as was the case of Eli (see 1 Samuel 3:11-14). God cursed Eli and his descendants forever. Two of Aaron's sons died on the spot for the wrong they did. Ya'akov said in James 3:1 NKJV, "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter

judgment." The unjust will face God's judgment. 2 Peter 2:9 NKJV says, "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." Those who are not teaching God's commandments and who are leading people to sin will face dire eternal consequences. 2 Peter 2:4 NKJV says, "God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness."

Leaders have the responsibility to lead well. Leaders have influence and can help people, but they can also destroy lives by their behavior or wrong teaching. They should be qualified (see 1 Timothy 3:2-10). Leaders need to learn to delegate, and they should not be overloaded with work. The work of the priests was given in the Bible; they did not have to do everything. God knows our intentions and leaders are required to teach truth (see Luke 8:17-18). As we have shown, they will be judged more harshly.

The portion ends with the Tabernacle being set up on the first day of the first month, the 1st of Nisan, and when it was set up the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the presence of the Yĕhōváh the LORD filled the tent. When the cloud lifted from over the Mishkan, the Israelites would follow it. A cloud appeared over the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting) during the day, and fire would appear over the Mishkan at night during their time (for some 39 years) in the desert!

Notice how God did not give them His presence right away, but they learned and grew spiritually. Then God gave them the Tent of Meeting in the desert. Perhaps this is the way God tests us to see if we continue to seek Him. It has been my experience that God will give us things to do and spiritual gifting as we remain faithful.

God had the people build the Mishkan to help people connect with God. Perhaps there was only one central place of worship and subsequently one Temple located at Jerusalem so that the people would know that there is only one God. God has given us so much to help us in life. We have the stories of those like Noah and Abraham who kept the Torah and passed it on verbally to others (See Genesis 6:9, to walk with God is to keep God's commandments, Deuteronomy 5:33, and see Genesis 26:5, where it emphatically says Abraham kept the law, the Torah.). We have God's written commandments to help in life and also the Holy Spirit to help us (see John 14:15-16). We experience answers to some of prayers, we have the encouragement of other believers and good teachings that teach us to do what God says to do, we see and experience miracles and healings and so much more. We have a creator God who is our King who we are to listen to and obey. Exodus begins with the oppression and despair that Israel experienced at the hands of the Egyptians and ends with God's presence among the people at the Mishkan. Exodus 40:35 NKJV says, "Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." In the book of Exodus, we see how Israel was set free from Egypt; they were also set free to serve God and do what is "right and good" (see Deuteronomy 6:18).

The 1st of the Jewish month is the month of Nisan. There are four Jewish New Year's:

The 1st of Nisan is the counting of king's reigns.

The 1st of Elul is for the animal tithes.

The 1st of Tishrei, also known as Rosh Hashanah or Yom Teruah is the new year for the calendar year and also known as the Feast of Trumpets or The Day of Shouting.

The 15th of Shevat is also called Tu BiShvat and is the tree new year when trees are planted and other ecological things are often done.

Also, we see that the dedication of the Mishkan took 8 days. That's why Chanukkah lasts 8 days; it remembers the rededication of the Temple. Chanukkah means dedication.

The Haftarah for Pekudei is 1 Kings 7:51-8:21. The Haftarah portion for Pekudei concludes with the dedication of the first Temple. The presence of the Lord filled the Temple and Solomon blesses the people. Both the Mishkan in the desert and the Temple in Jerusalem were filled with the presence of God. Like the Lord filled the Temple, those that believe in the Messiah are filled with the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit should not be taken lightly. According to Hebrews we can insult what God has given us. 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." These sinners will not escape God's punishment.

1 Kings 8:10-11 CJB says (Cohanim means priests), "When the Cohanim came out of the Holy Place, the cloud filled the house of ADONAI, so that, because of the cloud, the Cohanim could not stand up to perform their service; for the glory of ADONAI filled the house of ADONAI." This is an example of the overwhelming presence of the Holy Spirit which we as believers in the Messiah Yeshua can experience.

After reading the scripture about how the presence of God filled the Temple, we may wonder if any of that type of experience is for believers in the Messiah and the answer is yes. We are to receive the Holy Spirit when we believe in the Messiah Yeshua and it impacts our lives, and we can experience the Holy Spirit. Kefa (Peter) said in Acts 2:38-39 NKJV, "Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Some though are not open to the Holy Spirit. It is a commandment of God to receive the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age. Some put on a show; acting is not the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is with believers in the Messiah Yeshua just like God's presence was with Israel at the Mishkan. God is ever present and is not far from us. Acts 17:27 NKJV says, "So that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us."

Some of us have experienced the presence of God in amazing ways through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit simply works in our hearts and minds at times, and at other times we can experience a timeless type of presence and peace. If you need that, just acknowledge the presence of God, and talk to God. I first experienced God's presence when I did that years ago. Do not let your mind get sidetracked; it is your time with God. God has also given us associated gifts with the Holy Spirit.

God is amazing and wonderful.

God wants to comfort us and give us peace in every situation. Yeshua told us that He would not leave us as orphans, and He gave us the commandments in the Torah and the Holy Spirit. God is able to help us supernaturally, so we are to pray and cast our anxieties on God. Philippians 4:6 NKJV says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." 1 Peter 5:7 NKJV says, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." Be sensible and be patient and trusting towards God. Do not put yourself in compromising positions of any sort. You do your part in a sensible manner and let God take care of the rest. Pray for protection and for all things; prayer works!

God is with us so do not be deluded into thinking He is not there. It says about our God Yĕhōvâh in Psalm 147:4-5 NKJV, "He determines how many stars there are and calls them all by name. Our Lord is great, his power is vast, his wisdom beyond all telling." Be strong and courageous even as Israel was in the desert years ago as they moved forward toward the land God promised them. They were not without doubts and trials but continued to move forward in faith. What a tremendous witness they are to us. So, we also should move forward in faith and faithfulness.

We have finished Exodus, so we say (3 times):

Hazak, Hazak V'nithazek

Be Strong, Be Strong, We Will Be Strengthened.

**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.)**

Exodus 35:3 tells us not to kindle a fire on Shabbat. The context was work on the Mishkan so we should understand that we are not to do any work on our meeting places on Shabbat. Also, anything that requires considerable effort is wrong. Kindling a fire can require a lot of work including gathering wood and lighting the fire. In our modern times, lighting a fire can be no work at all, but be careful not to do anything cumbersome on Shabbat. If you feel any conviction for the thing you are doing, then do not do it. Do not do any unnecessary work on Shabbat. Also, consider this. What is more work, driving a car or walking to congregation? Flipping switches is not work unless it is associated with a job of course.

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

ADONAI or LORD in all caps in our Bibles is the name for God, which is pronounced, Yĕ-hō-vâh. Yĕ-hō-vâh is used 6,521 times in the Old Testament portion according to Strong's Dictionary. Since God's name is used that many times, it is evident that we should be using His real name. So, why not use God's real name? According to Exodus 3:15, Yĕ-hō-vâh is God's true name forever. In that verse and everywhere we see a name for God in all capitals (in some of our Bibles) it is this exclusive name for God, Yĕ-hō-vâh. Of course, we should use His name with respect. Yĕ-hō-vâh is an acronym formed from the Hebrew verb hayah which means to exist. Yĕ-hō-vâh means, He existed, He exists, and He will exist. He is our eternal God and creator. I want to honor God's name. Will you also honor God's name?

Some people call God Hashem which means "the name." They dishonor God's name by not using His name (see Deuteronomy 29:20). When we honor someone, we use their name in an appropriate way. Christians for the most part do not use the true name of God. Why not begin using His true name and honor Him? Do not be afraid to use God's real name with respect. I say this in order to encourage you to use God's real name because it points to God being our eternal creator.

The ancient rabbis say that is God's name. The church Fathers said God's name is Yě-hō-váh. I have seen God's name pointed as Yě-hō-váh in the Aleppo Codex. 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. So, let's put God's name on His people.

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

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ
 יְאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ, וַיַּחַנְךָ
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵי אֱלֹהֶיךָ, וַיִּשְׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹמִים

Yě-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

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

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

Thank you for being with us today.