



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
 Yĕhōvāh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)
 Yochanan – John

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
 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
 Tzav – 25th Torah portion

The Torah portion for today is Tzav and means "command." This portion begins by God giving commands about the burnt offerings, meal offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, a priests' offering, and well-being offerings.

Since Passover and Resurrection Weekend is coming up. It is a disgrace to Christianity that some do not celebrate God's feasts. The feasts in the Bible are God's feasts the Bible says. Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, **these are My feasts.**"

Also, call Easter, Resurrection Weekend for goodness sake. **It is not** the feast of Ishtar (pronounced Easter), which is the bare-breasted goddess of fertility. Some say it doesn't matter. Tell that to God when you stand before Him in judgment. Deuteronomy 12:30-31 NKJV says, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods." We are not to do anything connected to pagan ritual including coloring eggs and bunnies. Eggs were colored with blood by the pagans and rabbits are a symbol of fertility. Do not call Yeshua's resurrection the bare breasted goddess of fertility.

Also, believers are commanded to do a ritual service called a Seder for Passover. Seder is the word used for the ritual meal for Passover. Numbers 9:3 NKJV says, "On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. **According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.**" This should include Yeshua's death and resurrection. He died for our sins as our Passover lamb when the Passover lambs were being slain.

Shaul said we are to keep God's feasts. When Shaul talks about Passover he talks as though everyone knew about keeping Passover and would be keeping Passover! 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 NKJV says, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly

are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. **Therefore let us keep the feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Shaul tells us to keep the Passover! We should be keeping God's feasts.

I would like to begin today by talking about how some people focus on the steps we are to take in life instead of God. They are in a bubble so to speak where God exists outside of their experience. We need to make time for God and make God a priority in our lives and put God in our lives. So we need to take time to pray, to talk to God about our lives, and recognize God is there during our day. And we need to integrate God's commandments into our lives. Psalms 25:5 NKJV says, "Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day." God is supposed to be part of our life, all day and every day.

Watch out for mindless ritual. I am not saying that all ritual is bad. I have a prayer list because I want to make sure I pray for all the things I want to pray for. In this way, I do not have to reinvent my prayers every day which can be burdensome. Make sure you are engaged mentally with your prayers.

We need to develop rituals in our lives so that we get done with what we need to do and that includes our spiritual side of life. I pray a lot, but not everyone has the time to do that. I would suggest setting some time for morning prayer, talking to God, and study. So get up a little earlier, get ready for the day, and then spend some time doing those things. In that way, you will be able to relax and pray. Some people prefer to do these things at other times. Morning prayer is not commanded by God, but the biblical model is morning prayer. Psalms 5:3 NKJV, "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You." Years ago, I had a long commute to work, and I would pray on my way to work and I got to work feeling refreshed!

The biggest step for engaging with life is to keep God's commandments. God's commandments are right and good it says in Deuteronomy 6:17-18 and that is what we all need to be doing. Beware of mindless man-made commandments. Deuteronomy 4:2 says we are not to make up extra laws so focusing on all kinds of extra things we need to do sounds like work.

For example, some people have a highly inordinate fixation on resting on Shabbat. It probably has to do with what they have been taught and perhaps trying to fit in with others who have learned to do this.

Yeshua tells us that God gave mankind the Sabbath. It was intended for us. Mark 22:27 NKJV says, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." It was intended as a day of much needed rest for us and not as a day of entanglements and extra works.

Some will say we need lots of extra laws because people would end up working on Shabbat. When God rested in Genesis 2:3, we do not see God doing anything more. Then why do some think they have to work at keeping extra man-made laws on Shabbat. We are to do what God says first and foremost. In Isaiah it says that they are not keeping God's commandments but are working at keeping irrelevant man-made laws. Isaiah 29:13 NKJV says, "Therefore the Lord

said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men."

The people who are being micromanaged by commandments of men do not seem to get the idea that they are not following God. Some of these laws actually make us work on Shabbat. And these man-made laws make it difficult on people so that they do not rest the way they should. For example. Some say we cannot drive our cars because we cause fuel to be burned on Shabbat. Does starting our car equate with the work we would have to do to start a fire? When the Bible was written, starting a fire could be a considerable chore.

So, we have some people walking to their meetings with their little children on Shabbat. And what if it rains? Some believe you cannot open up an umbrella because you are putting up a structure. Is this reality or nonsense? These extra laws make life difficult and do not give us rest on Shabbat. They seem more like work. Commentaries like the Talmud may have good advice at times, but it is not God's word. Some things were inspired by God, but it was written by man. We have to sort out the good from the bad. The Bible is God's word and that is why it is our main source for truth.

Keep it simple on Shabbat. I will not even empty a wastepaper basket on Shabbat. Why is that my saying? I do not like to see a wastepaper basket with lots in it. Since I am always busy on other days, I have the temptation to do little things on Shabbat. So, I resist doing even little things on Shabbat. We can do necessary things on Shabbat, but do not be tempted to do more.

Also, I talk to God about emergencies and try to listen to the Holy Spirit. I once had a plumbing problem. Could it wait for tomorrow? Some things can wait, and other things cannot. Use good sense. Remember, God said in Isaiah they were following people and not God with their extra man-made commands.

Enjoy your life in God. That is where it is mostly manifest. I genuinely enjoy my Shabbat as a day of rest. There is an underlying understanding to me that God gave me a day of rest so I often think about that during the day. I rest my mind, My emotions, and also any work.

God expects us to get our mind and emotions in the right place every day. 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, whom the LORD will send against you." We can control our thinking. It is said that the people who were thankful to God for the manna in the desert thought it was sweet. Those who did not, did not enjoy the manna. So, control your thoughts. Psalm 32:11 NKJV says, "Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" So, be glad and have joy. Having joy is a commandment of God. Having negative attitudes will hurt us. Even medical doctors concur with that.

God did not give us impossible commandments to do. They are good and natural ways to live. Some say it is too hard to keep God's commandments. There are some 400 driving laws in the United States. That does not keep people from learning the driving laws and driving. I have

heard there are over 2 million different laws in the United States. Most of them are only common sense.

For example, the Bible says we are to put railings on our buildings to keep people from falling and hurting themselves. Most cities have laws about putting railings on houses and buildings. The Bible says God's commandments are not hard to keep. Mitzvah means commandment. Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB says, "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach." In other Bibles, the word hard is translated differently, but Strong's Dictionary says the Hebrew word means hard. God's commandments are not hard to keep.

Live in peace and follow the light. It goes with the natural flow of how God created us. Think of how rivers flow. They do not flow in two directions but in one direction. In the same way, there is a natural to life. God designed us so He knows what is best.

Have you ever tried to go against the flow in a river? I remember having to paddle hard against the current of a river in order to get to land or I would have been swept down the river. Psalms 25:8-10 NKJV says, "Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He teaches sinners in the way. The humble He guides in justice, and the humble He teaches His way. All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." These scriptures are wonderful. God is good and always does what is right, so His commandments are right and good. God has given us kindness and truth. The word mercy in this verse in the Hebrew is the word *chesed* and means kindness. It is translated steadfast love in the Jewish Bible. *Chesed* is sometimes translated loving kindness in other verses of the Jewish translation. We are to be open to God's ways and keep His laws; they are truths for life and are His loving kindness towards us!

This next verse uses the word taste to mean experience. We can experience the goodness of God through His commandments. Psalm 34:8 NKJV says, "Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" We are to trust in God and His commandments. Some people take these words out of context and say we are only to trust in God; they say everything we be okay. How can you experience the goodness of God if you do not trust in His commandments? If you keep God's commandments, you will trust in God and see that He is good.

More to Consider

I would like to encourage you to stay in truth; stay on the right path. If God says something is wrong in the Old Testament portion, we need to understand that God's commandments still apply. Why is that?

As I've said before, why would something God said is wrong now be good or okay? People who are saying we don't have to keep God's commandments are contradicting God. Just because they don't believe in what God says, it doesn't mean we have to follow their bad example. We should understand that anything an all-knowing God said was wrong, no matter what time period, it would always be wrong. After all, why would anything that an all-knowing God say is wrong ever be okay to do? Malachi 3:6 NKJV says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change."

The only exception is the sacrificial law. The Messiah Yeshua has replaced the Old Testament sacrificial law at this time and that would mean the priestly laws are not applicable at this time also. Hebrews 10:12-14 NKJV: "After He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." There is a sacrificial system in the future kingdom perhaps as a remembrance ceremony or for thanksgiving (Isaiah 66:20).

Also, we are to keep God's feasts. The Bible says they are God's feasts. Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "These are My feasts." They are not just Jewish feasts. Yeshua taught a parable about a wedding feast in Matthew 22, and some did not choose to come. So, others were invited instead of those who did not to come. Will we choose not to observe God's feasts? How will God judge those who do not keep His feasts? Genesis 1:14 says that the lights that God created are so we know when we are to meet with God. The word **seasons there is the Hebrew word *moedim* which means meetings!** "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and **seasons**, and for days and years;" Genesis 1:14 NKJV. God intended for us to meet with Him on His designated days.

How did we end up with a system of theology that ended up changing Gods laws? It is simple. Mankind made up another system through the Roman Empire in the 4th century. We received a so-called Christianity which denies the truths of the Bible and with a Judaism that denies the Jewish Messiah and a system that follows the rabbis and their man-made ideas.

We instead should have a Christianity that accepts all of God's word, accepts the Messiah Yeshua for who He is, and accepts the helper the Messiah gives us, the Holy Spirit, to help us follow God's commandments. And the Holy Spirit does so much more than that.

* We have supernatural gifts or evidences of the Holy Spirit (see Romans 12:3-9; Ephesians 4:11-12; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

* The Holy Spirit helps us to have, "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;" Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV.

Be in fellowship with God.

* Fellowship with God requires we do what is right. Isaiah 59:2 NKJV, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you."

* Fellowship with God requires appropriate boundaries in life.

We live out our lives with the fear of God, a deep respect for God, and learn His commandments. Proverbs 1:7 NKJV, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

We are to stay faithful to God. Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

* Fellowship with God requires continued care and concern spiritually. Proverbs 3:5-7 NKJV says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own

understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil."

The following is a possible list of some things we can do to help us spiritually.

Live with a normal godly routine. Inspect your life to reveal areas that need to be changed. We need to develop our ability to always do what is right in all areas of life and apply God's commandments to our lives. Psalms 86:11 NKJV, "Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth."

First, we simply begin doing what we learn. For example, how do we keep a day of rest? We plan ahead so we don't have chores to do on a Shabbat. Perhaps we then think about how we can use our day and make it special.

A lot of life is about how we treat our relations. We need to be good to all, especially to our own family, friends, and close associations. We should never take our relationships for granted. Treat them thoughtfully. For example, try smiling more. It connotes acceptance and kindness. Always have the other persons best interest in mind. It says in Leviticus 19:18 to love others.

Also, do things to help you with boundaries with others. For example, parents are in charge, not the children. This helps define how your relationship works. We have a short list that defines how we treat each other in our family. For example, "Parents are in charge, we will be kind to one another and patient, we will pray together every day."

Don't take yourself too seriously. Relax and enjoy your relations.

Don't take offense easily. Taking offense to non-sinful behavior can cause a lot of tension in life. That is something you don't need.

Have a sense of humor in life. Things in life can be a little silly. We don't laugh at each other, but we can enjoy little non-sinful mistakes and lighthearted comments (not to be confused with snide sarcastic remarks).

We are to keep God's commandments. There is no compromise to that, but there is a lot of latitude to how we approach the other things of life (namely, the non-sinful things).

As we apply proper practices to our life, we should be a kind encourager towards others. Make a special effort to be kind, especially when trying to help someone in general with life and with spiritual matters. Proverbs 27:9 NKJV, "Ointment and perfume delight the heart, and the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel." Your kind advice gives vitality. Put that in contrast with angry advice which often brings hurt and discouragement.

Continuing on with our teaching, we need to make adjustments to our approach in life in order to keep God's commandments. 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."

Let's talk about making adjustments.

Sometimes what we do doesn't work out. So, we need to try doing it a different way.

We may notice that our approach irritates others at times. If we are irritating others, stop just thinking of yourself and learn to bring joy to others. Proverbs 27:14 NKJV says, "He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it will be counted a curse to him." Learn to recognize when we irritate others.

In general, before you can speak into a person's life, you have to show respect and that you care. Earn your ability to speak into someone's life. It is often not automatic. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 NKJV, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up." This scripture implies a good relationship.

Telling the cashier that they are too slow will matter little to them. You have almost no relationship with them. At company meetings I was the head of one of our divisions; I would encourage my fellow workers to do an excellent job. After all, their work represents who they are and we rely on each other to bring in customers so we can provide for ourselves and our families. The people who we serve are relying on us and we also rely on our coworkers.

Stay close to God; God sees us and knows our innermost thoughts.

Psalms 139:1-2 NKJV, "O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off."

Psalms 139:23-24 NKJV, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Proverbs 21:2 NKJV, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts."

Isaiah 55:7 NKJV, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

Decide you will change and do better. Perhaps some of the things we talked about have helped you or resonated with you. Make a commitment now to change and apply what we have been talking about. In sales, they want you to come to a decision and sign their contract. Make a contract with God right now and move forward spiritually.

Be direct in your approach to God. Don't make up excuses or try to get out of keeping God's commandments. God will empower us and bless us for doing what is right and good. Deuteronomy 4:40 NKJV says, "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.**" Doing things God's way helps us with life.

We know that sin brings problems and pain. God's word brings great reward. Psalm 19:11 NKJV says, "Moreover by them Your servant is warned, and in keeping them **there is great reward.**" That's why when a person does what is 'right and good,' things go better (see Deuteronomy 6:18). Things may not go better with Coca-Cola; it depends on what a person is doing. Living how God tells us to live even works better for unbelievers.

God also promises supernatural blessings. Sometimes God just does something to bless me. There was a nice jacket that cost \$500 on sale for \$250. I had this thought; too bad it's not \$50. When I went back to the store a couple months later, there was the jacket I wanted for \$50. How about that! Deuteronomy 28:1-2 NKJV says, "If you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you ... all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

Sometimes we try round about ways to please God. Think about how you can be faithful to God. Don't make wrong applications of God's commandments. I try to error on the conservative side in my approach to God's commandments. That doesn't mean that we make up misapplied extra man-made laws. In Romans 14, there were people who didn't want to eat any meat at all rather than take a chance that the meat came from a pagan temple. In pagan towns, the meat sometimes came from pagan temples. Shaul says he doesn't condemn himself for what he allows.

He means that if the meat is kosher (namely, what the Bible says is okay to eat) and Shaul knows it didn't come from a pagan temple, he is okay with eating it. Also, Shaul said not to cause those who are being conservative to stumble. Those in the pagan city of Rome had scruples about eating meat that might come from a pagan temple. Yeshua said we are not to eat meat that comes from pagan temples. Revelation 2:14 NKJV says, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

I mentioned that we should prepare for Shabbat. Keep this in mind for the upcoming Passover. I believe any form of leavening is wrong. I don't believe in using baking soda, whipping egg whites, or other forms of what I think is leavening. **Plain flour does not have any leavening agent in it.** Cake mixes have leaven. The purpose of not having leaven during the Feast of Unleavened Bread teaches us to be a pure people.

Some make extra laws and make a microscopic issue out of eating for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which lasts for 7 days. They say you even need to use separate utensils I call that micromanaging by man-made commandments. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God."

By the way, those who are teaching from Romans 14 that they don't condemn themselves for sinning are taking Romans 14 out of context. The Bible is clear about staying away from sin; those who live sinful lives will end up in the lake of fire the Bible says (see Revelations 21:8).

If I was your friend, I would try to warn you about the danger of doing something if I knew it could hurt you. Revelations 21:1, 8 NKJV says, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth." ... "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone." What is the context? It is the future kingdom. I am warning you because I care about you. Don't get confused by the liars that tell you there is no danger ahead when there is. They don't have your best interests in mind.

God gave us good things to enjoy. We have plenty of opportunity to enjoy all that God has provided for us. During the Feast of Unleavened Bread that is soon coming up, we don't eat anything with leaven in it. Not eating leaven reminds us not to sin and to keep God's commandments. The result of keeping God's commandments is blessing! So **not** eating leaven during this the Feast of Unleavened Bread is a wonderful opportunity to be reminded to stay faithful.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds us to stay faithful.

In preparation for Passover we often clean our houses; kind of like a Spring cleaning. Our family even cleans the crumbs out of our toaster; we put away food containing any leavening agent. Doing this reminds us to make our lives clean and new spiritually and remove every speck of sin. God's feasts are important to keep because they are God's feasts. Leviticus 23:2 NKJV, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts." God's feasts remind of important lessons for life and bring us into relationship with God.

Torah Study

The Torah portion for today is Tzav and means "command." This portion begins by God giving commands about the burnt offerings, meal offerings, sin offerings, guilt offerings, a priests' offering, and well-being offerings. Burnt offerings were to be entirely burnt up and the fire on the altar was to never go out. The priests were to eat some of the other offerings at the tent of meeting; the meal offering at the anointing of the priest was to be burnt up completely. There was to be no leaven in the offerings, and no blood or fat was to be eaten. Moshe then does a consecration ritual for the priests. He dresses them, anoints them with oil, does a bull offering and two ram offerings, a blood ritual, and an elevation offering. Moshe then anoints them with blood and oil, and they were to remain at the Tent of Meeting (the Mishkan, the Tabernacle) for seven days until their consecration and atonement was over.

Again, in this portion, God is very specific about how the offerings were to be done. It should remind us that we are to do things God's way and not our own way. He is God and we are not. Particularly in this portion, it was a special moment in the lives of Aharon and his sons as they were anointed priests and consecrated to the Lord. We should also conclude that being a priest for the true God or for that matter, any leadership position for God is to be taken very seriously.

The Haftarah for Tzav is Jeremiah 7:21 to 8:3, and 9:22-23. Just before our Haftarah portion it says that God's anger and fury will be poured out on those who worship the queen of heaven

and other pagan gods. The queen of heaven is Ishtar (Easter) also known as the multi-breasted pagan goddess of fertility. It is also used for other woman pagan deities and even for Mary the mother of Yeshua by some. Let's consider the kingdom of God being a very high-class place. After all, God is all powerful. So, the future kingdom of God is going to be very amazing.

So, let's imagine a very high-class restaurant being there for everyone and say a guy walks in without a shirt on. It would be a disgrace to show up without a shirt on at a high-class restaurant. So, it is inappropriate and a disgrace to refer to the resurrection of Yeshua (Jesus) as the bare-breasted god Ishtar (Easter). After all, He gave us minds to use to give Him the glory He deserves! Use them.

Praying to Mary is a form of pagan worship since **we are to pray to God only**. The Bible is noticeably clear about this.

Exodus 20:4-6 says,

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

Shaul (Paul) said that no one engaged in pagan worship will be allowed in the Kingdom of God. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

The unrighteous will not be in God's future kingdom.

We are near Passover. Passover was when Israel was set free from the Egyptians and given God's commandments so they could serve God. Yeshua died and rose from the dead at the time of Passover so we could be given the Holy Spirit to help us be set free from sin and serve God. Passover is relevant for believers in the Messiah Yeshua and should be celebrated.

I've heard people say we don't have to observe God's feasts. What's the matter with God's feasts? They aren't just Jewish feasts but are biblical feasts. In fact, God says they are His feasts (see Leviticus 23:2)! Shaul says to observe the Passover in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. Here is some information on a Hebraic understanding of Passover from the Complete Jewish Bible. Pesach is the Hebrew word for Passover and the word Seder is the ceremony for Passover. Hametz is bread with leaven and leaven when observing the Passover refers to sin; so, by removing hametz, it means we are to remove sin from our lives. Matzah is bread without leaven. So, the Complete Jewish Bible translates 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 CJB as, "For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the Seder not with leftover hametz, the hametz of wickedness and evil, but with the matzah of purity and truth."

Celebrate the Seder, celebrate Passover! Shaul (Paul) commands us to observe the Passover and that applies to no matter where we live. Yeshua said that there will come a time when we will worship God wherever we live (see John 4:21). It is no longer true that we have to go to Jerusalem because the Messiah has changed that. Some Gentiles say we can't do it unless we are in Jerusalem. They are just anti-Jewish replacement theology critics. Messianic believers over history have observed the Passover wherever they lived. The Torah makes allowances for people who are too far away to make it to Jerusalem. Messianic believers who kept God's commandments and God's feasts were the true believers in Shaul's (Paul's) time. Numbers 9:3 NKJV says, "On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. **According to all its rites and ceremonies** you shall keep it." We are to be prepared to observe the Passover.

True believers also didn't keep misapplied man-made laws. We should understand that some pertinent ritual is okay. Ritual is part of life, but ritual is not necessarily a commandment from God unless God says to perform it. Notice I said misapplied man-made laws. Some say you have to wear a hat after you get up in the morning. What does wearing your hat after you get up have to do with God? It's a man-made law. Man-made laws become man-made idols.

Our Haftarah portion begins by saying that they should have obeyed God's commandments, but they did things their own way and were stubborn and had evil hearts. People just want to do things their own way. They celebrate our national holidays instead of God's holidays (feasts). There is nothing wrong with our national feasts, but it is wrong for Christianity not to celebrate God's feasts. Call Easter Resurrection Weekend for goodness's sake. It is not the feast of Ishtar (Easter), the bare-breasted goddess of fertility. Some say it doesn't matter. Tell that to God when you stand before Him in judgment.

God tells Jeremiah to call to the people, but they won't listen or answer. Israel is doing detestable things and they even offer their sons for human sacrifice. God warns them that their land will be turned to ruin for their sins. Those who were sinning were being stubborn and doing things their own way; they should have known and understood that they were to do things God's way. He is a God of grace (favor), justice (He does what is just), and righteousness (He does what is right.). Why not do things His way!

Let's read Jeremiah 7:23-24 and 9:23 from the Haftarah for Tzav.

Jeremiah 7:23-24 CJB says,

"Rather, what I did order them was this: 'Pay attention to what I say. Then I will be your God, and you will be my people. In everything, live according to the way that I order you, so that things will go well for you.' But they neither listened nor paid attention, but lived according to their own plans, in the stubbornness of their evil hearts, thus going backward and not forward."

Jeremiah 9:23 CJB says,

"'Instead, let the boaster boast about this: that he understands and knows me - that I am ADONAI, practicing grace, justice and righteousness in the land; for in these things I take pleasure,' says ADONAI."

When I look at some forms of Christianity, I am very saddened because of their lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6 NKJV says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being a priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children." Pastors who are rejecting God's law will be rejected by God. Do you want God to forget your children; get with it. Understand and keep God's law.

Three laws in this portion should be applied in our era. Leviticus 7:19 says that any offering that touched anything unclean was to be burnt up and was not to be eaten by those who were clean. The clean could eat the offerings. Not eating things that touched anything unclean should also be applied to what everyone eats on a daily basis. We could also say that **spoiled or contaminated food should not be eaten**. Anything not acceptable to eat should be disposed of and not eaten.

Also, Leviticus 7:23 says that **no one was to eat any kind of animal fat**. We should understand that it is a representative list here. Other places give a single species.

Leviticus 7:26-27 says that **no one was to eat or drink the blood of an animal or bird**.

People in our era have lots of knowledge about everything except for God. 3,000 believed in the Messiah Yeshua on Shavuot (Pentecost) it says in Acts 2. God gave the Holy Spirit on a Jewish feast day; that's why all those Jewish people were at the Temple in Jerusalem. The 3,000 who believed knew their Bible and they were instantly capable home group leaders who had learned the Bible as they grew up. They fellowshiped from house to house and ate together (Acts 2:46). Eating together is something Jews do on Shabbat! Believers observe Shabbat; early believers in Yeshua observed Shabbat because it is one of God's feasts, and they kept God's good commandments. We want what is good; God wants what is good!

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.)

They were to take put on their linen garment and put the ashes next to the altar. Then change and take the ashes outside their camp in a clean place. Leviticus 6:10-11.

The fire on the altar is to be kept burning and not go out. Leviticus 6:13.

The High priest and his descendants are to eat the remains of the poor peoples' offerings in the area of the tent of meeting. Leviticus 6:14-16.

The flour offering is not to eaten with leaven. It is holy. Leviticus 6:16-17.

The priests were to make their own flour offering in the morning and evening and it was to be burnt up on the altar completely. Leviticus 6:20,23.

The priests were to offer up the sin offering and eat it in the area of the tent of meeting. The offering sprinkled on the inner altar was to be burned up completely. Leviticus 6:25-26, 30.

The trespass offering is given. Leviticus 7:1-6.

The thanksgiving offering is to be eaten and the remnants are not to be left until morning. Leviticus 7:15.

They were to burn the remnants of the offerings left over on the third day. If eaten after the third day the sacrifice is annulled. Leviticus 7:17-18.

Any offering that touched anything unclean was to be burnt up and was not to be eaten by those who were clean. The clean could eat the offerings. Not eating things that touched anything unclean should also be applied to what everyone eats on a daily basis. We could also say that spoiled or contaminated food should not be eaten. Anything not acceptable to eat should be disposed of and not eaten. Leviticus 7:19.

Leviticus 7:23 says that no one was to eat any kind of animal fat. We should understand that it is a representative list here. Other places give a single species.

Leviticus 7:26-27 says that no one was to eat or drink the blood of an animal or bird.

God Will Never Forsake Us
by Moshe Schwab
(a teaching to accompany the Torah portion)

How can we have joy when we are having a difficult time?

First Rabbi Shaul tells us to have faith in God and pray about what is bothering us. Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Stop belaboring things and start praying so that your peace is restored.

Then right after that, Rabbi Shaul teaches a few ways on how to apply loving your neighbor from Leviticus 19:18. Doing what is right in life helps us to get through life. Philippians 4:8-9 NKJV says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." Notice that his advice also restores our peace by developing better relations.

Also, our relationship with God is important. I have joy in knowing that no matter what happens, I am right with God. We are to accept the Messiah Yeshua, the Holy Spirit, and follow God's commandments (turn from sin to God, teshuvah). If you are not keeping the pertinent

commandments from the Old Testament portion, you are sinning. People say we can't keep them. They don't want to keep them. Some commandments were just for Israel when they entered the land. Some need to be kept on a personal basis because we live in a pagan land. The sin offerings were done away with because Yeshua the Messiah was the final sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:9-12). We are to keep the commandments in the New Testament because they are based on the Old Testament portion.

For example, when Shaul says we are to support our leadership in 1 Timothy 5:18, he quotes from the Old Testament portion. "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain;" Deuteronomy 25:4 NKJV. The New Testament portion was based on the Old Testament portion. There was no New Testament for the early believers. That wasn't put together until the Itala text was put together around 150 AD and it included the Hebrew gospels. That's right, the early believers were all Jewish and the gospels were originally written in Hebrew. They have been found. Some of the New Testament letters were also written in Hebrew and all the New Testament needs to be understood within a Jewish context. The Messiah Yeshua was Jewish and still is Jewish!

The Greek text was put together by the Roman Empire which was an anti-Jewish Empire and the Greek text contains many anti-Jewish insertions. These insertions were put in by heretics. The Empire also killed the early believers of the Messiah Yeshua and burned the Hebrew New Testament scriptures in order to change Christianity into a Roman religion that did not keep God's feasts and included some pagan forms into its false religion. That has been passed down into Christianity. There are many people out there who defend the false practices that were passed down to us. Do not be intimidated by their false beliefs and false doctrine.

God looked around the world to find people who would follow Him, but they were all foolish unbelievers. Psalms 14:1 NKJV says, "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good." Israel made a commitment to God. They weren't perfect, but many Jewish believers in the past gave their lives for the truth of God's word. Without the Jews we would have no Messiah. The world owes a debt of gratitude to the saints of the Old Testament.

Yeshua is Jewish and the context of our faith is Jewish.

Let's continue talking about how we can have joy, even in difficult times. Ya'akov (James' real name) said we are to have joy, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience;" James 1:2-3 NKJV. From trials, we can develop more conviction. Yeshua said we would have trials, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" John 16:33 NKJV. Yeshua said to be of "good cheer."

Every day I say a Jewish prayer that thanks God for another day. Jewish prayers often just come from something in the Bible. For example, Psalm 118:24 NKJV says, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." Why not start your day being thankful? When you are stressed, tap into the joy you can have from God. Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV says, "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

Don't stay depressed. That won't give you peace. Be at peace, be thankful, and have joy. I know it's not easy at times but do it. Ask God to be with you and protect you. The Israelites sang this song, "You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall surround me with songs of deliverance." Psalm 32:7 NKJV. Hide yourself in God; sing about His deliverance.

This one time I was feeling a little sorry for myself and my friend asked me how I was doing. I knew right then that I needed to control my thoughts. I have talked to a number of people over the years, and they all started doing better by controlling their negative feelings and resisting the devil. 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." Control your thoughts.

We should also understand that believers in the Messiah have hope. "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit;" Romans 15:13 NKJV. We have a relationship with the God of the universe; namely, those who love Him and are growing spiritually, and want to keep His commandments have the hope of eternal life.

This life is short, but eternal life is a long, long time. 1 Corinthians 15:52-54 NKJV says, "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" We have victory over death because of the Messiah.

Shaul says nothing will be able to separate us from the Messiah in Romans 8. As we separate ourselves for God, He will not allow us to be separated from Him. I once heard a preacher say, "God is all the time voting for you, and the devil is voting against you; and we determine the election." I vote for the God of the Bible, Yēhōvāh is His name forever (see Exodus 3:15).

*As we separate our lives for God,
He will not allow us to be separated from Him.*

1 Corinthians 15:57-58 CJB says we have the victory, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! So, my dear brothers, stand firm and immovable, always doing the Lord's work as vigorously as you can, knowing that united with the Lord your efforts are not in vain." Stand firm; be immovable.

Filter out the thoughts that clog our mind and release them to God.

Think good thoughts. I'm not saying to throw caution to the wind. That would be foolish. Someone I know who lived in a war zone years ago was saved by her brave mother. Some fighting broke out nearby and her mother went outside and grabbed her and brought her to safety. Get ahold of yourself and bring your thoughts to where they belong. If you allow your mind to keep you down so that you only focus on the negative, you will begin reacting in negative ways. Be brave but use good sense. Shaul said in Philippians 2:1-2 NKJV, "Therefore if

there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Keep moving forward; keep living for God and Yeshua. Keep looking to the future even if it seems far off.

I've been in some tough places in my life and the solution to my problems was doing what is right and seeking God. Even the heartache I felt years ago seemed to go away when I put God first. I can't explain it right now; but just thinking of this scripture about God healing the brokenhearted brings tears to my eyes. Psalm 147:3 NKJV says, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Also, Psalm 55:22 NKJV says, "Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved." Tell God what is bothering you and stand strong.

Look to God and not at the barriers we face; listen to God over and over.

Listen to what the scriptures say. Also, seek God's voice and comfort. Psalm 34:18 tells us God is with us, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." Isn't that wonderful. Also, it says in Deuteronomy that God will not leave us or forsake us. Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV says, "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

One of the challenges of life is to keep our hearts and minds in the right place. It says in Proverbs 4:23-27 NKJV, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. 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." Let's keep our hearts in all we do. If it takes one hundred times, stay true to God. Look forward and think about what you are doing. Don't budge; do what is right in all we face.

God wanted Israel to do things a specific way; we need to do things God's way and not our way. God's people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge about God and the scriptures. We need to have joy, even in difficult times. Our thoughts can get clogged up with the issues of life and the troubles we face. Take comfort in God and decide to follow Him and do what is right no matter what. We have a lot to be thankful for as believers. Nothing can take us away from God unless we let our own thoughts overcome us. Yeshua said in Revelation 2:7 NKJV, "To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." God, "is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV.