



#9 VaYeshev Genesis 37:1-40:23
Teachings by Moshe Schwab

Names

Ya'akov – Jacob
 Kefa – Peter
 Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ in the Greek means to be smudged – anointed
 Moshe – Moses
 Shaul – Paul
 Yeshua – Jesus' real name
 Yēhōvāh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
 Y'hudah – Judah

Yochanan – John

Yosef – Joseph

Terms

Haftarah – reading from the prophets
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible
 Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah
 Vayeshev - 9th Torah portion

Since this Shabbat is so close to our Thanksgiving Holiday in the United States, we will be talking about some things to give thanks for. First of all, I'd like to talk about something from this portion that are particularly meaningful to me.

This portion of the Torah is about Yosef (Joseph) and his family. His brothers went to a trade route and Yosef followed them there. Trade routes were known for sin because of those who passed by on those routes. Yosef was a good man who heard from God, but his brothers didn't like his interference in their lives. Perhaps Yosef felt compelled to try to help them avoid any sin.

Ironically, they turned their attention toward Yosef and sold him to foreigners to get rid of him and his interference. Just like Yosef perhaps went after them to help them, Yeshua seeks us in order to help us live right. Will we send Him away like Yosef's brothers did to Yosef? Or, will we accept Yeshua's help?

Yeshua said in John 14:16-17 NKJV, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth." God gave us the Torah, but also wants to give us the Holy Spirit to help us. Yeshua said of the Holy Spirit, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;" Acts 1:8 NKJV. Our God wants to empower us through the Messiah Yeshua.

Here are some things that I find meaningful spiritually in my life:
 (Perhaps the scriptures after have meaning to you as well in these areas.)

*God protects us and heals us. Psalm 46:1; Exodus 23:25

*God knows my heart; I desire truth and want to keep His commandments. "He shall be like a tree;" Psalm 1:3 NKJV. Wind blows the chaff when grain is tossed in the air; it is not edible and is not good for anything. "The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff;" Psalm 1:4 NKJV.

*When I have trouble, I pray and get prayer. I know that God is all powerful and good and God can help me. Psalm 102:17

*Be thankful for what comes to mind. Sometimes I accomplish things because of the skill that God gave me and sometimes God helps me through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 48:17

*Be thankful for God's wonderful creation. Jeremiah 32:17

*Be thankful for all the gift of the Holy Spirit does. Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:20

*Be thankful in all the little things we do and accomplish – that we can be faithful. Proverbs 3:3

*I am thankful for all I can do; big and small. Proverbs 3:5-6

I am thankful that I know truth and can be spiritually minded and not worldly minded. Psalm 119:160; Deuteronomy 13:4.

Perhaps you can make you own list of spiritual things to be thankful for.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks;" 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NKJV.

Torah Teaching

VaYeshev means, "and he settled." This portion begins by telling us about Ya'akov's love for his son Yosef and the long-sleeved coat he made for him when he was seventeen. One time, Yosef reported on his brothers and his brothers became jealous of their father's favoritism. Yosef also had a couple dreams where his brothers prostrated themselves to him and they hated Yosef even more.

In this tragic portion we see the destructive nature of sibling rivalry, jealousy, and worldly thinking. We also see a lack of trust by Yosef's (Joseph) family in God's leading through Yosef's dreams. But we also see how God favored and protected his prophet Yosef. This should remind us that God can protect His people and give them favor even in difficult situations, and that the prophetic can be instrumental in helping God's people.

I have been amazed at what God will do for us if we will follow how He is leading us. Perhaps all we are doing is to live right, and God turns that around for us and blesses us in many different ways. Sometimes I just think of something and it happens. This one time I was at the store and I was looking at an expensive jacket that was marked down half price to \$250. I thought to myself, "Too bad it's not \$50." Two months later I was there and it was marked down to \$50. My wife was with me and she bought the same style of jacket too. There were only a few left and they just happened to fit us and they were in the colors we wanted. My size is difficult to find because I am tall. It was no coincidence to me. I knew it was God.

Ya'akov sends Yosef to see how his brothers are doing and when his brothers saw him in the distance, they plotted to kill him and then throw him in a cistern. When he arrived they threw him in the cistern and took his long sleeved coat. A caravan was coming at the time, so instead of killing him, they sold Yosef to them and the caravan went on toward Egypt. His brothers took his coat and put goats blood on it and told their father he must have been killed by a wild animal. Then the portion talks some about Y'hudah and his children. Tamar was not given proper treatment by Y'hudah's family and she entices Y'hudah to sleep with her and she has a child by him.

In the meantime, Yosef becomes a servant of Potifar, a captain of Pharaoh's guard. God favored everything that Yosef did and he was appointed to manage Potifar's household. Potifar's wife tried to seduce Yosef, but he would not comply so she pulled off his garment when he fled and accused him of trying to sleep with her. Yosef ends up in prison, but God gives favor to Yosef and he is put in charge of the prisoners. God just keeps blessing Yosef even in difficult times.

Pharaoh became angry with his baker and cup bearer and put them in prison. They had dreams that Yosef interpreted for them. He told the cup bearer that his position would be restored and the baker that he would be killed. Yosef asked that the cup bearer to remember him. Yosef's predictions turned out as expected, but the cup bearer forgot about Joseph's interpretation of his dream. We find out later that God works it out and Yosef even becomes second to Pharaoh, the leader of Egypt. Absolutely amazing, isn't it.

That just goes to show you how important hearing from God is. Shaul tells us that it is very important. 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV says, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." Some say we are not supposed to hear from God, but Shaul says that what he is saying is a commandment of God. 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV says, "Let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord." So the people who are saying we shouldn't do this are disobeying God.

We are supposed to be having words of prophecy. That's what they did in the early congregations; 1 Corinthians 14:26 NKJV says, "Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification." The reason Shaul says that all things are to build up the believers is because it seems the meetings were laborious; in the context, Shaul puts limits on what they do and we also need to have meetings that divide up time between activities and that are orderly.

What God tells us through the prophetic should not go against the truths of the Bible. The Bible tells us to test what is spoken. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 says, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." Prophecies should encourage us. 1 Corinthians 14:3 NKJV says, "But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men." The people who think prophecy is just for telling the future are wrong. If God says to be strong in His prophecy, that is a word of encouragement. If it happens that some testing comes after that, it was meant as a prophecy for something we would have to face. In either case, it was encouragement. Making up prophecy or making up what will happen **is wrong**. If we are speaking prophecy, we are to speak what God says and **NOT** what's on our mind. Look what the prophetic did in the case of Yosef. He saved the lives of his family and the lives of the people in Egypt and all around that area. The prophetic is powerful. God worked out things for all the people of that region through his prophetic gifting.

Shaul tell us that God can work out things in our lives. Just like God worked out things for the good of Yosef and eventually for his whole family, we know that God can also work out the

situations in our lives and bring good. Romans 8:28 NKJV says, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Stay faithful and seek God's spiritual gifts.

The Haftarah for VaYeshev is Amos 2:6-3:8. Amos was from Judah, but prophesied to the northern kingdom of Israel. Amos predicts doom for the northern kingdom of Israel's neighbors in the beginning of the book of Amos. Then, in today's portion, he predicts God's judgment on the northern kingdom.

Northern Israel is treating good people badly and the poor badly, they are committing sexual sins, and they are drinking wine in their meeting places (synagogue). God destroyed the Emori and brought Israel out of Egypt and into the Emori's land. Israel though caused the Nazirites to sin and silenced the prophets. They should have valued their relationship with God. Their own strength will not save them. Then God uses some examples of cause and effect to show why they are doomed.

They would not listen to the prophet of God, just like Yosef's brothers did not listen to Yosef. So northern Israel would bring trouble on themselves for not obeying God. We should always remember that God will restore and forgive us if we will change and do what is right and good.

It says in Amos 2:12 NKJV, "But you gave the Nazirites wine to drink, And commanded the prophets saying, 'Do not prophesy!'" It says in 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy." It's the same in our time for some isn't it. People say you can't prophesy. Guess what, they are contradicting the Bible and losing out in their relationship with God.

In this portion we see the destructive nature of worldly thinking and the end result of pushing away of God's words through the prophetic. Ya'akov and his family suffered because they did not trust Yosef's words from God. Israel did worse and was completely destroyed because they didn't listen to the prophets. God will work out His will. We have to decide if we will be part of it and stand strong for our faith. God may have to find someone else to do His work if we won't do it. Through the prophetic, God saved a whole region from disaster; God was able to do that because Yosef was willing to stand for God, do what is right, and be bold enough to trust in what God told him.

The Hand of God on Life

What do you want from life? Do we want God or do we want false practice. When I first began playing baseball, my coach was a former major league pitcher and he made a huge difference in how I played. He taught me the right way to swing a bat. He got a big kick out of watching us. I remember him laughing at my first attempt to bunt a ball. If I didn't have him to help me, I probably wouldn't have succeeded so well at the sport. When we do things the right way spiritually, the hand of God can be on our lives. Just look at what Yosef was able to do through God. God made him second to the head of Egypt and he saved the lives of those in the region. Doing what is right can make a big difference.

Think about how you do things. Are your attitudes and thoughts in line with the scriptures? (We learn a little at a time. The rabbis spent centuries on applying the Bible.)

When modern Christianity divorced itself from its biblical Jewish roots, they nearly lost all truth and introduced a pagan religion filled with idolatry. Even when Luther arrived on the scene, the purpose was to only make changes to the Roman/Greek Empire church that had dominated since their divorce from the Bible.

The rabbis for the first century believers in the Messiah, Rabbi Kefa, Rabbi Yochanan, and others including Rabbi Yeshua Hamashiach were turned into Greek and Roman figures; the Roman/Greek Empire even made observing some of the holy scriptures illegal.

Their Greek text replaced the Hebrew manuscripts. Having Hebrew scriptures of course would mean that the true early believers were actually Jewish; of course they were Jewish. The first New Testament text was put together around 150 AD and included the Hebrew gospels. We have recently found the entire New Testament in Hebrew in India and quotes from this manuscript match the quotes from the early church Fathers. That actually substantiates their authenticity. Of course we have a number of different Hebrew manuscripts and also translations of the Hebrew manuscripts into other ancient languages. We know this because the translations into other languages match the Hebrew manuscripts and not the Greek manuscripts.

To make the Roman Empires false claim complete, the Roman Empire said the Jews killed Yeshua when in fact Yeshua said the Gentiles would put Him to death; Matthew 20:19 NKJV. The leaders in Israel were appointed by Rome and they didn't want to lose their position to Yeshua. **Herod and the High Priest was appointed by Rome.** Those who were saying let Yeshua's blood be upon us were actually sent by their Roman appointees.

So our faith was replaced with a false faith. Instead of keeping God's commandments and instructions, people have made up their own system of faith. We need to get our teaching in line with what God's Torah (*torah* means instruction) teaches and learn to apply it. Some of what Judaism teaches helps us to understand the Bible properly. We have to figure out what instructions from Judaism is appropriate and what is not. There are some 200 appropriate Old Testament laws to follow and 1,050 appropriately applied New Testament laws that are applications of the Old Testament law. Most of the Old Testament law is for the priests. I understand that we have some 2 million laws in the United States; it is simply a lie from hell that we are not to keep the Old Testament laws.

The book of Hebrews tells us that we are to become skilled in the teachings of the Torah. The Torah teaches us how to live right. Righteousness means to live right. Hebrews 5:13-14 says, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 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 did they use to figure out what was good or evil? There was no New Testament at the time so it had to be the Torah. We are to live right and become skilled at living right. Also, in Jewish thought, doing good is to keep the Torah. We are to discern what is good it says.

Don't be confused by some Jews who think doing good is to pick something they think is good to support. That's not a bad thing to do sometimes, but some actually pick things that the Bible says is wrong. For example, some environmentalists think reducing the population through murder is okay. Green peace will put ropes across rivers in the jungle and capsize boats. So you could be going along and all of a sudden, you, your wife, children, and your baby are in the water trying to survive. Don't be so quick to think that just anything is okay to support. I'm all for a good environment; I'm for doing it right.

Open up the beauty of the scriptures in your life. Learn how to stay in the lines.

The scriptures can bring peace and blessing into our lives. When I was in the jungle, people were learning how to treat each other better through the scriptures. The scriptures have the ability to transform our lives. The early believers were all Jewish and were made to follow thousands of extra laws that micromanaged life and were just man made commandments. Yeshua quoted Isaiah and said that these misapplied laws were worthless in Matthew 15:9 NKJV, "And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Some think they are following God when they are just following man-made tradition. When Shaul says that they have not submitted themselves to God's righteousness, what is he talking about. Obviously, it is the man-made laws that Yeshua said were wrong and they should follow what the Messiah said. Shaul says they are, "Seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God;" Romans 10:3 NKJV. What did Yeshua say was wrong? Not following the Torah and instead following man-made tradition. Some tradition is fine. Life is filled with tradition, but making things into a commandment of God when they are not is wrong.

In Romans 10:4 the old English word *end* means goal. The Greek word for "end" is *telos* and is sometimes translated goal. We know that Christ can mean Messiah and law can either refer to the extra laws or the Torah. When we substitute an appropriate understanding for the words in Romans 10:4 we come up with. The Messiah is the goal of the Torah toward doing what is right for all those who believe. Some take this out of context and say we don't have to keep God's commandments. The Bible says that is a big big mistake; the ancient Jewish rabbis said there is a lake of fire for all those who live sinful lives. Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "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."

Romans 10:4 actually says that believers are to be like the Messiah and follow the Torah; with the goal toward doing what is right. Righteousness means to do what is right. The word *for* before the word righteousness is the Greek word *eis* which means toward. People who teach the lie that we are not to keep the Torah are taking the scripture out of its Jewish context. No one would have accepted Yeshua or Shaul if they were telling people not to keep God's commandments. Think about it! If people are going to the lake of fire for not keeping God's commandments, what do you think they were teaching back then? What's really scary is that it says all liars are going to the lake of fire; that's most likely talking about those who are lying about keeping God's commandments. They will say that God is a loving God and that He does not judge anybody. I'd say that going to the lake of fire for doing evil is a serious issue. Don't go to the lake of fire with them.

So we are staying in the lines spiritually speaking when we learn to apply and live the scriptures honestly. Sadly, people who are making up things out of context are in big trouble. When we approach the scriptures in their proper way, they encourage us and help us. Through the Messiah and the Holy Spirit, we can better keep God's commandments. We won't need thousands of extra commandments because we now have the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians chapter 5, it also talks about being like the Messiah.

Ephesians 5:1-6

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you."

Don't be deceived by these people who are going to the lake of fire!

This is for you people who are praying to pictures, statues, dead people (so called saints), or anything other than God, you need to stop it and start praying to God only. It says no idolater will be in the future kingdom of God. That's what it says.

Enjoy and be at peace with life in the short term. See life more like a blessing.
It just seems like a good way to start this section with some great scriptures.

Proverbs 16:2-3 NKJV

"All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirits. Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established."

Proverbs 16:20 NKJV

"He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the LORD, **happy** is he."

Psalms 119:1-3 NKJV

"**Blessed** are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD!
Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways."

Deuteronomy 28:2

"**And all these blessings** shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

Psalms 20:4-5

"May He grant you according to your **heart's desire**, And fulfill all your **purpose**. We will **rejoice** in your salvation."

After we know the direction we need to take in life, we start doing it. We learn by applying what we learn over and over. Shaul also says that the Holy Spirit works in us: "But the fruit of

the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Galatians 5:22-25 NKJV.

If we've been allowing things to take away our peace; stop obsessing. If we are making commitments to not be loving or kind, repudiate those thoughts and set yourself free of contempt. Decide you will be gentle; decide you will control yourself and be patient. Have you ever done something harsh and instead of it being encouraging, you pushed others away. When you work on these things in your life, the Holy Spirit can then start working on these things with you. You have to learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit.

Shaul says that since we are supposed to live with the help of the Holy Spirit; let's also walk in life with the help of the Holy Spirit. If you are suppressing these things in your life, you are also keeping the Holy Spirit from working in your life the way it is supposed to; don't quench the Holy Spirit. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 NKJV says, "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." Hold fast to God's commandments.

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are all ways that the Jews applied the Bible. If you were to go to synagogue, we would begin to learn how to apply God's commandments and these are some of the things you would be learning. Jewish synagogues were often called schools of virtue in the first century. When Shaul names his school, he instead call is the school of "Tyrannus." *Tyrannus* in the Greek has to do with power. Jewish synagogues taught virtue, but Shaul also taught about the power of the Holy Spirit.

Rabbi Kefa talks about the importance of virtue. This is an important godly Jewish biblical teaching. Most certainly, Shaul must have also taught these Jewish concepts. They were learned and passed down through the ages and they are practical and properly applied applications of the Torah. "Love your Neighbor;" Leviticus 19:18 NKJV.

2 Peter 1:3-10 NKJV:

His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him **who called us by glory and virtue**, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, **add to your faith virtue**, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **For he who lacks these things is shortsighted**, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, **be even more diligent to make your call and election sure**, for if you do these things you will never stumble."

We are supposed to be a people of virtue just as Jewish synagogues were schools of virtue. Even more so because the Holy Spirit helps us.

Also, in modern thinking, rabbi just means a teacher or Jewish leader. Kefa was a teacher and Jewish leader. It is wrong to think of them or of anyone as extraordinarily special because that is something reserved only for God. No one takes the place of God or can take the place of God. Using Father as a title is wrong because God is our Father. Using a title as an authority like God is wrong, so pastor or even a person's name can have improper connotations if they use it as though it has a "high" type of authority.

The issue Yeshua was addressing was improper use of titles. We have a "high" view of the Bible, but only if it is interpreted correctly. Kefa says 2 Peter 1:20-21, "No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The scriptures came from God. By interpreting them out of their Jewish context, we read into them our own interpretation which is wrong. We must understand them within the culture and belief system that they were given. They were Jewish or Israelite. Remember, saying we can't do something can also be a man-made commandment when it is not in line with a proper application of the Bible. Not using titles at all is just silliness. A proper application of a title is in how it is used.

Enjoy work and enjoy all aspects of your life. It is not drudgery and more drudgery, but success and more success, accomplishment and more accomplishment and fun, blessed times and relationship.

There is a lot of repetition in life. Doing a lot of the same things helps us to do a good job. We become better at what we do by doing something over and over. Even celebrating Shabbat can be a process of application and repetition that we can enjoy. Every week our family has a special meal and we light candles at our meal. We do this in acknowledgment of Shabbat which is Friday night and Saturday until sundown. We'll also do different fun things on Shabbat.

There is one thing we don't do and that's work. We only do what's necessary. Some people have to work on Shabbat because they can't get off; that is okay. But we shouldn't contrive work for ourselves on Shabbat. We also don't make others work on Shabbat. We intentionally make our Shabbat special. It's absolutely not a burden to let go of things on Shabbat. It is a joy.

Life and the repetition of what we do should not be a burden. We can enjoy the opportunity to accomplish tasks and all that we have to do. I pray about my day and I thank God specifically for what I was able to accomplish. Learn to appreciate the opportunity of work and accomplishing tasks.

Making sure we keep God's commandments is a joy because we know God has good intentions for us. I also want to please God; I care about my relationship with God. That is not to mention that God can put power on keeping His commandments. That makes keeping God's commandments extremely special.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 NKJV says, "I know that nothing is better for them than to rejoice, and to do good in their lives, and also that every man should eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labor—it is the gift of God."

Ecclesiastes 3:22 NKJV says, "Nothing is better than that a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him?"

Psalms 90:17 NKJV, "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands."

Colossians 3:23-25 NKJV says, "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done."

Appreciate life and learn to enjoy and appreciate the tasks and opportunities you have. God has given us our tasks to enjoy and also enjoy the benefits of what we do. God will repay us for our good both in the present and in eternity.

In our last portion, Ya'akov returns home and we see the hand of God on his life blessing him. In this portion there is a common theme. Even though Yosef is going through tough times, God is helping him and giving his favor. We need to become skilled in the teachings of the Bible and learn to interpret the Bible how early believers did. We are supposed to understand the Bible the way it was originally intended to be understood and not make up our own meanings. It cannot be plainly read; we must understand it in its original context. Don't be deceived Shaul says in Ephesians. Also, enjoy life, be at peace, and practice biblical virtue with the help of the Holy Spirit. Allow the work of the Holy Spirit and the hand of God to work in your life. We have been called to glory and virtue. Enjoy what God has given you and enjoy life. L'chaim, to life!