



### **Names**

Devarim – the 1<sup>st</sup> portion in Deuteronomy  
Kefa – Peter  
Moshe – Moses  
Og – one of the Nephilim  
Shaul – Paul  
Sihon – one of the Nephilim  
Yeshua – Jesus  
Yochanan – John

### **Terms**

Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets  
Nephilim – fallen angels, or giants  
Parashah – one of 54 portions of the Bible from the Torah  
Rabbi – Jewish leader  
Rebbe (Rebbee) – Jewish spiritual leader  
Shevat – a month on the Jewish calendar; our January or February  
Torah – 1<sup>st</sup> 5 books of the Bible

The portion for today is Devarim and it means “words.” In Genesis, God created everything by His words by speaking them into existence. Also, God gave us His word in the Bible to instruct us. His word is precious and by implication, there is power in His words.

I would like to begin by saying that we need to stay connected to God. Do not go to the right or the left where darkness and uncertainty abound. We stay connected to God by doing what He tells us. God is a living and caring God who knows what is best for us.

It doesn’t make much sense what some so flippantly say. They say things like just be a good person and believe in God and the Messiah Yeshua and we are okay spiritually. They then have to make up what they think is good instead of what God says is good. Think about it. Would an all knowing and good God know what is best for us or do we think our own ideas are what is right? Doing what we want instead of following God means we do not trust in God. God knows what is best and if you believe in Him you will trust in His commandments.

The Bible tells us not to deviate from what He tells us. We simply have to trust in God and His commandments no matter what we think because God the creator knows what is best. Proverbs 4:27 NKJV says, “Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.” Not doing what God says is evil because the all-knowing God knows what is best for us.

As we go along in life, we make choices. Do we make choices based on what God tells us or do we deviate to the left or right and make choices that are against God’s commandments. Keep what God tells us in the Bible. Learn God’s commandments and develop your ability to keep what God says. Hebrews 5:14 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.”

What do we put our efforts into in life? Is it all work and play? Where do we put God in our lives? Yeshua said in Matthew 6:33 NKJV, “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about

tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." We might think that putting God second, third, or fourth would be good enough, but putting anything ahead of God can cause us to be diverted from doing what is right and put others things in life ahead of keeping God's commandments.

Perhaps we think that we only have to keep God's commandments just some of the time, but God knows our intentions. He knows we are deliberately sidestepping what He tells us and what we should be doing. Do we genuinely seek God or are we double minded and only keep the commandments that we like and skip the commandments we do not like? Aren't all of God's commandments important?

In all if life's situations, we are to be aware of how and when to apply God's commandments. When I say God's commandments, I am primarily talking about God's Old Testament portion commands. The New Testament portion commands are applications of the Old Testament commands, and they also can give us proper applications of the Old Testament commands. Remember, Yeshua and Shaul (Paul) frequently quoted the Old Testament commands. If the Old Testament commandments have been done away with as some say, why would they use them to substantiate doctrine?

How do you stay at peace in life and with God? Are you faithful and firm spiritually? We can always be at peace by knowing that we did what was best by keeping God's commandments. Doing things our own way is like telling God that we know better than Him. We sometimes think things like, "I did my best." Why not do your best for God? When we stand before God at the time of judgment, then we do not have to say to God that we did not trust Him and His commandments.

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." There is a relationship between doing what is right and being at peace. We have the satisfaction of our good behaviors creating good and bringing goodness into our life and the life of others. God's commandments are "right and good," (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18), so they literally bring good into this world.

Stay in God's light, fight spiritually to stay faithful, and seek God's truth and peace. Life can be a struggle. Some people deny that we all go through struggles, but the scriptures tell us that in life, believers will experience some struggles. Some of them are personal struggles and some are spiritual struggles. Imagine being Joseph and being sold into slavery and being put in prison unjustly. Yet he remained faithful in all his struggles and brought tremendous deliverance to those who lived in Egypt and the neighboring countries from the drought that occurred.

If a great man like Joseph went through struggles, why are not some going through struggles in life, as they say? Either they take no chances in life, or they are suppressing the truth. More than likely, they refuse to admit they struggle in life because they are too proud to admit them. Even Yeshua says we will face troubles, so they are lying. John 16:33 NKJV says, "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."

Adam and Eve failed in the garden of God by doing something their own way instead of what God told them to do. Mankind then inherited the results of Adam and Eve's decision. We now must choose to follow God. Being a believer in God though does not mean we will not have to go through troubles. We all have to go through different issues in life. Sometimes these troubles come from having to apply ourselves and make an effort to succeed, sometimes they are because we suffer the consequences of sin in our life, sometimes it is because we live in a time of testing, or sometimes because there is evil in the world from people who do not properly follow God's commandments. We can resolve some of the issues in life by staying faithful to God, and not turning away from God's ways. We must decide to stay the course and not to go either to the left or the right of God's instructions in the Bible.

Having struggles is no different for us than it was for Shaul. He had to fight spiritually and in many other ways as well. He talks about being having to suffer physically in 2 Corinthians 11:25-27. He was beaten and faced a number of perilous circumstances. Most of us do not have to face the troubles that he went through. Shaul also talks about fighting mentally to stay faithful to God. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 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 to the obedience of Christ." We live in the physical world, but we must fight mentally to do stay faithful to God and His commandments. We face issues and trials in life and must struggle to do what is right and think what is right.

Life is not all ice cream and cake, but the good creator God has given us so much to enjoy in this life and then eternal life to all those who walk faithfully, keep the good commandments of our all-knowing God, and believe in our Messiah Yeshua. Psalms 43:3 NKJV says, "Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me." We need the light, the understanding of God's truths in the Bible, and to be led by God and the Holy Spirit. Finally, in Psalms 26:11 NKJV it says, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Amen to that! There is a right and a wrong, and a good path and an evil path. Stay faithful to our faithful God and King! Praise be to our God who cares about mankind and has revealed such wonderful truths to us. Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV says about God's commandments, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" Isn't God great!

### **More to Think About**

I would like to talk some about doing what is best; consider and think about what is best. You do not get something from doing nothing. It is simple math.  $0+0=0$ . Proverbs 13:4 NKJV says, "The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich." Also, it is said that if you apply yourself well, you will reap rewards. That brings to mind the jealousy of those who see the Jews succeeding and they then plot to steal what the Jews have. Why don't they instead learn from the Jews what makes them succeed? The Bible teaches us not to steal or covet what others have. These covetous people should instead learn to provide for themselves and stop stealing. The Bible says thieves will end up in the lake of fire. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV says, "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," (also see Revelation 21:8). This jealousy of the Jews keeps happening over and over because of people's sinful attitudes. Sin is evil.

Another way of looking at applying oneself is to take advantage of your opportunities while you can. Ecclesiastes 9:10 NKJV says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going." Some people waste their time on things of no consequence. I was talking to someone once and a timer went off and they said they had to go. They were scheduling their time instead of plodding along watching TV, playing video games, or other nonessential activities, instead of getting things done.

A leader of one adversarial country towards the United States is quoted as saying that Americans will mostly spend their time on nonessential activities. He perhaps thought that all Americans do is waste their time. I am not against having fun activities. We can even have fun and enjoyment out of accomplishing tasks. I have one acquaintance who graduated from Harvard University and when we talked some about watching TV, he said he didn't have a TV. He decided to use his time better and do things that meant something. Again, I am not against fun activities, but also take advantage of your time and accomplish something.

Most of all, it is important that we reap rewards in life by also applying ourselves spiritually. Proverbs 16:3 NKJV, "Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established." What is at the core of our life? Proverbs tells us to be diligent to keep our thoughts spiritually in line. We keep God's word because it can apply to all of life. What we think is an important part of life. Proverbs 4:23 NKJV says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."

We are to do what is "right and good" it says in Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV: "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." Shaul refers to this verse in 2 Timothy 2:15 NKJV, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." We are to be diligent to know the truths and commandments of the Bible so that we will not be ashamed before God who knows all and is the creator. The Bible and God's commandments are God's word, and they are words of truth. **They give us 'wisdom and understanding'** (see Deuteronomy 4:6)!

Be driven for God. Being driven is often a word used for a person who has drive in life or the ability to apply oneself well to life and to work at life. Apply the good attributes of being driven and not the negative attributes; it seems anything can be used the wrong way.

Some of the negative ways that people are driven is to look down on those of lesser ability or those who do not apply themselves well. Sometimes they even will alienate others. Some of these people can be very demanding and even try to impose their thinking on others even in small matters.

Keeping God's commandments though is not a small matter. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV says, "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." Why share this? It is a matter of success and eternal life or failure. People fail because of their own hardness towards truth and reject God's "good and right" ways. They think their ideas are better than those of the creator God.

Also, take time to smell our wonderful blessings we have through God. There is an expression, "Take time to smell the flowers." It means to enjoy the good moments in life. Psalm 107:1 NKJV says, "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for **He is good! For His mercy endures forever.**"

Psalm 106:1-5 NKJV

Praise the LORD! Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for **He is good! For His mercy endures forever.** Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can declare all His praise? Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times! Remember me, O LORD, with **the favor You have toward Your people.** Oh, visit me with Your salvation, that I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones, That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, That I may glory with Your inheritance.

Psalm 105:1-5 NKJV

Oh, give thanks to the LORD! **Call upon His name;** make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all **His wondrous works!** Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those **rejoice** who seek the LORD! Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore! **Remember His marvelous works** which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.

The psalmist attests to God's goodness. Why not try doing things God's way instead of your own way?

Call upon the name of Yēhōvāh, after all, that is His name used in the bible over 6,200 times! The translators put the name of **Yēhōvāh in all caps as "LORD."** Exodus 3:15 NKJV, "The **LORD** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever." Wrap your mind around that fact that He is truly God and tell people about Him.

If you need something to talk about read our "Prayer Class" at:

<https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class>

Glory in Yēhōvāh and His name; have joy and seek Yēhōvāh; follow Him and His word always; and remember His creation, His miracles and deliverance, His works, His wonders, and His good commandments.

Take a regular inventory of our hearts. In Jewish thought, light is understanding and refers to keeping God's commandments because they give 'wisdom and understanding' (Deuteronomy 4:6). Do we have a good eye or an evil eye? There is a common Jewish teaching on the good eye and the evil eye (do not confuse this+ with cursing someone with a disdainful look). Yeshua the Messiah said in Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV, "The lamp of the body is the eye. If

therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness." Live a life of light and understanding through God's commandments and not darkness and evil.

There are some who oppose God's goodness and have an evil eye. Some say, "Where is God?" 2 Peter 3:9 NKJV says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." They willingly reject God's good wisdom and understanding and teach lies. God knows what is best because He is God, not us. He will accomplish His will in His own time.

Take for example what Carl Sagan the atheist said. He said that 'nature was, nature is, and nature will be.' Strangely, the holy name for God in the Bible יהוה, (Yĕhōvâh) is an acronym for He existed, He exists, and He will exist. By the way, it is not wrong to say God's name. Calling anyone by their correct name gives them the respect they deserve. Those that never use Yĕhōvâh are desecrating God's name not honoring Him.

So, in essence, Carl Sagan makes nature into a god. I thought he didn't believe in a god. Not only that, but he also contradicts the science he believed in because science says the universe came into existence. Science actually goes along with what the Bible says. Genesis 1:1 NKJV says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." So, nature is not God, and it was not always around. It will also not always be around according to science because it will be swallowed up by the Sun at some future time.

By the way, the Bible also says nature won't always be around. 2 Peter 3:12 NKJV, "The heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat." God created everything out of nothing it said in Genesis 1:1, and He can do it again if He wants to because He is God, and we are not. Caring for and loving God's creation is good, but do not believe that this is all there is and worship the god of nature. I recycle diligently and pick up things that should be thrown away. I was taught to take care of our what God gave us. Do not be confused though by the theology of the environment god. The Bible says that idolators will not be in God's future kingdom (Revelation 21:8). Have a balanced perspective.

Also, science is not always right. In fact, they lie and make up stories to discredit good people who believe in God and false science too. Back in the 1950s, they made up fake science that said that the universe always existed because they did not like the idea of the universe coming into existence like it says in the Bible. Then some people who worked at Bell Labs discovered some data that revealed otherwise, and they had to retract their false science. So, science agrees with their being a sudden creation event.

You may think that environmentalists are only caring people, but they sometimes put nature over good sense and over the lives of others. When I was in the Brazilian Amazon Jungle, I came across this enormous diesel guzzling ship on the river. It had Greenpeace on the side of the ship. It was perhaps some 200' long. We were sweltering in our little boat, and I am sure they had the air conditioning on their giant boat, and they had all they needed.

I was told that Greenpeace would put ropes across the river and capsize people's boats. I have seen people going down the river with their families and children in their little boats or canoes perhaps for supplies or perhaps someone in the family needed medical care. So, one minute you would be just fine and the next, you and you wife with the baby she was holding, and children might end up drowning. I am not making this up. I was told that some people died because of their callous behavior. People are out of control with their nature theology, and they have made nature into a god.

### **Some things to consider:**

Live a balanced life.

Be reasonable, not greedy.

Do not be harsh or permissive.

Do not be out of control.

Not all is simple in thought. doing what is right is simple if we apply ourselves thoughtfully.

Perhaps you could think of some other important things to consider.

Work things through in life. Sometimes this comes easily and at other times we need to take time to process what to do. Sometimes we need to look at our lives, our motivations, our plans, our desires, and get them in line with God's truths in the Bible.

Proverbs 3:5-8NKJV

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. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.

Do not rely in your own thoughts and understanding but rely on the 'wisdom and understanding' that comes from God. Stay on the right path. In that way, you will be led by God instead of following evil. Following God will give you health and strength. Taking regular inventory of our thoughts and intentions will help keep us on the right path.

### **Torah Study**

Devarim means, "words." This Torah portion begins by Moshe addressing Israel 40 years after the Exodus just east of the Jordan River on the first day of Shevat. He tells them to go take the land of Canaan and begins to review their time in the wilderness. This portion is the first portion of the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is an often-quoted book of encouragement.

He tells them why he picked leaders and about the incident of the 12 spies. The Amorites and King Sihon refused to allow Israel to pass so Israel attacked them. God was with Israel, and they defeated the Amorites. They also defeated King Og of Bashan who attacked them. He was a Nephilim and the brother of King Sihon, and it gives the details of his size; his bed was 9 cubits long, about 15 1/2' long using the Egyptian cubit. The Parashah ends with Moshe addressing the issues regarding the tribes who would live east of the Jordan and encouraging Israel and telling them that God can deliver the land west of the Jordan into their hands.

It is interesting to note that some of the Nephilim survived the flood and there are some who think the Nephilim are behind some of the advances in our present-day technology. The Bible talks about spiritual powers at work against us and nothing about the possibility of the Nephilim still being around. Since some of them survived the flood, it is possible they are around too. A number of extra biblical sources talk about the Nephilim including Egyptian and archeological sources.

Israel is told to go and take the land. Most certainly this required faith in God and bravery. Perhaps we can compare this to standing up bravely for the truth of the scriptures. Or perhaps we can compare this to the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Some are afraid of the Holy Spirit, but Yeshua said that God gives good gifts to us (see Luke 11:11-13). Since He is a good God, why would He give us anything bad?

Kefa tells those in Acts 2 to believe and they will receive the Holy Spirit. The Greek word for "receive" that Kefa uses is to take in a literal sense as opposed to a mental sense. You can think about picking up an orange, but you can also literally pick up the orange and eat it. Just as Israel was to literally take the land, we are to literally take and use the Holy Spirit and the associated gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Some are listed as gifts in Romans 12:3-8 and Ephesians 4:7,11; in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 they are called gifts and evidences. They are intended to help us. The Bible is clear that we are to do things God's way. Shaul says in the context about the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that they, "Are the commandments of the Lord." 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV. I have run into believers who do not believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, yet they are commandments of the Lord. We are to accept all of God's word.

The Haftarah for Devarim is Isaiah 1:1-27. The Haftarah portion begins with Isaiah the prophet reproving Israel for their sins. God says that all their empty adherences and disobedience to God are a burden to Him and He calls on Israel to repent. Also, Israel is not attending to the needs of the widows and orphans like they are supposed to. Isaiah 1:16-18 CJB says:

Wash yourselves clean! Get your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing evil, learn to do good! Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, defend orphans, plead for the widow. "Come now," says ADONAI, let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool.

It was always God's will that we do what is good. Isaiah says stop doing evil and learn how to keep God's commandments (to do "good" in Jewish understanding). The world often does not have its roots in truth. God knows all, therefore His words in the holy scriptures are truth. Talking about the Old Testament, it says in Psalms 119:160, "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."

Yeshua says the same thing about the Old Testament in John 17:17 NKJV (there was no New Testament at the time), "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth;" John 17:17 NKJV. To sanctify or make holy is to separate our lives from doing what is wrong, from doing what is

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<sup>1</sup> g2983. λαμβάνω lambanō; according to [Strong's Enhanced Dictionary](#) it means to take hold of in an active sense (not a passive sense); in other words, to receive and use.



profane. We live our lives in deep respect for God; we live by His words in the holy scriptures; and we keep His commandments.

Also, one translation of the Hebrew Matthew in Matthew 5:17-18 Yeshua says: "Do not think that I came to throw down the Torah and the Prophets, on the contrary, I came to confirm. I say unto you in truth, that not one word will be diminished from the Torah – that it would not be performed until the end of the world."<sup>2</sup> The Greek was evidently changed by heretics, so people didn't have to keep God's commandments, but to conform to what the Roman Empire wanted them to do.

If we do not listen to God and do what He tells us to do, we are not believing in Him and not respecting Him.

**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.)**

**You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it. Deuteronomy 1:17.**

### **Be Strong Spiritually** **(a teaching to accompany the Torah portion)**

Our amazing God wants to work in us and change us. We have a choice. We can do what our all-knowing God says to do, or we can do things our own way. He first of all works in us through His word, the holy scriptures. As we apply God's commandments, we form good habits and learn how to apply His commandments. We can also learn how to conduct ourselves from others good example. Shaul tells Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:12-13 NKJV, "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." And of course, the Holy Spirit is our helper in this Messianic era.

In these verses in Timothy, Shaul is using a common Jewish way of teaching by giving us a list of a few things. To include everything sometimes would be tedious. All through the Bible, there are summaries. For example, the Bible says we are to love God. We love God by keeping His commandments. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the Lord your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always." Yeshua said the same thing in John 14:15 NKJV, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We don't decide to love God by doing things our own way.

It was common for the rabbis to give two-part responses or summarize using lists. The expert in the Torah said we are to love God and your neighbor; see Luke 10:27. He was summarizing. Rabbi Shimon said: "Upon three things the world stands, on Truth, on Judgment, and on Peace.

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew Gospels from Sepharad, The Gospel according to Matthew Version 2.2, March 2021. Translated from Vat. Ebr. 100 by Justin J. Van Rensburg. <https://www.hebrewgospels.com/matthew>.

As it is said: Truth and judgment of peace judge ye in your gates"<sup>3</sup> (see Zechariah 8:16). Rabbi Akiba said, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself is the encompassing principle of the Torah."<sup>4</sup>

In 1 Timothy 4:12-13, Shaul is encouraging Timothy to keep all of God's commandments especially by what and how he speaks; by how he acts; to be a kind, caring, and loving person; and as an example in spirit and faith. Purity refers to staying away from sin and keeping all of God's commandments and not just sexual sin.

Reading, encouragement, and doctrine is something we do to help others live right. Jewish practice includes leaders reading the scriptures to others (it is commanded in the Bible). So that is what Shaul meant when he uses the word reading. Encouragement is both talking about keeping what the scriptures say and talking about what we are supposed to be doing. These are also things a Jewish teacher would do in that era. Philo lived in the 1st century and said that the Jews met in synagogues, read the Tanakh, and explained and taught about what they read. He calls synagogues "schools of virtue."<sup>5</sup> They were going through the weekly Torah portions. The weekly Torah portions could have been set up by the holy prophet Nehemiah or even by Moshe himself (see Acts 15:21).

Philo's usage, "schools of virtue," perhaps helps us to understand that when Shaul met in the **School of Tyrannus** in Ephesus (Acts 19:1, 8-10), it was a synagogue (not a Sunday church) that he had formed; namely, **a school of virtue**. They were a branch of Judaism called Nazarene Jews. The Synagogue of Tyrannus was the first Messianic synagogue in Ephesus. The Greek word *tyrannus* can mean ruler or monarch (to be feared).<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the name referred to our God and King as in the Synagogue of the King (the true king). We always need to understand the Jewish biblical context. You've got people saying he started a Sunday church; that is wrong.

Since we know that Shaul stayed and taught at the Synagogue of Tyrannus for 2 years, he was using this opportunity to instruct Jewish and Gentile believers on how to observe the Torah and to live like the Messiah (see 1 Corinthians 11:1). His subsequent teaching is what was spread throughout the region (Acts 19:10). Remember, Gentiles were to learn the Torah. It says in Acts 15:20-21NKJV that the Gentiles were to learn and keep the Torah, "But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." Sometimes when we bring a new point into our teaching, we also need to tie it into things we already understand. That way we expand on our understanding.

We need the teaching and explanation of the scriptures first and foremost. This is why we have our own synagogue, our own school of virtue. To the best of our ability, we are modeled after the 1<sup>st</sup> century Messianic Jewish synagogue and not the church that abandoned Yeshua and the

<sup>3</sup> <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1513>

<sup>4</sup> <http://bibleresources.americanbible.org/node/1513>

<sup>5</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/philo/>

<sup>6</sup> I have also seen it mean awesome, but I do not believe it is being used in this sense.

truths of the Old Testament portion. It is my intention that we actually learn and grow in how to live right, and not just observe ritual or just get our ears tickled with a bunch of blah, blah, blah. The rabbis say it is our ritual to do so and so. It is of utmost importance to follow God's word in the Bible and not wrongly applied ritual laws.

We not only have the scriptures and the help of our rabbis, but the Holy Spirit can reach us and help us. The Holy Spirit is also very important for the Messianic life. Shaul often mentions the Holy Spirit and spends several chapters of 1 Corinthians on the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He says we are to. "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV.<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit is our helper (see John 15:26).

Some are against using the word rabbi, but it essentially just means a Jewish leader. Since we are messianic Jews, it is appropriate. Any term if used in the sense of being like God is wrong, even the word priest or a person's name can be overemphasized. They may be people of God, but they are not in any way the Father God; they do not take the place of God; they are not to be venerated or worshipped. They are not great ones so as to be compared in any way to God.

They are leaders by example; to be teachers of truth and virtue; and are to encourage others to keep God's commandments. For example, the word mother describes who a particular woman is. The believing woman is understood to be a woman of great respect and admiration who gives her life for her husband, family, and children; she is an industrious, caring, godly person who loves God, keeps His commandments, and teaches her family about God and how to love God. We use titles to describe what people do. There is nothing wrong with a title that is used in its correct context.

I should add that some titles are more nefarious than others. Priest was a word used to describe someone in the line of Aaron who performed sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem.

**There are no** genuine priests at this present time. Father is a word used for God, **so we should never use the word father** for a leader. Reverend means respected one and is okay because we are to honor our leaders, but we are not to honor them as though they are a god. Rabbi in our time can just mean a Jewish leader or Messianic Jewish leader and is okay but can also be used inappropriately. Rebbe is a spiritual leader and is an okay title, but sometimes there is an "I can do no wrong" stigma associated with that word and that would be wrong. I think you get the idea. Like I said, any title can be used the wrong way. Leaders need to make it clear that they are humble servants of God who live by example and are not bosses over God's people. I am just a servant of God for you.

The Holy Spirit helps us to stay connected to God. We must choose to stay within the boundaries of God's commandments and learn their applications and not ridiculous extra laws that micromanage life. The Holy Spirit then helps us to keep God's commandments and leads us in matters of question. For example, what if my plumbing breaks on Shabbat? I had this problem once and I asked God what I should do. Could I just wait until Sunday? A rule of thumb I use for Shabbat is, "Can it wait until tomorrow?" Why not make Shabbat a true day of rest?

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<sup>7</sup> In some places Shaul calls them gifts (charisma); he also calls them evidences of the Holy Spirit.

We can engage with God in many ways through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be our conscience, can lead us in our daily activities, can help us in our jobs or to be effective in our relationships.

The working of the Holy Spirit is amazing. My cousin told me the story where two men worked on a major computer system for 24 hours straight and they called my cousin in because they could not figure out what was wrong. He said a prayer and it was fixed in 10 minutes; that is the amazing work and power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is there for the believer in every area of life. The Holy Spirit is also there to help us enjoy our relationship with God.

Shaul said that we can have joy and peace through the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13 says, "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." My prayer class has so much encouraging information in it on the working of the Holy Spirit. Please read my class; it can be a great help to you and is free online on our website. I remember wanting this jacket that was marked down to \$250 from \$500. I thought, that is too much to pay for a jacket; I thought, perhaps if it was \$50, I would buy it. I went back a few months later and that very jacket was there and marked down to \$50. That was no small ordeal for me. I frequently have trouble finding clothes off the rack because I am tall. God can do anything; He can even provide us with an amazing jacket and the Holy Spirit can also work for us in the same amazing ways.

I frequently experience the peace of the Holy Spirit in my life. The Bible says that God can speak to us through prophecy. 1 Corinthians 14:3 NKJV says, "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." Don't you want to hear words of encouragement from God? These are not our words, but words that God gives us. It says prophecy is to build us up, to encourage us, and to lift us up – to comfort us. People make up stuff about what is going to happen and call it prophecy; they are just speaking their own thoughts and not God's encouragement; that is wrong. In Nehemiah's time, if his words did not come to pass, he would have been put to death. Sometimes when I touch my mezuzah, I say I love you God and I clearly hear God say "I love you" back to me. How encouraging is that! I long to be in relationship with my God and to know Him and His ways. Seek the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Decide to be a kingdom focused person; live your life with God; be attached to God; be a holy and good person. We need God's wisdom and understanding from the Torah (see Deuteronomy 4:6). We need spiritual understanding, the work of the Holy Spirit and according to Colossians 1:11 NKJV to be, "Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power."

Shaul said in Colossians 1:9-10 NKJV after hearing of their faith: "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

We are to be filled with the wisdom and understanding of the Torah so we can live right, please God, and be fruitful. That is what Shaul said, "In all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Deuteronomy 4:6 NKJV says about God's commandments, "Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear

all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" I am sorry for all you people who take the scriptures out of their Jewish biblical context. Shaul is referring to the Torah. Shaul also in Colossians 1:11-13 NKJV says we are to be:

Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy;" (how wonderful it is to experience God's power through the Holy Spirit) "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints" (of the holy separated ones who keep God's commandments, we are of those who are) "in the light" (understanding). "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

We have been rescued from ignorance, only darkness and lies; we have been removed from a worthless way of life so that we could be God's kingdom people through whom we have great hope. Then Colossians 1:14 NKJV says, "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." Remember, in Leviticus it says there must be a blood sacrifice for sin. Leviticus 17:11 NKJV says, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." We need the atonement of our Messiah who died and rose from the dead.

We are God's kingdom 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." Doesn't that make you feel special? So, act like you are His treasured people. We are still God's treasured people in this era. Kefa said in 1 Peter 2:9, "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."

God has not changed. We have been called to be a people of understanding who do not live in darkness. Live and learn God's word and His truths. Live for God's kingdom and set your heart on making God more important than anything else. Be close to God, be separate from the evil of this world and do what is right and good.

In this portion, Israel was told to go and take the land of Canaan. Perhaps this is a picture of what we are to do spiritually; we need to stand up bravely for the truth. God's word is truth because it was given by an all-knowing God. If we do not listen to God, we are not believing in Him and respecting Him. We need God's truths in the Bible and His Holy Spirit. We need to stay connected to God. God can be part of everything in life and can work powerfully in our lives. Be a deliberately strong focused person in relationship with God; be a holy, good, and fruitful person of light.

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

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.