



**#51- 52 Nitzavim – Vayeilech, Deuteronomy 29:9-31:30
and Teaching: Be a Faithful Servant
by Moshe Schwab**

Names

Kefa – Peter
 Moshe – Moses
 Shaul – Paul
 Ya'akov – James
 Yeshua – Jesus (in Hebrew it means "Salvation")
 Yehoshua – Joshua
 Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)
 Yochanan – John

Terms

Cohen, Cohanim – Priest, priest
 Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
 Parashah – (portion) one of 54 parts of the Torah
 Rosh Hashanah – Yom Teruah; Jewish New Year
 Shabbat – the 7th day of the week; we are to rest
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

This week's portion is a double portion, Nitzavim and Vayeilech. Nitzavim means "you all are standing" and begins with all Israel standing before God. Nitzavim can also mean established and an associated word in Hebrew (matz'vah) means pillar. Ya'akov (James) is referred to as a pillar in Galatians 2:9, an established one. Ya'akov acts as the head of the church in Acts 15 and not Peter (Kefa) as some say. The Roman Empire made up a false system of religion with Peter as the first leader and even made it illegal to keep some of God's commandments in the Bible. They made up this false religious system to distance their belief system from its true biblical Jewish roots. This false system of religion was passed down into Christianity.

Vayeilech means, "he went." These portions were established by the prophets. Ya'akov (James) speaking about instructing the Gentiles says in Acts 15:21 NKJV, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." The early believers were reading the sections of the Torah every week and teaching on them.

Vayeilech begins by saying that Moshe is 120 years old, and he is not allowed to enter the promised land. It seems a small matter, but it is perhaps a spiritual picture to us that little things matter to God. Yĕhōvâh will go over the Jordan before Israel perhaps expelling any fears.

Some people look okay on the outside but on the inside, they are filled with darkness. By just looking at someone, we cannot always tell what kind of person they are. I remember meeting this drug dealer years ago. He wondered if might be interested in buying some drugs. He was dressed normally, and one might have thought that he was a successful and normal member of the community. He was destroying people with the hard drugs he was selling. Yeshua said in Luke 11:34-35 NKJV, "The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness."

First of all, what is good? The Bible says God's commandments are "right and good;" see Deuteronomy 6:17-18. Therefore, in Jewish or true biblical understanding, when the Bible talks about what is good, it is talking about God's commandments. Some people blindly think that they are to just do what they think is good. They are not necessarily doing what is good. I sometimes talk about this supposed very smart person who thought the disabled are just a burden on society so they should be done away with. That was also the philosophy of Hitler who caused untold pain on the world. Hitler and people like him put on a show and make people think they are okay people, but they are not.

God is good and His commandments are good. Psalms 107:1 NKJV says, "Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever." This is in the Old Testament portion so contrary to what some say, God does not change. He was good in Old Testament times and will always be good. He is an all-knowing God and knows what is best and good for mankind and His Old Testament commandments are still good. A person who is good is someone who keeps God's commandments and a person who is bad or evil does things their own way instead of what is "right and good."

When people do evil instead of doing what is good, God is displeased. They bring pain and evil into the world. Deuteronomy 29:19-20 NKJV says, "He blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.' The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man." Yeshua said in Matthew 15:19-20 NKJV, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." The word for fornication according to Strong's Dictionary means, "adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals," or any other type of sexual sin the Bible says is wrong.

Yeshua is only mentioning some of the more detestable sins. We need to understand that these lists in the Bible are only representative lists. There are several hundred applicable commands in the Old Testament portion and some of them are only for specific people like farmers or just for men or for women. There are about 1,050 commands in the New Testament portion and most of them are applications of commands from the Old Testament portion. After all, the commands of the Old Testament portion are "right and good," so they still apply.

Just because someone says they are Christian or Jewish, it does not mean they are "good" people that keep God's commandments. Martin Luther wrote that we have grace if we sin and he says, "It is enough that by the riches of God's glory we have come to know the Lamb that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). No sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day." (cited in Hendrix, Martin Luther, pages 121-122). As we saw in Deuteronomy 29:19-20, God is angry with those who do not control themselves and who justify their sinful behaviors. While some will say that Luther is only talking about God's forgiveness, it is a disgusting statement that puts no boundaries on sin. We have received grace from God, but not grace to sin.

Shaul's statements in the New Testament portion mean just the opposite of what Luther said.

God will not forgive those who live in sin and do not repent. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 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." So, the faith without works belief system is completely wrong. Fornication refers to any kind of sexual sin.

James 2:22 NKJV says, "Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" Yochanan said in 1 John 3:4, "Sin is lawlessness." So, sin is not keeping the law. Yeshua said in Matthew 7:23 NKJV, "I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Those who do not keep the law will be rejected by the Messiah. When we take scriptures out of the context of the other scriptures, we end up with false doctrine.

In fact, what people think is doing good has become more and more just the opinion of the person or some cultural propaganda that they have adopted. A person who says they just love God and others instead of keeping God's commandments must make up their own rules instead of keeping God's good commandments. The same is true for people who say they only live by the Holy Spirit. These people are not trusting in God and are not following God properly.

We need to talk about some of the false doctrines that people teach and also ones that have been passed down to us. While I admired Luther for standing up to some of the false doctrine that was being taught at the time, he taught some false doctrine that is still being practiced today. God forgives those who stop sinning. Psalms 103:12-13 NKJV says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him." Those who continue to sin do not fear God. No one who lives in sin will be in the future kingdom of God according to Shaul (Paul).

Seek God's joy and peace. Our spiritual life is not just to get thrills and frills. Although it is incredibly exciting when God something supernaturally for us or for someone we know. Resist negative thoughts that keep coming back over and over that steal your peace. Do what you can about a situation, and then let them go. Some situations take time to get fixed. There are some situations that we cannot do anything about. Do not let situations drag you down. Do the best you can to work out situations.

Watch that you do not be consumed by negative thoughts because they will steal your thinking if you let them. Shaul said in Philippians to pray, give thanks, ask God for help, and think good things.

Philippians 4:6-9 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. 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.

According to Philo, synagogues in the 1st century were called schools of virtue. The early synagogues of Christianity helped people to get through life by applying the commandments from the Torah like love your neighbor as yourself. So Shaul was giving us ways in Philippians to do that.

Life requires effort, but all we do should be in God's light. A lot of things in life take effort on our part. Just taking care of ourselves takes effort. God's light refers to understanding. Namely, the direction in life that we get from God's commandments. God's commandments give us 'wisdom and understanding;' see Deuteronomy 4:6. For example, we not only know how to drive the car or truck we are driving, but we are to know and keep all the laws so that we can drive safely. Did you know there are about 400 laws associated with driving a vehicle in the United States? People in general have no trouble learning the laws so they can drive. So, it definitely should be no trouble learning the laws from the Bible that apply to life so we can do what is "right and good."

What do we see when we look at our life? I hope the answer to that question is either that we are doing our best to do what is "right and good," or that we have decided to make the effort to learn and do what is "right and good." We are approaching the Fall feasts of God. Rosh Hashanah begins the Hebraic calendar year where the trumpets are sounded announcing this feast. It is called Yom Teruah in the Bible which means "the day of shouting." It begins a 10 day period of self-examination before the day of forgiveness of sins which is called Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). Then comes Sukkot which is a joyous celebration for what God has done for us. Those in Israel are commanded to live in booths and be thankful.

The biblical name for Rosh Hashanah is Yom Teruah and means "day of shouting." Yom Teruah points to the future time when the final trumpet will sound and the future kingdom will begin. 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 NKJV, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." There is an ancient prophecy that says Yeshua will come back on the day he was born. On the day Yeshua was born, the trumpets were blowing on Yom Teruah to announce the coming of our Messianic King that year and the angels were shouting for joy, it was the Day of Shouting. Luke 2:13-14 NKJV says, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'" Yeshua then is to come again on Yom Teruah at the last trump. Some say Yeshua came on Sukkot, but the Yom Teruah makes more sense.

Yom Kippur is a somber and thoughtful day of repentance for sin. While we can be forgiven any time we repent, it is a day to take serious thought about the sins we have committed and ask God to forgive us. It is a day to make a firm decision to follow God and keep His commandments. It foreshadows the future judgement time when we will stand before God. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 NKJV says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done,

whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." We will be judged at the "bema" it says in the Greek. The bema is where the Torah is read in synagogues. We will be judged for the good and evil we have done Shaul warns us. The joyous feast of Sukkot foreshadows the future celebration we will have with our God and Yeshua in the future eternal kingdom.

More to Consider

Where are we situated? Do we desire to be God's people or are we following a made-up religious system? The buildings of brick and stone that people trust in and belong to will not get you into God's future kingdom. God does not want you to trust in stone or have a heart of stone. Instead, we must be in relationship with God.

Israel was to enter into a relationship agreement (covenant) with God. Some say it is like an ancient treaty. He will be God to them, and they will be His people. Similarly, when we keep God's commandments, we are in relationship with God, and He is our Father just as God was Father to Israel. Isaiah 64:8 NKJV says, "But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."

God as a loving Father gave us His commandments in the Old Testament portion to form us into His people, and He wants us to be part of His good family. A good father is both tender, but firm. Because our Father God knows what is best for us, He desires a good life for us, so he gave us His commandments to help us become, "the work of Your hand," the work of God's hand. When we believe on the Messiah Yeshua, we are to also receive the Holy Spirit and God's gifts to help us live right (see Acts 2:38-39; and 1 Corinthians 14:1).

Receiving the Holy Spirit is also a witness to us of the loving Father that we have. Some believe the Holy Spirit is proof that they have eternal life, but that is not true. It is another helper to help us keep God's commandments. Yeshua says in John 14:15-16 NKJV, "Keep My commandments, and I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper. The first helper were the commandments given by the Father and Yeshua at Mount Sinai and in the Torah. "Another" helper is the Holy Spirit. God has reached out to us to mankind to deliver us from the slavery of sin.

Those who live sinful lives will not be in God's future kingdom. Shaul says in Ephesians 5:6 NKJV, "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 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." Be ready always to stand in truth with God's commandments and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Be a good spiritually minded person. You can either set your heart on only living for worldly things or to do what is "right and good." Yochanan said in 1 John 2:15-17 NKJV, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of

life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever." Do not give up your eternal life for sinful desires. Living a sinful life will lead to the "lake of fire" forever, see Revelation 21:8.

We get nourished spiritually in order to get rid of wrong thinking. And we also need to get rid of wrong teaching. Deuteronomy 6:18 tells us that God's commandments are "right and good." We need to understand that God is a loving and caring God who has our best interests at heart. It is not true that God imposes commandments on us for no reason at all. God knows what is best for us and wants us to change and to what is best. Exodus 34:6-7 NKJV says, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." Give God a chance and see that His ways will bring blessings into your life.

What takes shape in the life of a believer after we grow up spiritually is someone who goes from being hard and mechanical to someone who is thoughtful about what they do. When I was in the jungle doing ministry, the people there often used their power and influence to control things and their families. It was a harsh environment. When people began to learn God's ways, their lives became better as they applied God's commandments.

I remember the story of a one husband learning to love his wife and was seen picking a flower for her. He was changing his life from a harsh and domineering way to being a more caring and understanding person. We are not to hold onto grudges and harsh ways, but to be a loving people. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." Shaul says the same in Ephesians 4:32 NKJV, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."

Think of yourself as being a fresh blessing in life. Enjoy the process. Contrary to what the world offers, God offers a good and right direction for life. And God can also put a supernatural blessing on those who follow Him. Doing wrong can bring consequences and curses into people's lives. Doing what is "right and good" can bring good into our lives and even supernatural blessings from an all-powerful God! God can do little things and also big things like raise someone from the dead. God woke me up in the middle of the night once and saved my life from a fire in my house! I have seen God do many things for me both big and small.

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 today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God." How awesome is it that the God of the universe will do things for us!

Hold on to living with a melody of gladness in your life. Unravel the words of God and let your life write a message of life in Yěhōváh. The Psalms in the Bible are songs.

*Have joy in God and His commandments.

Psalm 16:11 NKJV

"You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. "

*Have joy we that we do not have to live cursed lives.

Psalm 30:5 NKJV

"For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning."

*Have joy that we can know what is "right and good" and be blessed.

Psalm 5:11-12 NKJV

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as with a shield."

*Even the earth rejoices!

Psalms 65:13 NKJV

"The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing."

*Have joy, sing to Yĕhōvâh. Yĕhōvâh is God's name that is used in the Bible over 6,000 times! Over 2,000 different manuscripts show God's name as being pronounced as Yĕhōvâh. The ancient rabbis say this is the way God's name is pronounced and so do the early Church Fathers! LORD in all caps in some Bibles is God's name, Yĕhōvâh.

Psalms 9:2 NKJV

"I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

Psalms 13:5-6 NKJV

"But I have trusted in Your mercy; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me."

This time of year is important as are all of God's feasts. I am not talking about the Gentile made-up feasts, but the real biblical feasts. In my life, I replaced the Gentile feasts with God's feasts. Those who keep God's commandment to keep the Sabbath, which is observed every week, should always remember to make a big deal about the special feasts of God like Passover, Shavuot, Yom Teruah (also called Rosh Hashanah), Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. They are God's feasts! Leviticus 23:2 NKJV says, "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts."

Torah Study

In this portion, as Israel stood before God, it says they were to keep the words of their covenant with God; namely, their relationship with God. It was God's intention that they become a people who were dedicated to do what is right. They saw the terrible lifestyle of the Egyptians and of those who they passed by on their way to Canaan. They were to understand that their lives would be cursed just like these other people if they did not follow

God's commandments.

It says they may think everything will go well if they just do what they want to instead of God's way. Deuteronomy 29:19-20 NKJV says, He blesses himself in his heart, saying, 'I shall have peace, even though I follow the dictates of my heart'—as though the drunkard could be included with the sober. The LORD would not spare him; for then the anger of the LORD and His jealousy would burn against that man." Some say that "doing what is right in their own eyes refers to keeping God's commandments." No, it does not. You are not following God if you are doing what is right in your own eyes.

Have you known people who say they are just fine even though they live in sin? This scripture in Deuteronomy makes an important point; it seems to be mankind's nature to think that doing things our own way will work out fine, but we are not to do that. If they do not keep God's commandments, the people will see their devastation and wonder what happened. They will receive the consequences of their sin.

It says in this portion that the things hidden belong to God, but God's instructions, in the Torah, which are revealed are to be kept. We should remember to keep God's commandments; God gave them to us for our own good. There are some things we do not know, but God has given us His wisdom to make us a "wise and understanding people," see Deuteronomy 4:6.

It goes on to say that when they turn back to God, God will bless them for keeping His commandments. That also applies to us in our era. When we repent of our sin, God forgives us, and we also return to our relationship to God.

Moshe tells them to choose life and keep God's commandments; they are not too hard for them. Mitzvah means commandment in Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB which says, "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you." There are some who say the Old Testament is too hard to do. It is not true. The extra man-made commandments are too hard to observe.

Yeshua referred to this verse and said His yoke is not too hard to keep. Yoke in Jewish understanding refers to the Torah, the Old Testament. Yeshua said about believers who are doing signs in His name, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Matthew 7:23 NKJV. The Greek word used for lawlessness is "*anomia*." *Nomia* was the word used by the ancient Rabbis for the Torah. *Anomia*, with the "a" in front of the word negates it. *Anomia* is then to not keep the Torah. Yeshua tells those who do not keep the Torah to depart from Him. Moshe then tells them to cling to God. Cling can also mean to cleave or stay close. Cling, cleave, stay close to God by keeping His commands.

The Haftarah for Nitzavim is Isaiah 61:10 to 63:9. The original Haftarah included the verses Yeshua read just after He finished fasting (Luke 4:18-19). These verses would be read the week just before Rosh Hashanah. So, if we allow for a couple of weeks, when we count back approximately 40 days for Yeshua fasting in the wilderness, we end up near Tisha B'av. Just

before Rosh Hashanah, Yeshua quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 NKJV, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

Yeshua said that these scriptures have been fulfilled. All of scripture has not been fulfilled yet. Some say that Yeshua has already fulfilled everything. The next part of the scripture that Yeshua did not read, Isaiah 61:2b says, "And the day of vengeance of our God." The day of God's vengeance has not occurred yet. Not everything has been fulfilled; there is still more to come.

This Haftarah says that Israel will have everlasting joy and will be a people who do what is right, right means to be righteous; they will be a people of praise. All will see this, and God will rejoice over them. They will enjoy the fruits of their labors. Clearly, God is not done with Israel as some say; those that say so are being deceitful. They believe in the false doctrine of "replacement theology." They often misinterpret the Bible and apply what it says in the Old Testament about Israel to Christianity because of their faulty theology.

In the portion Vayeilech, Moshe tells Israel and Yehoshua that God will go before them and to boldly enter the land. Moshe then wrote down the Torah, gave it to the Kohanim, and told them that they were to read it to the people every seven years on Sukkot. Moshe and Yehoshua go to the tent of meeting and God tells them that someday the people of Israel would become a disobedient people. In this portion, they are encouraged to boldly trust in God and to do what God told them to do; there are consequences for doing what is wrong.

Because they would someday disobey God, they were to write a song that the people should learn as a testimony. Yēhōvāh commissions Yehoshua as Israel's new leader and Moshe finishes writing the Torah which was to be kept by the Ark. Moshe assembles all the leaders and tells them they will provoke God with their evil and he teaches them the Ha'azinu that God told him to write. Recognizing that any one of us could fail, should make us humble and open to anything that can help us do what is "right and good" (see Deuteronomy 6:18).

Our culture brainwashes us into accepting sin. This brainwashing works through alluring tactics (through lust), by force (by making us conform to sin, or us wanting to belong), and by lying (our culture is filled with lies which contradict God's commands). Yeshua said in John 8:44 NKJV, "**You are of your father the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and **does not stand in the truth**, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it.**" Do what is "right and good" and do not follow lies.

The Ha'azinu is to remind Israel that someday they will provoke God with their evil. While we like to hear and sing about good things, we also need to hear the complete story. We also need to apply ourselves to doing what is right and good. Rabbi Shaul says in Galatians that we should not be deluded, "A person reaps what he sows;" Galatians 6:7 NKJV. If a person sows what is bad, God sees that. Sow good (keep God's commandments) and God will reward us with eternal life. A pretty good trade off; we do what is good and we are rewarded

for doing good in the present, and then get rewarded with eternal life with a good God.

It says in Hebrews 10:28-31 NKJV, "Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.' It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

God will forgive us if we repent.

While judgement may be difficult to hear, it is what the Bible says. We should also understand that God will forgive us if we repent. So, do not remain in your sin, but repent and decide you will follow God and do what is right. Shaul says to stand in Ephesians Chapter 6. We should, STAND UP, and get back on our feet spiritually! Yochanan said in 1 John 1:9 NKJV, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If God cleanses us of our sin, He will not hold them against us. Psalms 103:11-13 NKJV says, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him." Instead of failing, why not remain faithful. We are told to be strong in this portion. Deuteronomy 31:6 NKJV says, "Be strong and of good courage."

The Haftarah for Vayeilech is Hosea 14:2-10 and Micah 7:18-20. Joel 2:15-27 is included when this Shabbat portion is during the 10 days of repentance. In the Haftarah, Hosea uses pictorial imagery, and He tells Israel to return to God; nothing but God can save us and make us:

Lilly – beautiful	Tree roots – stable	Olive tree – prosperous
Fragrance – pleasant	Shadow – protected	Grain – fertile
Vine – cover the land	Wine – have joy	

Ephraim will even repent of its idols because of what God is doing in Israel. It makes sense; God's ways are fruitful and right; those who do what is right will have life through them, but the sinful will stumble.

In Micah 7:18-20 says that God will forgive for He is merciful. He will have compassion and cast their sins into the depths of the sea. On Yom Teruah, we sometimes do a ceremony where we throw bread into a body of water or river and as the bread gets carried away (or sometimes eaten by birds), we think of our sins going away. It says in Micah that God will keep His promise of truth and mercy that has been promised to the children of Abraham and Jacob.

**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.)**

People are to hear the entire Torah every 7 years. Since we can each have Bibles, we can read this for ourselves. This can be done a little at a time which is probably better for retention, or all at once. Deuteronomy 31:12.

We are to learn the song talked about in Deuteronomy 31:19.

Be a Faithful Servant
(A practical teaching to accompany the Torah teaching.)

During this season leading up to Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), we are to think about our lives and how we are doing spiritually. Sometimes we have talked about spiritual warfare in this season which is an important part of staying faithful. We also need to trust in God and His power. In our Torah study we mentioned that we are to cleave to God. We are to stay close to God and stay away from sin. In this Torah study, we also mentioned how we are not to rely on our own thinking and think that doing things our own way is okay. We should do things God's way. Do not depart from God. Serve God; be a faithful servant.

God is powerful and His works are beautiful. We can each take part in what God is doing through His power.

The scriptures sometimes have so much to teach us. How amazing is God's creation. Somehow it just happens there is dry ground above the water on the earth. If the land was level all over the earth, the earth would be covered with water. How did we end up with dry ground? God spoke it into existence, "Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear;' and it was so;" Genesis 1:9 NKJV.

God's creation is beautiful; it reflects who He is. Psalms 111:2-4 NKJV says, "The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. His work is honorable and glorious, and His righteousness endures forever. He has made His wonderful works to be remembered." It is true, isn't it? The sciences study the creation of God. That statement should rankle a few scientists. In a number of cases, science can only speculate and develop unproven theories. Look how long it took man to figure out how to go to Mars. Science moves at a snail's pace, doesn't it? When God spoke things into existence, it just happened. God can do that because He is God. Mankind takes a long time to get anything done; mankind is nothing compared to God.

God is God and We Are Not.

What is amazing about a relationship with God is that we can participate with God in life. If we keep His commandments, He blesses that and there is power associated with our obedience. The Torah says we can either have God's blessings or be cursed. If we do things our own way, we miss out on the power that God can put on our lives through our obedience. Sometimes, the consequences of doing what is wrong are not so severe, but just one big mistake can mess up our lives badly. Why not receive blessings instead of curses!

As believers in the Messiah, we also participate in the spiritual gifting that God gives us through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is good and so are God's gifts that are associated with the Holy Spirit. We need to be reminded of these things. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Luke 11:13 NKJV. Notice the exclamation point at the end of this verse. Even the translators thought this verse conveyed importance.

Shaul says that the spiritual gifts are to be used by believers. We see them doing this in 1 Corinthians 14:26 NKJV, "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." Shaul might be pointing out that their meetings were a little tedious but notice how different they were than our modern meetings. The early believers used their spiritual gifts!

Early believers sang (psalms), had teachings, revelation (prophecy, words of knowledge and wisdom), and speaking in tongues with interpretation. They used the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We have different lists of spiritual gifts. There are probably many spiritual gifts. Remember, the Rabbis made incomplete lists. For example, it would be tedious to list every commandment so they would list a few of them. That is why we have different lists. The Rabbis would often summarize or give 2 answers to a question; for example, love God and your neighbor. Hillel said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn."¹ That is two commands. Hillel was a Jewish rabbi who lived in the 1st century. Notice how he summarized the Torah. He wasn't saying not to obey the whole Torah by his summary and neither was Yeshua when He summarized.

Do you see how important it is to understand the Bible in its Jewish context? The Bible even says the Gentiles were to learn and keep the Torah. The context of this verse in Acts is referring to the Gentiles. Acts 15:21 NKJV says, "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." It is sad how people can read the Bible and not understand it properly.

Let's read about some of the spiritual gifts. To learn more about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how to use them go to: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class>. This is really important. The Holy Spirit even saved my life at least a couple of times and can do the same for you!

1 Corinthians 12:4-10 NKJV lists a number of gifts:

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillel_the_Elder

the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.

Here, the gifts are called a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Many of these gifts were used in the Old Testament portion including other gifts like inspiration to do different kinds of work.

In Romans 12:4-8 NKJV they are called gifts (charisma):

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Ephesians 4:11 NKJV lists some gifts:

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." Israel had all these gifts in Ephesians in the Old Testament portion; some of the prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah were apostles; they were sent. An apostle is someone who is sent; it is a common gift according to Ephesians. Shaul said in Romans 16:7 NKJV, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles." Junia is a woman's name. Regardless, apostles are a common spiritual gift.

Some churches spiritualize the word apostle to mean something that it is not; they are doing that out of pride, and they are being deceitful and controlling. These are some of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but there are others; we know that because we have different lists of gifts. These gifts bring the power of God into the assembly of believers. Just like God's creation is beautiful, His spiritual gifts are both powerful and beautiful. Again for more information on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, go to: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/prayer-class> for more teachings on the gifts/manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

Our lives are to be centered and attached faithfully to God.

When we make something the center of our attention, we are keeping our eyes on it; we are to keep our eyes on the things of God and recognize His presence. God sees all we do. Proverbs 15:3 says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good."

In our portion for today it says in Deuteronomy 30:20 NKJV, "That you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life." What a great scripture. Obey God, cling to Him, stay close to Him; He is our life. He is the one who gave us life, and we can choose to be with our good God for all eternity. You are clinging to God's commandments and not just Jewish commandments. Some say they are

Jewish commandments. Why would God's good commandments only be for one group of people? Yeshua was the Jewish Messiah to the world.

Work at being wholly clean people and do not carry a stained life with us.

Have you ever had to walk around with a stain on your clothing? What about a stained spiritual life? I was at a business conference once and at lunchtime, I went outside, and a bird had stained my shirt without me knowing it. One of the millionaires who was there was kind enough to tell me and he even tried to use some water and a napkin to clean it. I was amazed by his caring attitude. Perhaps that was the secret to his success. Do what is right and good and God will bless you the bible says.

Ya'akov tells us to get rid of the sin in our lives, have clean thoughts, and think of doing what is right. Resist the devil and draw near to God. James 4:7-10 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. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." Ya'akov tells us we need to get serious about life and to be humble; we need to be willing to do what is right in the sight of an all-knowing God.

"Draw Near to God and He will Draw Near to You."

We are not fooling God. No one can fool God. In fact, the Bible says God will not be mocked. Galatians 6:7 NKJV says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." God knows what is going on. Shaul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10: "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." God expects us to get with it; do not walk around with spiritual stain.

Be ornamented with keeping the norm spiritually and not at being a deviant.

People often identify people who are spiritual outcasts and keep their distance. Even unbelievers can sense a person who is deviant and does not want to associate with them. Also, though we may hide our faults to others, God knows who we are. Yeshua did not mince words when it came to sin. He said about those who sinned, "For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside some are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness;" Matthew 23:27-28 NKJV.

Some can be the slickest and nicest people, but their innermost thoughts could be filled with all kinds of worthless sinful desires. Yeshua said in Luke 6:45 NKJV, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil." Are we doing good and keeping God's commandments? God knows, so make sure you clean up your life. Yeshua also said in Matthew 5:16 NKJV, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Remember good works in Jewish thought and biblical thought is to keep God's

commandments. Yeshua gave us light so we could be a people of light (namely, understanding, see Deuteronomy 4:6).

Now is a good time to set your life straight. We are coming up on Yom Kippur when we make a general confession of sins. Ya'akov said in James 1:12 NKJV, "Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." Psalms 1:1-2 NKJV says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night."

Let us serve Yĕhōvāh and be His blessed people.

Psalms 100:2-5 NKJV:

Serve the LORD with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.

Serve Yĕhōvāh² with Gladness.

Some things God has hidden the Bible says, but we have His word to follow, and we should do what we know and keep His commandments. We need to take care to continue to follow God; what God has given His believers is by no means a small matter. What God created is beautiful, His commandments are a blessing for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit is also good. God has given us gifts associated with the Holy Spirit and the early believers used them. We need to recognize that God knows us and sees us; we should stay close to Him. No one can fool God; we should not identify ourselves with those who are defiant or deviant. We should set our lives straight and serve God and be faithful.

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

Yĕ-hō-vāh bless you and keep you.

Yĕ-hō-vāh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yĕ-hō-vāh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.

²In 2,363 different manuscripts, God's name is pointed as Yĕhōvāh; once as Yĕhōvāh; never as Yahweh.