



### **Names**

Kefa – Peter  
 Messiah – English for Mashiach; anointed one; Christ  
     in the Greek means to be smudged  
 Mishkan – Tent of Meeting in the desert  
 Moshe – Moses  
 Shaul – Paul  
 Yeshua – Jesus' real name  
 Yĕhōvâh – God's real name forever (Ex. 3:15)  
 Yochanan – John

### **Terms**

Haftarah – reading from the prophets  
 Menorah – 7 candle Israelite lamp  
 Tanakh – Old Testament portion of Bible  
 Mishkan – tent of meeting in the desert  
 Torah – 1st 5 books of the Bible  
 Torah portion – there are 54 portions of the Torah

We are beginning the month of Av. The 9<sup>th</sup> of Av (Tisha B'Av) is a day of sorrow for the loss of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Temples and for the sin of the spies. Other disasters are said to have occurred on that day so it is tradition (not a commandment) to fast on that day. Of interest, we know that Yeshua read from the scroll just before Rosh Hashanah (because He read from Isaiah 61) and reading from the scroll was and still is the typical day that marks one's Jewish birthday. Going back 40 days allowing for time to get to His hometown to read, we end up near the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. Yeshua fasted for 40 days before returning home to read. It is quite possible then that Yeshua began his 40 days of fasting on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av.

I would like to begin by talking about our communication with God. Some go through life unaware that God is there. Maybe they were taught the false doctrine that God created everything and left us on our own. That is not true; God created all that is and He sustains all. Isaiah 40:26 NKJV says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing." This is in the present tense, so it refers to God's sustaining power.

Therefore, we should have substance in our communication with God during the day, every day. Canned prayers are not necessary, and we do not even have to use words at times. Our attitude and confidence about life and God can speak volumes. There is a saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words."

Also, there is another expression, "Take time to smell the coffee," spiritually speaking. This expression means to appreciate life and appreciate the moment. In this case I use it to mean to appreciate God in life and also in the moment. Some people will say mechanical prayers perhaps without any true thankfulness. Sometimes they will do it only to complete the act as fast as they can. Does that sound crazy? Where is their true thankfulness?

Also, be firm and thoughtful spiritually yet carefree in your daily activities. For some this may seem to be opposites, but it is not. Making sure you do what is right should be almost automatic. When it is not, use good judgement or even rely on the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is to be our helper so that we follow God's commandments. John 14:15-17 NKJV, "Keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth."

Perhaps someone does something that sounds wrong. You do not have to go along with them. You can just walk away. Or you could say to them, "That doesn't sound appropriate." Or just say in your mind that I would never do that or think that. Those are perhaps a few ways where we can be thoughtful. If you do not encounter someone very often, you do not have to feel the need to interact with them. If it is a spiritual attack from the devil, I rebuke that thought in the name of Yeshua and tell the devil spirit to leave.

In one situation, I rebuked in my mind the evil that was presented me by someone. There was no danger involved and the other person probably wouldn't be interested in what I had to say. They did not believe in God and any words on my part would not benefit them, so I let what they said go. I was busy and needed to keep doing my work. I did not allow the other person's ungodly attitude to get me down or cause me to entertain their sinful attitude. He knew I was a believer. Some people will say things to us just to try to get us upset. Being more carefree gave me more peace and it will give you more peace. If necessary, pray and give it to God.

Psalm 66:17-20 NKJV

I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear. But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, Who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me!

The word extolled means to praise. He took time to praise God perhaps quietly, talked to God about what he was encountering, and God helped him, how wonderful. Most of the time though in life's situations, it is a matter of controlling our own thoughts.

God wants us to live in His true blessing. The word *ashrei* in the Hebrew is often translated blessing, but can mean happy. "Blessed is he" sounds better to me because I think of it as being happy and also fortunate for my relationship with God and what comes with that. Exodus 20:6 NKJV says about God, "Showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." Isn't that wonderful; God is tremendously merciful. Proverbs 4:4-5 NKJV says, "He also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words; **keep my commands**, and live. **Get wisdom! Get understanding!** Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth."

What is being quoted in the Proverbs Chapter 4 verses?

Deuteronomy 4:5-7 NKJV

Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God **commanded** me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your **wisdom** and your **understanding** in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes,

and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' "For what great nation is there that has God so near."

God gives us wisdom and understanding through His commandments; "wisdom and understanding" is quoted in the New Testament portion and also refers to God's commandments. Because we live in a Messianic era, the Holy Spirit can also give us wisdom and understanding – the Holy Spirit is 'another helper' (John 14:15-17).

It should make sense that worldly ways and worthless traditions diminish your relationship with God. Repetitious and meaningless prayers are an example of these things. Again, some people actually get up early and say prayers as fast as they can just to get through them. Others say senseless repetitions. That is not a true relationship with God.

There is an exception to this. God gave us speaking in tongues in this Messianic era.

It is to speak to God – "Does not speak to men but to God." 1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV

It builds up the person – "Edifies himself." 1 Corinthians 14:4 NKJV

It is prayer – "I will pray with the spirit." 1 Corinthians 14:15 NKJV

It is thanksgiving – "You indeed give thanks." 1 Corinthians 14:17 NKJV

Shaul said, "I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all;" 1 Corinthians 14:18 NKJV. And he also said about these Messianic gifts, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV. And these spiritual gifts he wrote about, "The things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord;" 1 Corinthians 14:37 NKJV. Some of you have minimized God's spiritual gifts; we are to "desire spiritual gifts." They were instituted by God.

God is there, you can actually talk to Him, praise Him in the moment, and ask Him for help. Psalms 46:1-2 NKJV, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." God is there so talk to Him. Deuteronomy 33:26-27 NKJV says, "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to help you, and in His excellency on the clouds. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." God can sustain us and keep us.

Psalms 115:11-15 NKJV

You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD;

He is their help and their shield. The LORD has been mindful of us; He will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the LORD, both small and great. May the LORD give you increase more and more, you and your children. May you be blessed by the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.

God is our help, is mindful of us, and blesses us. Being blessed is mentioned 5 times in these few verses! Too bad people believe the Old Testament has been done away with. God is greater than their unbelief though and still cares about us even though some do not believe in His word.

Finally, let's read about how to keep your heart and mind in the right place.

Proverbs 4:20-27 NKJV

Give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for

out of it spring the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.

Listen to God and keep His commandments before your eyes in all you do and keep them in your very being. They are life giving and give us health so make them part of who you are. They contain the answers for every part of life. Do not say wrong things or oppose what is right (do not be perverse). Instead move forward with your eyes set on what is right. Do not wander from what is right so that you stay away from evil.

## **Torah Teaching**

Today is a double portion, Mattot and Massei. We have a few double portions because there are 54 portions during the year. There are also Shabbat portions that are dedicated to the holidays (God's feasts). How we cover the Torah can be subjective; the important thing is that we cover the basics (the Torah) every year because the prophets instituted the weekly reading. A reading schedule helps with that. We talk about the Torah in our teachings because the Torah says it gives us understanding and wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:5-6). Also, I try to talk about what I think God is leading me to talk about. I personally long to hear what God wants me to hear, and teaching what God is leading me to teach, is a way that I can accomplish that for others, and also help them to learn and grow spiritually.

Mattot means, "tribes." This Torah portion begins by talking about the keeping of vows. Vows were to be kept, but the man of the house could annul a vow. Vows to God and legal agreements are binding. Promises should be kept, but they are not binding. Sometimes something might come up. We should always try to be a people of our word. Decisions and plans are the same; they may need to be changed sometimes; we should try to follow through with our schedule and intentions and be courteous to others. Vows to God are binding, but sometimes cannot be kept because of extenuating circumstances; for example, someone who abuses their spouse. Yeshua used adultery as one of the reasons for divorce; He was addressing a specific situation in His time where men were making frivolous excuses to divorce their wives in order to commit adultery (He was not addressing all situations).

Perhaps we could also conclude that those who use frivolous things to be unforgiving and break off relationships are also doing what is wrong. "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;" Leviticus 19:18 NKJV. We are not to hold onto grudges and take vengeance, but love others like we want to be treated.

Breaking a vow to God is sin and we must ask for forgiveness. In Yeshua's time, people were making frequent vows. They thought that they could swear by the Temple or other things and that gave them an out to not fulfill their vow. Yeshua said not to swear falsely in the Hebrew manuscripts. The Greek manuscripts are missing the word falsely. Because of the missing word in the Greek manuscripts,<sup>1</sup> we have people acting inordinately scrupulous. Yeshua said it is important to be a people of our word and to lead people to do what is right: "A good man out

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<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew manuscripts were put together in around 150 AD and are a valuable resource for understanding the Bible.

of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned;" Matthew 12:35-37 NKJV. The content implies that we are to lead people to do what is right. Also, the intents of our heart should be to do what is right.

We must keep God's commandments. If we sin, we can ask God for forgiveness and we are forgiven. We must be truly sorry and determined not to do it again (1 John 1:9). Kefa (Peter) said that false teachers who teach people not to obey God's commandments will go to the lake of fire (2 Peter 2:4-11). There was no New Testament at the time; the early believers followed the Old Testament. Shaul (Paul) said the Old Testament commands have not been done away with: "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law;" Romans 3:31 NKJV. Shaul was addressing the issue of just keeping commands and man-made ritual without faith in God. That was the context of his teaching. It was a problem back then and it is wrong practice; we are not on good terms with God by just doing commands and rituals without faith in God.

No one will have an excuse when they stand before God. They will stand before the Bema; that is the Greek word used for where Yeshua will judge from (2 Corinthians 5:10). The Greek word "bema" is where the Torah is read from in Jewish synagogues. People who do not teach God's commands from the Old Testament will go to the lake of fire. I am not talking about man-made commands; people sometimes end up following ritual and custom instead of God's commandments. Some Old Testament commands also have other practical application and are valid applications of the Torah. That is how we got 1,050 commands in the New Testament portion. God does not want anyone to go to the lake of fire, but He is a just God (2 Peter 3:9). I genuinely care about you, and I do not want you to go to the lake of fire either.

The portion goes on, and Israel attacks and defeats the Midianites because the Midianites had caused the sin of Baal-Peor. Israel cleansed and divided the booty and any Midianite woman who had sexual relations previously was to be killed. The tribe of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh asked to have the land east of the Jordan, but they would continue to fight until the land west of the Jordan was conquered.

Israel did not start any of its wars up to this point, but they were drawn in by people who plotted against them. The tribes of Israel that settled east of the Jordan perhaps were never supposed to be there, but that is what they chose just as Lot chose to look to the east and ended up living with the ungodly people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Was there really not enough room for both Abraham and Lot to live peaceably?

The northern tribes did not expel all the Canaanites; perhaps because some tribes lived east of the Jordan. Perhaps the northern tribes ended up worshipping idols as least in part because not all the Canaanites had been conquered. Consequently, the northern tribes became sinful and because of that they were conquered and dispersed. Perhaps this portion shows us that we should be careful what we choose. Although we can be chosen by God, what we choose might not be what is best for us. Instead, seek what God wants for us.

The portion Masei is Numbers 33:1-36:13. Masei (Mas-ay) means, "journeys." It is the last Torah portion in Numbers. This Torah portion begins by talking about the journeys of Israel. Moshe told Israel that when they crossed over the Jordan that they were to take over the land, get rid of the people who lived there and their idols, and divide the land to the tribes by lot.

They were warned if they did not get rid of the idolatrous people in the promised land that the people there would harass Israel – they would be thorns and stings. The boundaries of Israel were given and also the leaders for the tribes to divide the land by lot. Israel was to give the Levites 48 towns and 6 were to be cities where someone who killed a person by accident could seek refuge and their case heard. Many of the original laws in the United States came from the Bible; we assume people innocent until they are proven guilty in the United States. Murderers were to be put to death, but there had to be more than one witness to a crime. Women who inherited land were to marry inside their own tribe.

God made provision for Bible teachers to live throughout Israel. In Acts 15: 20-21 NKJV, referring to the Gentiles following the Old Testament, "But that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." God's true teachers teach people to follow the Torah. Do not go to the lake of fire with false teachers who deny the Torah (2 Peter 2:4-11).

We have finished the book of Numbers and we say:  
 Hazak, hazak, ve-nithazek,  
 Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened.

### **God is Real and Present** **(a teaching to accompany the Torah portion)**

God is always at work including doing the work of the kingdom; He is at work powerfully (even if it is not apparent).

There are perhaps millions of miracles occurring every day. God can do that because He is God. Sometimes we wonder where is God, but He is there, keeping all his creation together. He is not removed from His creation as some say. Even the tiles in our kitchen floors contain the molecules that God has created. Science has found a particle called the Higgs boson. Science says that if it was not for this particle, everything would just disappear. So, God created this particle to make all matter exist and God sustains all matter to continue to exist.

Sometimes God gives us examples in the natural that explain the spiritual. I once looked at a building in the beginning stages of its construction. I thought to myself; that is a picture of God at work. Spiritually speaking, we only see the girders that God has put in place, but there is a finished work of God that we do not see. Ecclesiastes 8:17 NKJV says, "Then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it; moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it."

Shaul (Paul) said, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33 NKJV. Shaul says that God's wisdom and knowledge is incredible; so much so that we cannot understand them. In spite of mankind's shortcomings and willfulness, the almighty powerful God reaches out to mankind to rescue us. In fact, if possible, God wants everyone to be rescued. 1 Timothy 2:4 NKJV says, "Who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The word used for saved (sozo, Greek) in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *malat*<sup>2</sup> which always means rescued.

We should let our good ways show the amazing goodness of God.

God has rescued His people and helps us so that we can live in His good ways by keeping His commandments. It says in Romans 12:2 NKJV, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." There is a big difference between who we are and what the worldly are like. Recently, we talked about how Balaam had an evil eye.

There is a good eye, "If there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things;" Philippians 4:8 NKJV; and there is an evil eye that is contrary to the way God wants us to view life and live life. The evil eye views things with mistrust, evil intentions, envy, resentment, and can even see others as threats. It produces greed and arrogance. Proverbs 22:9 NKJV says, "He who has a generous eye will be blessed." This is a characteristic of a good eye. Yeshua talks about the good eye and the evil 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;" Luke 11:34 NKJV. The good eye and the evil eye are standard Jewish teachings. That is why Yeshua is talking about them. He is a Jew and the Jews were trying to follow the commandments of our almighty God Yēhōvāh (Yēhōvāh is His name forever the Bible says; Exodus 3:15).

I should also mention that in some cultures, people will curse others with their eyes. That can be another meaning of the term evil eye.

In Jewish thought, light is understanding. Psalms 119:130 says, "Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." God's word contains God's commandments which give us understanding and wisdom. Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NKJV, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" God's ways fill us with light (understanding).

Shaul talks about us being a people of light (understanding). "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light." Ephesians 5:8 NKJV. We were once filled with darkness, but now we can be a people of understanding who are rescued by God to keep His good ways of light. Shaul also says, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise,

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<sup>2</sup> "h4422. מָלַט *mālat*; a primitive root; properly, to be smooth, i.e. (by implication) to escape." – [Strong's Enhanced Dictionary](#). See Joel 2:32.

but understand what the will of the Lord is;" Ephesians 5:15-17 NKJV. Understand what is going on, be wise and keep God's commandments, use your time well; the time we live in is evil.

Our present day has not changed much, but God's light is there and is beautiful. We just have to make a decision to be a people of light. God's ways should be a light to the world. "I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6 NKJV (the Hebrew word Yeshua-ti in this verse means, "my Yeshua (salvation);" an interesting reference to Yeshua). In Psalm 36:9 NKJV, "For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light." What a great verse. God is an endless supply of water (blessings) for life; when we are a people of light, we have understanding.

In contrast, those in darkness do not see the light.

In John 9, Yeshua heals a man that is born blind. This is one of the miracles the ancient rabbis said the Messiah would do. Even in our day, it is difficult for a person to see after they have had a cornea transplant if they have never seen before. Their brain has never learned to interpret what they are seeing so they cannot interpret what they are seeing. Yeshua must have healed the man's sight and brain waves; amazing! Yeshua said to the formerly blind man after he believed that Yeshua is the Messiah, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind:" John 9:39 NKJV. Yeshua came to rescue us and make us His people of light so that we see. Those who think they already have it figured out and think they see, do not see; they are blind.

God's people respond to God by being committed to Him.

God lifts His people up just as He did with the man that was born blind. Just as the blind man responded, After my cousin believed, he said that God saved his life and he wanted to live a holy life. I had a miraculous healing. I was very sick and the hospital couldn't figure out what was going on. I didn't know much about God at the time, but I asked God to heal me and He did. I responded by beginning my search for Him and I found Him through the Messiah Yeshua just as the man that was born blind did. The man who was born blind was healed and believed in the Messiah Yeshua; my healing and subsequent search led me to my Messiah as well.

God is at work calling people to Him, "But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all." Matthew 12:15 NKJV. God is healing people, helping people, and leading people. Isaiah 53:5 NKJV says, "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Not only will God do marvelous works for us, we also have God's scriptures of light; God also gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe in His Messiah to help us. Yeshua said, "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father;" John 15:26 NKJV.

Kefa (Peter) said, "Then Peter said to them, "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. Turn towards God (teshuvah) and accept the authority of the Messiah Yeshua (baptized). The Holy Spirit is the helper for all who are called by God; won't you receive the Holy Spirit today? God is a good God and what He gives us is



amazing and good. 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!"

Would you say a prayer with me:

God, I am making a commitment to return to you and to learn and do what you have commanded us to do. I accept the authority of Yeshua (Jesus) as the true Messiah to the world; I confess Yeshua as Lord and I believe He died for my sins (for where I fall short) so that I could be forgiven and I believe that He rose from the dead. I now ask to receive the gift of the promised Holy Spirit; I am now forgiven of my past sins; I will now live a holy life; and by continuing to live and act in faith towards you God and keep your commandments, I will receive eternal life from You. Amen.

This is the beginning of your life of understanding and wisdom. We now live out our lives everyday by learning about God and seeking Him, and keeping His commandments. This is the beginning of the process of being a people of light.

God was real and present with Israel while they were in the desert before they entered Canaan. He is a real and present powerful God who sustains all of His creation and works on behalf of His people every day. God reaches out to mankind to help us find Him and rescue us so we can demonstrate the goodness of God. We are to be a people of light and understanding through an all-knowing and good God. The blind man who Yeshua healed not only saw physically, but understood that Yeshua was the Messiah. Those that think they have it all together are often spiritually blind even though they can see physically. God will help those who believe in the Messiah through the work of the Holy Spirit. God is a good God and wants to give us good things.