



#48 Shoftim – Deuteronomy 16:18 to 21:9
Torah teaching and teaching, Staying on Course in Life
By Moshe Schwab

Names

Cohanim - priests
Kefa – Peter
Moshe – Moses
Shaul – Paul
Shavuot – Pentecost, a spring feast of God
Tamuz – the name of an ancient pagan god
Yeshua – Jesus (in Hebrew it means "Salvation")
Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Exodus 3:15)

Yochanan – John

Terms

#48 – the 48th portion
Haftarah – the weekly reading from the prophets
High Holy Days – Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, & Sukkot
Parashah – (portion) one of 54 portions of the Torah
Shabbat – the 7th day of the week; we are to rest
Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible
Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible

Shoftim means, "judges." This portion occurs in the Jewish month of Elul, just before the High Holy Days, the Fall feasts of God. It is a good time to think about doing better in life and following God and keeping God's commandments.

We are accustomed to need many different things for life in our era.

For example, we need water, plumbing, and electrical for many of the things we need to do. For most of us, we would not think of living without these things, and we consider them to be a necessity. Even in ancient times people needed these things. They were accomplished in not as sophisticated ways, but they still had them. There was a city in this one remote area of the Middle East called Petra that archeologists found evidence of a dam to hold water and tiles for a plumbing system that could bring water into the city.

People will consider these things a necessity and they are important. Many are often consumed in life with what they need to do to get by. Often in our era, most people seemed to be concerned with only the physical aspects of life and not the spiritual side of life. Why not also make the God of the universe an important part of life as well. Some see no value in a relationship with God and eternal life. Since God's commandments give us wisdom and understanding (see Deuteronomy 4:6) and are "right and good," they have everything to do with a successful and meaningful life. Then God promises eternal life in the future kingdom of God to those who believe in Him and want to do what is "right and good." It makes sense. If a person does not want what our good God wants to impart to them, God does not force it on them.

Since God is a good and caring God, He considers those who keep His commandments to be His holy and treasured people. To be holy means to be a set apart people who follow God by keeping His commandments. It is not automatic by only faith as some say. It requires that we act differently than the worldly unbelieving community who do not follow God. Deuteronomy 7:6 NKJV says, "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of

the earth." Of course, this verse refers to Israel, but it also applies to those in the New Testament era who follow God and keep His commandments.

Those that do not keep God's commandments are not following God, but their own desires and ideas on life. Ephesians 2:3 NKJV says, "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." Those who follow their own desires and ideas on life are a people of wrath because they do not follow God. Some will say they are okay with God because they believe in God. It says in James 2:19 NKJV, "Even the demons believe." The demons believe and they are going to the lake of fire! Revelation 20:10 NKJV says, "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone." Even Shaul (Paul) says, "Do not be deceived."

Some people say that saying these things is not loving. Wouldn't you want someone to warn you about an impending calamity and save your life. You protect your children and love them, so God loves you and Shaul also cared enough to warn you to keep God's commandments. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV Shaul says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? **Do not be deceived.** Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." Righteous means to do what is right by God's standards. These people who do things their own way do evil because our all-knowing God knows what is best and they are instead doing things their own way and bringing evil into the world; and I might add, they are like the devil it said in the book of James.

We need to know a lot to take care of the things of life.

We need to know how to take care of ourselves, make food, take care of our home, and some of us have a job so that we have the money to provide for ourselves, and some of us have families to take care of as well. People often have a number of necessities they need for life.

Since we have to apply ourselves to so much in life, we should also be willing to apply ourselves to the things of God. The Creator of the universe deserves our awesome respect. God is to be feared because He is the King of the universe. I will respect the lives of bugs on our land and do not unnecessarily cause them harm, but I do not fear them. I do fear God.

God sent Kefa (Peter) to Cornelius because Cornelius feared God, was a dedicated believer, was generous, and prayed constantly. These are good things and fearing God is a good thing. Acts 10:1-2 NKJV says, "There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always." To many people and even believers, God is an afterthought, something to consider if they have time. They do not fear God.

For example, some consider keeping Shabbat as a day of rest to be a waste of time. It is first of all, a day of recognition that God is the creator of the universe.

Exodus 20:8-11 NKJV says,

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor

your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.
For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

The fact that it says that 6 days are meant for labor suggests we are to get our work done on those 6 days and not on Shabbat. Some say that it is too difficult to do that. People will ask you to help them on Shabbat. They should respect you and respect your wishes to not work on Shabbat.

Also, when this commandment is mentioned in Deuteronomy, it adds that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt. Some people are slaves to work, and they do not have to be. Keep Shabbat, the real Shabbat is our Friday at Sunset to Saturday at sunset. In ancient times, only the wealthy had time to rest from their jobs. This command gives equal dignity to everyone. Even their animals are to rest. Deuteronomy 5:15 NKJV says, "And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." The Sabbath was instituted for all of mankind in Genesis 2:3. All men are created in the image of God and are given Shabbat as a day of rest.

Make the God of the universe important in your life. He gave us His commandments because He cares about us and doing things God's way will help us in life and give purpose to life. We can be very busy taking care of the things of life. Also, make God's ways important. God deserves our fear and honor. God wants what is best for us.

More to Consider

God has good things for us. He has not left mankind alone. His ways keep our lives in order and are a blessing to us. Think about it; the God of the universe created us and we get to learn from Him. We should be so thankful for the opportunity we have.

Sometimes though, people's lives can be caught up in sin that does not please God. Some even make excuses for how they behave. When we are determined to do what is wrong, we break off our relationship with God. God gave us good commandments that we can follow, and they are not difficult to keep (mitzvah means commandment). Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB says, "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you, it is not beyond your reach." Yeshua even quotes this by saying His yoke is not difficult (yoke is a Jewish expression that refers to God's commandments in the Torah). Yeshua is Jewish. God will forgive us if we turn our lives around and follow Him. 1 John 1:9 NKJV says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God gave us the choice to either follow what is "right and good" or do things our own way. Why is there so much pain in the world; mankind decided to do things their own way. People will do what is right in their own eyes and not in God's eyes. Do what is right in God's eyes and keep His commandments. Deuteronomy 6:18 NKJV says, "And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD." Those who want to follow God and turn their lives around will be raised from the dead to be with Him in a new and good future kingdom. In the meantime, God has given us His good commandments in the Old Testament portion and also the Holy Spirit in this

Messianic age.

God gave us His law and the Holy Spirit to help us overcome sin and to help us. I was talking to someone on the phone this one time who seemed to have given up trying to live right. When I mentioned repentance to him, I thought the Holy Spirit was telling me he was angry with me for saying that.

If anything, he should have welcomed my encouragement. I was trying to help him to have a blessed life and get right with God. A good person will encourage and kindly try to lift up and encourage someone. I had his best interests at heart. I do not want to see anyone suffer for the consequences of their sin and most of all, I do not want anyone to end up in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8).

I get the idea that some place a low value on life and nothing could be further from the truth about life. Life is not monotony and a frivolous merry go round of activities. We can have a life of joy and also value a relationship with our Creator God. It is wonderfully special to live in relationship with God. We have good reasons to value and care about life, and also be excited about our relationship with God.

God did not have to care about mankind; He has lots of creation to care about. Since He is a good God, He reaches out to mankind in spite of some who are mindless, uncaring, selfish, hurtful, and destructive. In contrast, God calls those who want to do what is right and follow Him. They are His children. 1 John 3:1 NKJV says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

It is no wonder that those who live in unbelief towards God do not understand. They are ignorant. 1 Corinthians 1:21 NKJV says, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." Those that do not believe and follow God live in a dark tunnel where they are oblivious to the truth. Romans 1:21 NKJV says, "Their foolish hearts were darkened." Those that conduct themselves in darkness must take the first step toward the light and want to know God and the truth. So instead of being "bright in their own eyes" and blind, they can see and come to know the truth.

Why do you think some think this way?

Some see life as no more than mere chance.

All their values are wrapped up in materialism; they value things.

Some want what others have, and will even try to take what does not belong to them.

Their values could be humanistic; they value only what people make or do.

They could be wrapped up in some type of man-made created philosophy of life.

Some do not want anyone including a good God to speak into their lives.

The Bible says there is a devil, and people allow the devil to speak lies into their lives.

Enjoy the life that God has given us and hit the mark in life through His commandments and the work of the Holy Spirit. God created this world, and we should enjoy life and follow our creator's commandments so we won't suffer the consequences for sin. Sin brings evil into our lives and

the lives of others.

The Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39) is given to believers in Messiah in this Messianic era to help us live better and lead us and encourage us in life's situations. You can do no better than to follow God's commandments and how the Holy Spirit is leading you (The Holy Spirit will not contradict God's commandments – why would God's good commandments change; God says in Malachi 3:6 NKJV, "For I am the LORD, I do not change."). Through God's commandments and the Holy Spirit we can hit the middle of the target in life.

Torah Study

Shoftim means, "judges." This portion occurs in the Jewish month of Elul, just before the High Holy Days, the Fall feasts of God. It is a good time to think about doing better in life by following God and keeping God's commandments. The Jews have a prayer book for this time of year. It would be good to do something in preparation for Yom Kippur (the day of forgiveness of sins – the Day of Atonement). According to the Jewish writings, Moshe came down the mountain with the second set of tablets on Yom Kippur. He went up the mountain several times, but only two times to bring down the tablets of God's commands with him. The first time Moshe came down with the tablets, some in Israel were committing idolatry and he threw the tablets down. The second time, the people were not sinning.

People can be stubborn, but in the second case they repented. Many people get accustomed to the way they live. Those that say they follow the Torah often follow extra misapplied laws and do not follow the Torah the way they should. Christians do the same thing. They are accustomed to following the pagan practices passed down by the Roman Empire. Those that follow the extra misapplied man-made laws and those who follow the pagan practices for the most part do not want to change.

Yeshua said in Matthew 5:20 NKJV, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." What did the Pharisees do in Yeshua's time? They kept these extra misapplied laws religiously. The same is true about Christianity. Many do not follow the teachings of Yeshua (Jesus), but instead the teachings of their denomination. What are we supposed to do? Deuteronomy 10:12-13 NKJV says, "What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good."

We are to fear God and love God by keeping His commandments. We are also to have loving affection towards God. After all, He first loved us by providing His good and caring commandments. I have found that by understanding the magnitude of God's love for us and being thankful that I can deeply love God.

The same is true with loving our neighbor as ourselves. We first love others by keeping God's commandments. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD. You shall keep My statutes." But we should also be kind and care about others and give them the respect that is due them. That is part of loving you neighbor as yourself.

The Torah portion begins with Moshe (Moses) telling Israel they were to appoint judges in their cities who would not distort justice or take bribes. Bribes subvert justice. Our elected officials should look out for the best interests of our countries. If they are not following what the Bible says, they are not looking out for our best interests because what God says is "right and good." Also, some politicians are looking to get votes just to stay in office instead of considering the outcome of bribing the people to vote for them. They are to be held accountable to the people. Their bad decisions can subvert justice. Are we holding these people accountable for their ungodly decisions. Are we supporting ungodly people?

They were not to plant a sacred tree or set up a stone (to pray to). What about putting up an evergreen tree in our homes? Evergreen trees were considered sacred because the pagan god Tamuz died by an evergreen tree. So, setting up an evergreen tree in homes has its roots in pagan practice. What about Christmas, December 25th? Rome celebrated the birth of the Sun god (natalis solis invicti) on December 25th. Not only are the evergreens pagan, but the day chosen by Rome to celebrate Yeshua's birth is pagan. We are not to do the things the pagans do (see Deuteronomy 12:30-31).

If you want to find out a more acceptable date for the birth of Yeshua, see my article, [Rosh Hashanah and the Birth of Yeshua](#). He was born on a Jewish holiday and not December 25th. If you want to celebrate His birth, celebrate it on a better day. To see my article, go to this page and scroll down to the article: <https://www.teshuvahsa.org/observing-the-feasts>. Did you know that it was illegal in the United States to celebrate the pagan day of Christmas until around 1830? Pagan practice seems to seep into our faith and the Catholic Church has incorporated pagan practice into its church to draw people into their church.

The adherents then do many of the same pagans things they did before they believed, They say they believe in the God of the Bible. They are not following what the Bible says. Deuteronomy 12:30-31 NKJV says, "Take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods." The pope even wears a pagan fish hat and the cardinals who wear red clothes got that from a pagan cult that dressed in all red and danced around fires.

Idol worshippers were to be stoned, but there had to be two or three witnesses. Think about it; do you still want to put up a pagan symbol in your home on a pagan day? God takes things associated with pagan practice very seriously.

Difficult cases were to be decided by the Cohanim (priests). This compares to our higher courts in the United States. First the appointed judges made the decisions and if it was a more difficult decision, they were to defer to the Cohanim.

If Israel wanted a king, God must choose him; he cannot be a foreigner; he cannot have many wives and excessive riches. He is to write a copy of the Torah, keep a copy of the Torah, and read it every day. He is not to think himself better than others.

A lot of leaders in the United States obtain inside information about how to invest their money and they make money off of their position. Leaders should not accumulate excessive wealth due to their position. Those in important positions should know God's commandments and read the Bible. They are good lessons and commandments for life that everyone can benefit from. I had an atheist friend that worked in research that once told me that he would trust someone who had values and faith in God before someone who did not. That should reveal something to us about God's good commandments.

The portion goes on to say they were to support the Cohanim. They were not to learn the religious practices of the Canaanites. So again, we should stop keeping pagan practices.

It says in Deuteronomy 18:10-11 NKJV that no one was to be a, "Diviner, a soothsayer, an enchanter, a sorcerer, a spell-caster, a consulter of ghosts or spirits, or a necromancer." A person that does these things is using false signs associated with devil spirits. The devil wants to keep us from the true God and is called the destroyer in the Bible (see Isaiah 14:12). Anything associated with spiritualism and the occult, and these false signs is wrong to do.

God will raise up a prophet like Moshe. They were to listen to him and whoever does not will have to give an account for himself. Some people do not understand why we are to accept the Messiah Yeshua. He brought us peace not how the world perceives peace, but through the gift of the Holy Spirit. John 14:25-27 NKJV says, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you." Yeshua went away so we could have the gift of the Holy Spirit when we believe in the Messiah Yeshua (see John 16:7).

We can see many similarities between Moshe and Yeshua (Jesus). Here are a few; there are many more than these.

Similarities Between Moshe and Yeshua

- Yeshua and Moshe came to save Israel.
- They both had to flee for their safety.
- Both spoke to God and God spoke to them.
- They were both prophets and teachers.
- Moshe set Israel free from pagan Egypt and Yeshua set believers free from sin.
- They both honored God's real name, Yĕhōvâh; Exodus 3:15; John 17:6.
- They both served God.
- Moshe led God's people and Yeshua leads us as our "Shepherd;" John 10:11
- Moshe offered his life for the people and Yeshua gave his life for our sins.
- Israel received the Torah from Moshe and from Yeshua (Yeshua is God).
- Moshe's face shined from the presence of God and Yeshua shined as the presence of God when He was transfigured.
- Moshe lifted up the serpent for the healing of the people and Yeshua was lifted up and gave Himself for our healing.
- Both were appointed by God as saviors.

- Moshe gave the people manna and Yeshua created food for thousands.
- Moshe gave the Torah on Shavuot (Pentecost) and Yeshua gave the Holy Spirit on Shavuot.

The portion continues. They were not to listen to false prophets. Those who killed another accidentally could flee to a city of refuge so their case could be heard; they do not deserve the death penalty. A person who commits murder is to be put to death. This is to keep murder from occurring. Those that oppose the death penalty are causing people to be murdered. A country that does not have just punishment for crimes is an unjust country. They were to keep honest boundaries and a false witness was to be punished.

They were not to be afraid of enemy forces because God would fight for them. Under certain conditions a man was to not serve in the army. They could take spoil from their enemies and they were to completely destroy their enemies; they were not to destroy food bearing trees. The leaders of the nearest town were to do a ritual over an unsolved murder and ask for forgiveness so that innocent blood would not be shed.

The Haftarah is Isaiah 51:12 to 52:12; the Messianic portion should go to Isaiah 53:12. The Haftarah portion asks the question, why are they afraid of man. God says awake for He is your God, be strong, the uncircumcised and unclean will not enter any more. Shake the dust off your feet (leave unbelief behind) and loosen your chains (be set free). Israel will be redeemed again and **they will know His name** and that He speaks, "Here I am." He is announcing salvation (**Yeshua** just happens to be the Hebrew word for salvation). God will bare His arm and all the earth will see salvation (**Yeshua**). They literally saw Yeshua (which means salvation), didn't they.

Modern Jews who do not believe in Yeshua stopped reading Isaiah 53. The Messianic portion should continue to Isaiah 53:12. It goes on to say in Isaiah 53 that God's servant will succeed and be honored. [In Isaiah 53 it says:](#)

People will be appalled at **Him**;

He will be disfigured.

Who will believe; the arm of the Lord has been revealed?

People despised **Him** and did not value **Him**.

He bore our pains and we thought **He** was being punished.

He was stricken and wounded for our sins;

by **His** bruises we are healed.

We are like sheep that have gone astray yet God laid our guilt on **Him**.

He was like a lamb being slaughtered, silent.

He was arrested, sentenced, and died for the sins of our people.

God will accomplish His desire through **Him** and make many righteous.

This is obviously talking about a sole male person, so this is about Yeshua the Messiah giving Himself for our sin and not Israel as some say. Some rabbis make up meanings to the scriptures to detract from the truth. It is evident that the Jewish Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) has reached the entire world. **He** is truly the Messiah.

In this Haftarah portion we clearly see Yeshua. **He is the one that came and said, "I am" ("here I am"); He is the one bringing good news; He is our God and King; and He is the one that brought the earth salvation – He is Yeshua (He is salvation, Yeshua is the Hebrew word for salvation.).**

The Messiah was to be the descendant of David and is God (Yĕhōvâh according to Jeremiah 23:5-6). Yeshua prays to be glorified with the glory He had before He came to earth. He did not become God; He came as God to help us. Yeshua says in John 17:5 NKJV, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

Yeshua makes a number of "I am" statements in the New Testament portion. In Isaiah 52:6, 7, 10 CJB, it says, **"Here I am!" ... "your God is King!" ... "All the ends of the earth will see" Yeshua (salvation). Could it be any plainer!**

Yeshua said (NKJV):

"I am the bread of life" (John 6:35,48,51).

"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

"I am the door of the sheep"(John 10:7,9).

"I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11,14).

"I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

"I am the true vine" (John 15:1,5).

In Deuteronomy 18:18-19 NKJV, Moshe said that those who don't listen to the prophet like him would have to give an account; "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him."

Commandments, Implied Commandments, Permissions, and other Concepts. (We can also understand commandments are being implied from other scriptures in the Bible. There are other possible concepts than what is shared here.)

"You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which the LORD your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment." Deuteronomy 16:18 NKJV.

No trees are to be in the sanctuary. No idol that is a pillar is to be erected. Deuteronomy 16:21-22

"And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment." Deuteronomy 17:10-11 NKJV.

The appointment of a king and the king's obligations. Deuteronomy 17:14-18.

Levites are not to take booty. Deuteronomy 18:1.

The priests are to receive certain things. Deuteronomy 18:3-4.

All priests will serve at the feasts. Deuteronomy 18:6-8.

Divination, enchanter, soothsaying, sorcery, wizards, using charms, consulting ghosts, familiar spirits, inquiring the dead is prohibited. They are signs produced by devil spirits. Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

Listen to the righteous prophets (those who teach to do what is "right and good." Deuteronomy 18:13 and Deuteronomy 6:17-18.

False prophets are to be put to death. Deuteronomy 18:20, 22.

The cities of refuge. Deuteronomy 19:3-4.

We are not to pity those who cause physical harm. Deuteronomy 19:21.

Maintain proper land boundaries. Deuteronomy 19:14.

More than one witness is required to convict. Deuteronomy 19:15.

A scheming witness is to be prosecuted. Deuteronomy 19:19.

We are not to copy the actions of idol worshippers (or of unbelievers) like baldness, cutting your flesh, or disfiguring the body. Deuteronomy 19:28.

Not to be afraid of Israel's enemies. Deuteronomy 20:1.

Rules for warfare. Deuteronomy 20:3-4, 10-12.

No Canaanites were to remain alive. Deuteronomy 20:16.

Not to destroy trees or any needless destruction. Deuteronomy 20:19

When finding someone who had been killed and what to do. Deuteronomy 21:1-3.

Staying on Course in Life (A practical teaching to accompany the Torah portion)

Allow God's word to speak into your life and keep you clean.

The Bible says that judges were not to distort justice; we need to stay on course in life too. In previous portions, we talked about using the scriptures to help us in areas of our life. We want to be a "clean" people who do not live in sin. For example, we are to have faith. Deuteronomy

9:23 NKJV says, "You rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice." We see that having faith in God means we are to keep God's commandments.

There are similar words for faith in English with different "shades" of meaning. Believing means we have faith and trust. When we do not trust in God, we do not obey God and vice versa. I sometimes replace the word faith or believe with the word "trust" in my mind in order to make it a more active idea. Websters online says that believing is similar to accepting, understanding, and concluding. It is dissimilar to suspecting, doubting, and disputing. Therefore, when we are not accepting God's commandments, we are actually disputing with God!

Which part of understanding faith applies to you. What helps you to understand this better? Perhaps you've been doubting that God made the 7th day holy. Genesis 2:3 NKJV says, "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." To sanctify means to set it apart. Should we keep the Shabbat the Bible tells us to keep? Rome changed the day of worship and not God. "On March 7, 321, however, Roman Emperor Constantine I issued a civil decree making Sunday a day of rest from labor, stating: All judges and city people and the craftsmen shall rest upon the venerable day of the sun." See the Sabbath in Christianity on Wiki. It was changed by a man to honor the sun god, not Yeshua. Are we going to trust God or what some man did? The Bible says in Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV, "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." So, changing Shabbat to Sunday is wrong.

That is how we can use the scriptures to help us do what is right. Deuteronomy 4:2 helps us to understand that Sunday is the wrong day because it was changed by man. Have you ever gone to the doctor on the wrong day, I have. They tell you to come back on the right day. What about worshipping God?

We are made in the image of God; God has given us the blessing of having His characteristics. If someone wrongs us, we need to forgive after we make up and not carry grudges. Deuteronomy 13:17-18 NKJV says, "That the LORD may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy, have compassion on you and multiply you, just as He swore to your fathers, because you have listened to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all His commandments." God forgives us after we repent and do what is right; He even blesses us; so we also need to forgive others and not keep a record of offenses.

This also could teach us that God expects us to trust Him; so whatever sin we are being tempted with, we need to devote our attention to correct our behavior. We do not want the fierce anger of God; that is for sure. Revelation 3:5 NKJV says, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life." I want to be an over-comer. What resonated with you more? The fierce anger of God might be enough; you surely do not want to be blotted out from the book of life and lose your eternal life!

Set your life in order; do not let your aim be set off course.

We need to set our lives in order and stay on course. We do not want to live a life of sin, and we want eternal life with an all good and powerful God. Getting off course can be a painful

experience. This one time after driving for several hours, I took the wrong exit onto the wrong freeway and it took me a half an hour to get back on track. We do not want the added pain of circumstances or wrong habits to keep us from living out the purposes that God's wants for us.

God told Israel to go into Canaan and when they did not go, they ended up wandering in the desert for 40 years! They eventually got there. Stay the course so you do not end up wandering. Proverbs 14:12 NKJV says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." A lot of the time, getting off the path doesn't affect us a lot, but just that one time can really mess us up. Why take the chance with your life. My one missionary friend tells the story of hearing this loud crash while looking for a jungle town. They found a panther in a pit the next path over. They were probably glad they were on the right path or they could have ended up in a pit with a panther.

Be productive; do not let complacency set in and sidetrack you from engaging spiritually.

Do we ever wonder if what we are doing is making a difference. Do not let yourself think for one minute that what you do does not matter. All the good we do matters. Shaul said in Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Engage with how the Holy Spirit wants to work in us. There is nothing wrong with that. Make doing what is right your aim everyday.

Shaul says in Philippians 3:14-15 NKJV, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind." Engaging spiritually is a worthwhile thing to do. We can try to be good at academics, sports, or work, but there is nothing better to do than being productive spiritually. We honor great achievement, but don't forget to honor the greatest achievement of all; living right, engaging with the things of God, and living for the purposes of God. When Abraham was 99 years old, God still expected him to live right. Genesis 17:1 NKJV says, "When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.'" Just like Abraham, we also need to stay engaged spiritually; even at 109.

Keep going; push yourself spiritually

Years ago I used to participate in sports. Sometimes I would play baseball all day long; the days seemed to go by so fast even though I exerted myself all day. I used to enjoy running. I remember this one time I went to run with my friends; I ran about three miles to see them, ran another 12 miles with them, and then ran home. I managed to win some races because of my dedication. Shaul told us to be dedicated believers.

He said in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 NKJV, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."

When you are in training, you are thinking about what you need to do to succeed. I remember hearing about this one basketball player while he was in college, practicing for 6 hours a day;

plus, he had to go to classes and study. We can be dedicated to all sorts of things, but do not forget to be dedicated to God. Shaul says that he fights to bring his body into subjection. Stay in the fight; push yourself.

This Torah portion begins by talking about appointing judges. Judges were not to subvert justice. We also should do what is right and therefore make this world a better place to live. Stay in faith and keep God's commandments. Just imagine how much better the world would be if we all kept just the 10 commandments. There would be no more murder and need for war. Accept what God teaches us and trust in Him. Find ways that help you to keep God's commandments. Do not live in sin. Set your course spiritually. What we do matters. Do not get sidetracked. Stay engaged and fight spiritually so you will receive the prize of eternal life.

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

Yě-hō-váh bless you and keep you.

Yě-hō-váh make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Yě-hō-váh lift up His face upon you, and give to you peace. Amen.

Thank you for being with us today.