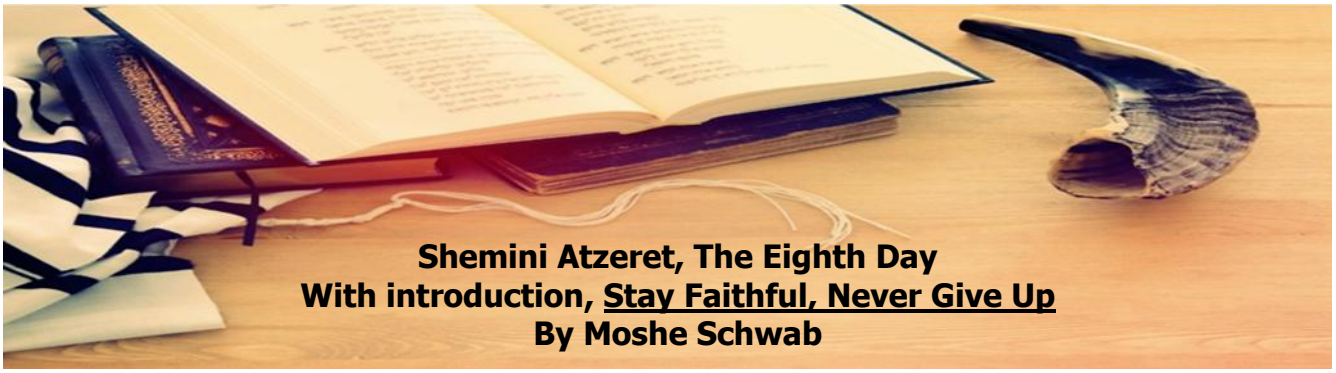


Shemini Atzeret, The Eighth Day
With introduction, Stay Faithful, Never Give Up
By Moshe Schwab

The portions we use for The Eighth Day consist of readings about God's provision. Although the Eighth Day may only be a day of rest, some treat it as a day to go to synagogue. Use your best judgement. The following is a great teaching to read while resting to help you stay the course. Someone once told me, 'When are you going to get with it?' They meant, "When are you going to stop keeping God's commandments?" It is important for us to understand that we are in a time of testing.

Before we talk about that, let's talk a little about how to keep Shemini Atzeret. We will conclude with more on Shemini Atzeret after our teaching for today. Shemini Atzeret is also known as the 8th Day and is most likely just a closing out ceremony and a day of rest for those who remained at Jerusalem until the 8th Day. I was once told by my Rabbi who grew up Orthodox that the 8th Day took on added activities because the people wanted something more to do on the 8th Day.

The typical Hebrew word used for assembly is not used for Shemini Atzeret, but a word that means "closing out" (Leviticus 23:36; Numbers29:35). The Bible reveals that Shemini Atzeret was only a closing out ceremony and a day of rest for those in Jerusalem for the 14 day Temple dedication ceremony.

In 1 Kings, Solomon holds a 14 day feast for the dedication of the First Temple. 1 Kings 8:65 NKJV says, "Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days – fourteen days." This appears to be part of a final section of the 14 day event.

This reference in the following scripture most probably refers to Shemini Atzeret. Why say the people were sent away on the 8th day of a 14 day ceremony? 1 Kings 8:66 NKJV says, "On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people." So, it must be Shemini Atzeret and not the 8th day of the 14 day ceremony. Solomon must have sent the people away with a closing ceremony on the 14th day of the 14 day ceremony which coincided with what some call the 8th Day of Sukkot. In other words, Solomon sent them away on Shemini Atzeret.

So, if this was Shemini Atzeret, then the 14 day ceremony of Solomon began on the 9th of Tishri. This would give the people time to celebrate before the 10th of Tishri which is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. They then would have remained for the rest of the dedication and celebration during Sukkot and the closing out prayer on Shemini Atzeret.

Notice that Shemini Atzeret is a "mikra kodesh," (a holy calling out) in this case in 1 Kings, it was to just send the people away for those who remained until the 8th Day. Then the people went to their tents and celebrated a day of rest. The next day they would have gone home. It was not a day of extensive activities as some do. The scriptures clearly say it was a closing out ceremony, but if you think you need to meet, you should do so. You could just say a closing out prayer and have a day of rest. Again, according to my Rabbi, activities were added because people were interested in doing something on Shemini Atzeret. We should not make added activities mandatory if they are not commanded. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Let's continue with our Bible teaching for today. Again, we will have more information on Shemini Atzeret after our main teaching. Remember, the point of reading the portions every week is to learn the lessons they teach us and to help us keep and learn God's good commandments.

The first leader of the Messianic believers said referring to the new Gentile believers 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." New believers were to learn and keep God's good Old Testament commandments.

<u>God's unconditional goodness tests us</u>.
One of the important concepts that we teach is that God's unconditional goodness tests us. It tested the Israelites in the desert as God provided for them unconditionally. Also, those who receive the Holy Spirit in this Messianic age are tested by God's unconditional goodness. We will have a teaching on observing The 8th Day following our teaching for today.

> Deuteronomy 8:2-4 NKJV says,
> And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, **to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not**. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and **fed you** with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. **Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years**.

God gave Israel food and water, their clothes did not wear out, and God must have strengthened them physically. They may have thought that they had made it spiritually but they had to prove that they believed in who God was by keeping His commandments. So, even though God set them free from the Egyptians and provided for them, it was a time of testing as well. We could say that God provided for them unconditionally.

In the same way, believers in the Messiah Yeshua are tested to see if they truly believe in who God is by the unconditional gift of the Holy Spirit that is given to all those who believe on the

Messiah Yeshua. We receive this unconditional gift from God just like God provided for Israel in the desert out of His goodness. It is time of testing to see if we will keep God's commandments. We become God's holy special people if we keep His Old Testament commandments. Deuteronomy 28:9 NKJV says, "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways."

Notice how the writer of Hebrews ties in the Messianic era with Israel's time in the wilderness.

> Hebrews 10:26-31 NKJV says,
> For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 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.

Those who willfully live sinful lives will not be in God's future kingdom (for example see 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and Galatians 5:19-21). Shaul must have talked about this frequently because he reminds them about this. Galatians 5:21 NKJV says, "Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things **will not inherit the kingdom of God**." We can be forgiven of our sin, but we must confess our sin to God and decide not to do it again. We must take control of our thoughts and what we do and follow God's commandments.

> 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.

Those who respect God (fear Him) and keep His commandments will be forgiven. Those who do not will fall into the hands of the living and real God at the time of judgement and fall short of God's grace. Hebrews 12:14-15 NKJV says, "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.

Yeshua said he will reject those who do not keep the law. Matthew 7:21-23 NKJV says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Yochanan said that not keeping the law is sin. 1 John 3:4 NKJV says, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." Yeshua came to help us keep the law and gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us.

Do not insult God's grace. You have been given the good gifts of God's commandments and the Holy Spirit. Will you pass this time of testing? Be strong spiritually. God has good intentions for us. Deuteronomy 5:29 NKJV says, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!" God wants to bless us with His good commandments and with His good Holy Spirit. Pass this time of testing and do what is "right and good."

> Joshua 1:7-8 NKJV says,
> Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
>
> Luke 11:13 NKJV says,
> 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!”

I would like to begin by encouraging us to be a person who stays true to who we are supposed to be. We are not supposed to follow the ideals and ways of the worldly. 1 John 2:16-17 NKJV says, "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."

<u>Stay true to your godly nature and be a person of goodness and peace</u>.
There are lots of ways to approach life. Being patient, overlooking little things, and helping others in a respectful and kind manner are always the best way to encourage others. Even warning others in a kind manner about the judgment of God produces the best results. Sharing what the Bible says can make your approach better because we use God's words and not our words.

I have heard some say things like, what you are sharing is of the devil. They believed in not keeping the law and they do not like the idea of keeping God's laws. Like it says in 1 John 3:4 NKJV, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." So, sin is to not keep the law. It then says a few verses later, 1 John 3:8 NKJV, "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." So, it is not keeping the law that is of the devil. We do not live like any idea or practice is okay but by God's good standards that help us in life and prosper us. God's ways for us are specific. Yeshua told us that we must apply ourselves to what God says, that is what He means by the narrow way. Matthew 7:14 NKJV says, "**Narrow is the gate** and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." The reason people do not find the way to eternal life is because most people want to do what they think is okay even if their ideas are sinful. It is difficult because of all the false teaching out there. Deuteronomy 30:11 NIV says, "Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach." The Bible says God's Old Testament commandments are not difficult.

People take scriptures out of the context of the Bible and apply them wrongly. Yeshua kept the law, and we are to keep the law. 1 Corinthians 11:1 NKJV says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." Shaul (Paul) imitated Yeshua and Yeshua kept the law. Those that take the scriptures out of the context of the Bible will contradict the scriptures and say that Shaul said all we need to do is have faith. They just do not know the scriptures. James 2:24 NKJV says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." Those that misunderstand the scriptures say it is just by faith, but the Bible says it is not just by faith.

What are their motives? Perhaps they do not want to follow our good and all-knowing God who has our best interests at heart. Or, they perhaps just want to do things their own way and they pick and choose what they want to follow from the Bible. They are not following God with their whole heart. One of the commandments in the Old Testament portion tells us in Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Often though, these people who do not want to follow God the way He tells us have been fooled by false doctrine, man-made theology, or just a lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6 NKJV says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you." Those that teach false doctrine often teach a wide gate and contradict Yeshua.

Let's talk more about our godly nature of goodness and peace. Jewish synagogues in the time of Yeshua were called "Schools of Virtue" according to Philo of Alexandria. Synagogue is a school of virtue because we learn good ways to live by keeping God's commandments. In fact, the Bible says that God's commandments give us wisdom and understanding (see Deuteronomy 4:6) and God's commandments are "right and good," (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18). So, it is not true that they are a curse as some say. Not keeping them can be a curse. That is what theology does; it sometimes makes up doctrine. Theology can be a false system of error that is leading people to eternal destruction. 1 Peter 4:3-5 NKJV says, "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead."

Do not follow their Gentile ways. They will say that we do not have to follow the law of God because they are a Gentile. They just do not understand the Bible. Would God's good laws only apply to the Jews? No, God's blessings through the law are for anyone who wants to follow the true God.

Learning to be kind, considerate, and respectful comes from God's Old Testament commands. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." So, keeping God's commandments as well as treating others how you would want to be treated is commanded by God and things like being gentle towards others and kind are commandments of God. For example, Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV says, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." We need to work on these things. If we resist these things, then the Holy Spirit which

is given by the Messiah Yeshua to believers cannot work in us properly. We would be resisting God.

Even when we play games, we must follow the rules, or we lose the fun of playing the game. I was recently watching a sporting event on TV and the replay showed that one of the rules of the game was violated and nothing was done about it. Evidently, the referees who called penalties for those infractions did not see what happened. The TV broadcasters showed a number of people who were at the game being upset about the mistake the referees made.

Committing sin is evil because they bring pain and wrong into the lives of those they associate with. Those that accept sin into their lifestyle ignore the goodness of God and His "right and good" ways and they selfishly seek their own ways. They are like children who steal a baby's toy because they can get away with it.

They will not get away with their sin when they have to stand before God. Shaul (Paul) says that those who live in sin will be judged harshly by God. Romans 2:5-6 NKJV says, "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds." Those who do not change and do not do what is "right" will experience God's wrath because of their sinful deeds. Instead, why not bring the goodness of God into the world, do what is "right and good," and be a people who look forward to God's future goodness in His eternal kingdom.

The 8th Day would be a final day of thanksgiving for all God has given us and will give us.

> Psalm 28:7 NKJV says,
> "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices, and with my song I will praise Him." "Praise" in this verse is the Hebrew word for thanks.
>
> Psalm 30:4 NKJV says,
> "Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name."
>
> Psalm 119:7-8 NKJV says,
> "I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments. I will keep Your statutes; oh, do not forsake me utterly!" "Praise" in this verse is the Hebrew word for thanks.
>
> Psalm 119:62-64 NKJV says,
> "At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You, because of Your righteous judgments. I am a companion of all who fear You, and of those who keep Your precepts. The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy; teach me Your statutes."

Have joy, appreciate God and his commandments, be thankful for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and have gratitude for all God has done. God did not have to help us, but God is a good God, and it is important that we recognize His goodness and do not reject Him. Get to know and

understand that our God is good. We are indebted to our God for all we have, for all that the earth provides, and for His good intentions for us.

Here is more to consider. Stay Faithful, Never Give Up

Seek God's light. Let His word direct us.

Moshe told Israel they would fail some day; he told them this so they would not give up. They came back to their land from Babylon and got their lives back together. This is a process we do over and over as believers in the true God. In this Messianic age, the first thing we are to do is to turn toward God by keeping His commandments and accept the Messiah. We are to receive the Holy Spirit. We can tell God we want His Holy Spirit and He will give it those who believe in the Messiah Yeshua. In the future, we may receive a spiritual gift that is associated with the Holy Spirit. My experience has been that everyone who seeks spiritual gifts, will receive them; so be patient and seek them. Shaul said, "Desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV.

Yeshua said we are to receive the Holy Spirit as our helper. John 14:15-16 NKJV says, "Keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever." The Holy Spirit is helping us to keep God's commandments. We need to turn to God, repent, keep His commandments, accept Yeshua as the Messiah, and receive the Holy Spirit as our helper (as well as God's gifts of the Holy Spirit).

Kefa said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39 NKJV. Isn't that great; it is a promise from God to us and our children and even those afar off. Perhaps Kefa never thought that people all over the world would be receiving God's Holy Spirit. I do not know what his idea of being afar off was. We are surely far from Israel and a couple thousand years later; God's calling is still true for us today.

We have both God's word to lead us and the Holy Spirit now in this Messianic age. As we saw in the scripture portions for today, we are to keep God's commandments and not sin. They told us to return to God; God wants to give us His mercy. He blesses us for following His instructions (Torah means instruction). Psalms 43:3 NKJV says, "Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me." The idea of being led by God begins with keeping His commandments. Then the Holy Spirit helps us in the details of life and lots more.

Oddly, there are some people who think we are only being led by the Holy Spirit. The context of the scripture about the Holy Spirit is keeping God's commandments. Yeshua said first of all, we need to keep His commandments. "Keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper;" John 14:15 NKJV. Could it be any plainer? Over and over the Bible tells us to keep God's commandments.

Stay connected to God; His ways support us and are good.

God's word is a light to us and so is the Holy Spirit. Psalm 119 has many great scriptures about keeping God's commandments.

From Psalm 119 NKJV:

10 "With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!"
16 "I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word."
30 "I have chosen the way of truth."
40 "Behold, I long for Your precepts"
50 "This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life."
65 "You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments."
72 "The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver."
162 "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure."

In order to grow spiritually, we may need to change how we do some things and even stop how we are doing other things. Years ago, I tried to study the Bible and pray every day, but the business of life kept me from doing that. I had to form the habit of doing that every day. Now I do it automatically. If my day gets away from me, I spend my evening in study and prayer.

Psalms 5:3 NKJV says, "My voice You shall hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning I will direct it to You." Talking about Yeshua, "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed;" Mark 1:35NKJV. Mark 6:46 NKJV says about Yeshua, "And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray."

Let us form good habits. Hebrews 5:14 NKJV says, "Those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." 1 Timothy 4:7 NKJV says, "Exercise yourself toward godliness." We are to work at doing "good" and forming "good" habits ("good" means to keep God's commandments – see Deuteronomy 6:17-18). When we come up to a problem, then we will be ready to do what is "right."

<u>Money is often a driving force in our lives. It speaks loudly to us.</u>
When I first went out on my own, it was not well planned. I got a job; I got a place to live; and I had 2 dollars that I had borrowed to live on until I got my first paycheck. Some of you are probably thinking wow, that must have been hard. I sure learned the lesson of working for a living. I had to work, or I would starve.

<u>We must also allow God to speak loudly into our lives.</u>
Some can put all their effort into making money and not give God a proper place in their life. Remember what Psalm 119:10 NKJV said, "With my whole heart I have sought You; oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!" Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV says that, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." God tells us to live good and blessed lives; then someday we will be with Him for eternity. Hebrews 14:12 NKJV says, " Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

God knows what we do, and He is the almighty judge. We will have to give an account for our lives. Do we do good or evil? When I wrote down what I thought God wanted me to share

today, I did not have any idea how things would fit together. I just shared about holiness and then I looked at the next thing God wanted me to talk about. "He is the almighty judge!"

It amazes me sometimes how flippant people can be with the Bible. Guess what, people who do not follow God's commands are bringing pain and evil into this world. God is just and He will judge mankind. Shaul said in 2 Corinthians 5:10-11 NKJV, "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."

Notice how it says, "terror of the Lord." I do not think we hear that in too many churches nowadays. It says we will be judged for the "good or bad" we have done. Strong's says the word "bad" means, "bad, evil, harm, ill, noisome, wicked." It is not just things we think are bad, it is what God says is wrong. This may come as a total surprise to you, but the word for judgment seat, is the Greek word bema which is the word Jews use for where the Torah is read. Shaul was Jewish and so is Yeshua. How about that! We will be judged by how we keep the Torah. Again, it says in Psalms 119:65, "You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe Your commandments." If you want to be dealt well with in eternity, keep God's commandments.

God does not want anyone to fail. He cares about mankind; He is a God of mercy.

We have just finished observing three of God's feasts. God's feasts help us to connect with God on a regular basis. This present world will perish, but we have the opportunity to be raised from the dead to be with God in His future kingdom where we will be connected to God for all the time. Won't you believe in the Messiah Yeshua and keep God's commandments?

> Kefa said in 2 Peter 3:5-9 NKJV:
> For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water. But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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.

Isn't that great! God is a good God and does not want anyone to fail. Yochanan says he saw the heavenly Jerusalem coming down from heaven in the book of Revelation. Perhaps he had a slow-motion action future-play. God could restore Jerusalem in a split second. Perhaps God slowed it down for him so he could experience how it will occur sometime in the future. Yochanan also said, "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;" Revelation 21:8 NKJV. There is a lake of fire for those who do not obey God. This

may terrify you, but better for you to know now than have to face that at your time of judgment.

God gave Israel a song so they would be reminded to be faithful to God. It is important that we remember to do what is right. God gave us His words in the Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead us and help us. Ritual is often not a commandment of God; misapplied commandments are not God's commands. Not all ritual is wrong. The portion tells us there has never been a man like Moshe, at least not until Yeshua the Messiah. Yeshua even healed everyone in some cities.

As believers, we need to keep seeking God and never give up. Stay connected to God and His word. In order to grow spiritually, we may need to change some things in our lives. Money is often a driving force for us, but God should also be especially important. We will have to give an account to God for how we live. Stay faithful to our good and just God.

Observing Shemini Atzeret – The 8th Day

Let's review what we talked about earlier. The typical Hebrew word used for assembly is not used for Shemini Atzeret, but a word that means "closing out" (Leviticus 23:36; Numbers29:35). The Bible reveals that Shemini Atzeret was only a closing out ceremony and a day of rest for those in Jerusalem for the 14 day Temple dedication ceremony.

In 1 Kings, Solomon holds a 14 day feast for the dedication of the First Temple. 1 Kings 8:65 NKJV says, "Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days – fourteen days." This appears to be part of a final section of the 14 day event.

This reference in the following scripture most probably refers to Shemini Atzeret. Why say the people were sent away on the 8th day of a 14 day ceremony? 1 Kings 8:66 NKJV says, "On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people." So, it must be Shemini Atzeret and not the 8th day of the 14 day ceremony. Solomon must have sent the people away with a closing ceremony on the 14th day of the 14 day ceremony which coincided with what some call the 8th Day of Sukkot. In other words, Solomon sent them away on Shemini Atzeret.

So, if this was Shemini Atzeret, then the 14 day ceremony of Solomon began on the 9th of Tishri. This would give the people time to celebrate before the 10th of Tishri which is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. They then would have remained for the rest of the dedication and celebration during Sukkot and the closing out prayer on Shemini Atzeret.

Notice that Shemini Atzeret is a "mikra kodesh," (a holy calling out) in this case in 1 Kings, it was to just send the people away for those who remained until the 8th Day. Then the people went to their tents and celebrated a day of rest. The next day they would have gone home. It was not a day of extensive activities as some do. The scriptures clearly say it was a closing out ceremony, but if you think you need to meet, you should do so. You could just say a closing out

prayer and have a day of rest. Again, according to my Rabbi, activities were added because people were interested in doing something on Shemini Atzeret. We should not make added activities mandatory if they are not commanded. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

There are some differing opinions on the practice of observing The 8th Day, also known as Shemini Atzeret, as a day of assembly. Leviticus 23:36 NKJV says, "On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the LORD. It is a sacred **assembly**, and you shall do no customary work on it." The root of that word translated assembly is עָצַר and means to close out. So as previously pointed out, it was a *mikra kodesh,* a holy calling out for those there at the dedication of the Firat Temple. Therefore, it would only be a day of rest for those not there.

In a scholarly article I once read, the article concurred that the Hebrew says it was merely a "closing day" and a day of rest. The scholarly article said that is how the 8th Day was celebrated in second Temple times before 70 AD with a closing out ceremony in Jerusalem.

So, the 8th day was simply a closing out and a day of rest. They went to their tents with joy it says in 1 Kings. Joy accompanied God's feast days. They are God's feasts. Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV says, "Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Fat refers to having meat with the meal not just eating fat. Eating the fat of an animal is forbidden (see Leviticus 7:23).

Also, note that the Levites taught the people on God's weekly Shabbat and on His feasts, but the 8th day did not include this since it was a closing out ceremony. Initially, the Torah was read on Sukkot, but God through the prophets changed this to a weekly reading. As the nation grew, this would be a better way to teach the Torah so all could hear God's commandments and lessons. Nehemiah 8:7-8 NKJV says, "The Levites, helped the people to understand the Law; and the people stood in their place. So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading." It is good to have some appropriate exposition of the scriptures so people can understand them.

<u>The feasts of God</u>.
The feasts of God are meeting times with God, and it is good to learn and grow on our own or through good teaching on God's feasts and also on the weekly feast of Shabbat. The word translated seasons (*moedim*) is the Hebrew word for meetings in Genesis chapter 1. Genesis 1:14 NKJV says, "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and, seasons, and for days and years.'" The lights in the sky are for signs and meetings. The Bible said that Moshe went to hear from God at the "tent of meeting" in Hebrew, at the *ohel moed*. Exodus 33:7 KJV says, "Now Moses used to take the tent and to pitch it without the camp, afar off from the camp; and he called it, the tent of meeting." *Moedim* (meetings) is the plural used in Genesis 1:14. *Moed* (meeting) is the singular form in Exodus 33:7.

Of course, they most likely had customs and extra practices in the second Temple period, but extra observances do not need to be practiced. So, the extra observances added to the 8th Day do not need to be kept. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV says, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. The 8th Day has taken on extra practices in our era and people who treat these practices as God's commandments are following people and not God the Bible says in Isaiah 29:13 NKJV, "Therefore the Lord said: Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." Let's talk about this some more.

The extra man-made activities surrounding Shemini Atzeret.
Some include extra man-made traditions in their of observance of Shemini Atzeret. The root for the Hebrew word *atzeret* is the Hebrew word *atsar* which means, to "restrain, retain, **close up**, shut, withhold, refrain, stay, detain, halt, or **stop**" according to Strong's Dictionary. The word *atzeret* probably should be understood as a closing up, a stop, or halting of Sukkot. So, how did this word get translated as a "sacred assembly?" The word *atzeret* is used in Jeremiah and translated as assembly.

> Jeremiah 9:2 NKJV says,
> Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for travelers; that I might leave my people, and go from them! For they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.

The translated word for *atzeret* there seems a little forced. It is saying that Israel was an assembly of transgressors, of sinful people. It is not calling them to a sacred assembly but referring to them as a people, they are acting sinfully. So, the translation of *atzeret* as a sacred assembly is incorrect. As I have said, the root of *atzeret* referring to The 8th Day means a closing out ceremony like the one we see in 1 Kings 8:66. In Jeremiah 9:2, perhaps we could say from the definition of the word *atzeret* that as a people, Israel was 'closed off' or 'had stopped' keeping God's commandments. It is sometimes difficult to translate the meaning of a foreign word with just one word. Word for word translations are very helpful and are what I prefer though because we can look up the translated word and its root and perhaps get a better understanding of what that word actually can mean. This is one of those cases.

A side note on Jeremiah 9:2.
Some people say that Israel never followed God the way they should have. That is not true. So, we need to talk about this more. It is important to mention that not everyone in Israel was engaging in sin, but as a nation, they had become very sinful. They were not so predisposed to sin at one time. It is so sad, isn't it? Nations can deteriorate into sinful behaviors. Take for example the leftist regime of China which according to some sources murdered some 70 million of its own people in the 20th century. Their leftist religious system became the belief system of that nation and sadly, it became one of the most murderous societies in the history of mankind.

Isaiah the prophet also felt at one time that most of the people of Israel had forsaken God. 1 Kings 19:14 NKJV says, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." God says to Isaiah in 1 Kings 19:18 NKJV, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to

Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." There are always some people who follow God and His good commandments who are deterrent to the terrible evil of sinful societies in the world. There seems to be a tipping point though for nations that makes that nation into an evil society.

That's what happened in China and Russia and other countries that believed in leftist religions in our era. That is what happened to Canaan at one time. Leviticus 18:24-25 NKJV says, "Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants." Their sin caused the destruction of their own nation. You could say that the sinful leftist concepts of China caused them to murder their own people, and it is still going on today. Other religions do the same to their own detriment and even teach that murder is okay. We do not know where it will all end. Also, we know that Israel entered a dark era in their history because of their sin, their evil behaviors. Jeremiah was warning them and trying to get them to repent of their sin. People often fool themselves into thinking there are no consequences for sin, but they are wrong.

The History of Shemini Atzeret.
Also, when I talk about the extra activities of Shemini Atzeret, I am mostly referring to the man-made holiday of Simcha Torah which involves the turning back of the scroll to Genesis and reading the last portion of Deuteronomy and some of Genesis. It is a man-made holiday and not commanded in the Bible. It was also explained to me at my Bar Mitzva training that people were interested in observing the turning back of the scrolls, so they made it into a tradition that is sometimes observed on Shemini Atzeret. Back then, their Bibles were written on scrolls and that practice is still maintained by some. Of course, as afore mentioned, it seems obvious that the word *atzeret* does not mean a sacred assembly. Some take a strong exception to The 8th Day being only a day of rest with a closing ceremony and include the man-made holiday of Simcha Torah in their celebration of Shemini Atzeret.

The Orthodox sect of Judaism in Israel celebrates 1 day for Shemini Atzeret so they celebrate Simcha Torah on The 8th Day. Outside of Israel the Orthodox celebrate 2 days of Shemini Atzeret so they celebrate Simcha Torah on the nineth day. All the Reformed sect of Judaism also celebrates Simcha Torah on Shemini Atzeret since they believe that it is not necessary to keep an extra day for the feasts. I do not believe we need to be doing extra activities on Shemini Atzeret so I believe that the turning back of the scroll can be done at another time.

How did Simcha Torah get started? They used to read the Old Testament scriptures out loud on Sukkot. God had the prophets split up the readings of the Torah into 54 sections so they could be read every week and the people could more easily learn God's commandments and lessons. Ya'akov (James real name) says about the new believing Gentiles learning and keeping the Torah, namely, God's Old Testament commandments 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."

So, they would read the last portion of the Torah on Shemini Atzeret and then begin reading the first portion in Genesis on the next Shabbat. I do not believe we must do a lot of activities

on The 8th Day, so we often read the last portion on the Sabbat before The 8th Day. There can be a closing ceremony for Sukkot because The 8th Day, Shemini Atzeret, is supposed to close out Sukkot. For those in Jerusalem for Sukkot they were dismissed on the 8th Day and rested. For those not in Jerusalem therefore, it only needs to be a day of rest.

However we celebrate The 8th Day, it can represent the final eternal rest in God's future kingdom. The 8th Day seems to point to our eternal blessings in God's future kingdom. We could call it the "perfect day" because it points to a perfect future era. Just as God's creation was very good, believers and followers of the true God, His Messiah, and His commandments will be in a restored wonderous future kingdom of God. Revelation 21:21 NKJV says, "And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass." God can do that because He is God.

Shemini Atzeret is a shadow picture of the future eternal kingdom of God.
We see that God's creation is referred to as a day in Genesis 2:4 NKJV, "This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." So, the word "day" can refer to a period of time and not just a day. Since the word day in Hebrew can also be a period of time, this then shows us that The 8th Day could be a shadow picture for God's future eternal kingdom. The creation account in Genesis Chapter 1 suggests an exact day between events and that would be amazing in itself but that the word day is used as a summary of the entire creation account suggests the word for "day" can also be a period of time or an era. For example, Psalms 90:4 NKJV says, "For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past." God can create everything in a second. God does not need a day since He is God. But, because the word day can also mean a period of time, it is reasonable to think of The 8th Day after Sukkot as pointing to and representing our eternal time or era in the future glorious kingdom of God.

Yom Teruah (the correct biblical name) or Rosh Hashanah points to the return of our Messianic King Yeshua with the Trumpets blowing announcing His return. Numbers 29:1 NKJV says, "In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a day of **blowing the trumpets**." Blowing could also be translated as shouting. For example, the word translated blowing is translated shout in Joshua 6:20 NKJV, "The **people shouted** with a great shout, that the wall fell down." So, the biblical name is more properly the Day of Shouting or Day of Trumpets.

1 Thessalonians 4:16 NKJV says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." Yom Kippur, also called the Day of Atonement, is a day of confession of sin, and points to the future time of judgement by God. Sukkot is often referred to as The Feast, and it points to our future celebration with our God and the Messiah. Doing something on The 8th Day other than resting on The 8th Day then seems to distort the concept of The 8th Day being representative of the eternal blessings in God's future kingdom.

Finally.
Also, some people will not stay in the sukkah on The 8th Day because they understand that Sukkot is over. Immediately after the day of rest of The 8th Day, most people take their sukkah down unless it is used for temporary housing such as in a stable for animals, a barn, or a cabin.

Yeshua was born in a converted sukkah (a manger) on Yom Teruah which means The Day of Shouting. It was not Sukkot yet, so their sukkah was empty and ready and available to stay in. It makes sense that God had a place prepared for the birth of Yeshua. The angels were shouting on The Day of Shouting the day Yeshua was born, and the trumpets were blowing announcing the day of the feast and the birth of our king. The inns were full because people were going to Jerusalem for the Fall feasts of God, namely, Yom Teruah (also known as Rosh Hashanah), Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. Bethlehem is very close to Jerusalem.

How do we observe this closing out of Sukkot in our modern world? For some, it is difficult to do this with other people, and I suggest saying prayers of thanks and concluding with the Aaronic prayer. The only option for some is to meet with people who make the day into a day of activities, and we do not do this, and I suggest you do something else. If you want to get together with others to conclude Sukkot on The 8th Day, you can get together with others who practice this more appropriately. You could observe the closing of Sukkot with your family, a friend or friends, or even do that online or on the phone. I know of one person who has an online meeting for The 8th Day. May you have a blessed 8th Day.

In closing, let us say the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-26:
ADONAI or LORD in all caps in our Bibles is the name for God, which is pronounced, Yĕ-hō-váh. Yĕ-hō-váh is used 6,521 times in the Old Testament portion according to Strong's Dictionary. Since God's name is used that many times, it is evident that we should be using His real name. So, why not use God's real name? According to Exodus 3:15, Yĕ-hō-váh is God's true name forever. In that verse and everywhere we see a name for God in all capitals (in some of our Bibles) it is this exclusive name for God, Yĕ-hō-váh. Of course, we should use His name with respect. Yĕ-hō-váh is an acronym formed from the Hebrew verb hayah which means to exist. Yĕ-hō-váh means, He existed, He exists, and He will exist. He is our eternal God and creator. I want to honor God's name. Will you also honor God's name?

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

The ancient rabbis say that is God's name. The church Fathers said God's name is Yĕ-hō-váh. I have seen God's name pointed as Yĕ-hō-váh in the Aleppo Codex. Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Yeshua is quoting Psalm 118:26; the word "LORD" in that verse in Psalms is Yĕ-hō-váh (יְהוָֹה).

Numbers 6:27 says we are to put God's name on His people. So, let's put God's name on His people.

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

יְבָרֶכְךָ יְהוָה, וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וִיחֻנֶּךָּ
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיָשֵׂם לְךָ שָׁלוֹם

Yĕ-hō-váh bless you and keep you.
Yĕ-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
Yĕ-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.