



#35 Naso Numbers 4:21-7:89
Torah teaching and teaching, Real Life Superheroes
By Moshe Schwab

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
(There are also transliterations from Hebrew)

The Torah portion for this week is Naso and Naso means, "to lift up." I would like to begin by talking about that God has good things for us; more than we can imagine. The Bible tells us that God will bless us for keeping His commandments. He also tells us to pronounce a blessing on His people in this portion. Every place you see the word LORD in all caps in the New King James Version (NKJV) it is the name of God, Yĕhōvâh. Yĕhōvâh is used over 6,000 times in the Bible and is pointed that way in the Hebrew in more than 2,300 different manuscripts.

Numbers 6:22-27 NKJV says,

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.'" "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

I often pray for God's help and protection. That is the first line of the prayer and something we all need. That in itself would be a tremendous blessing. It then asks for God's glory to look on us and bless us. This implies that God imparts His supernatural blessings. How wonderful it is to know that we have a God that watches out for us and does good things for us. That is truly wonderful; we are a truly blessed people. Then the prayer asks God to look on us and give us peace. One of the greatest gifts of life is having peace and satisfaction in life. People often search for this in life in many different worldly and even sinful ways. Just when they think they achieved satisfaction in life, their life is disrupted. They should have looked for God's peace in life.

We do not see all that God does for us in the present. Since He is God, He does amazing things for us of which we are unaware. God can answer any number of our prayers. He does not have to answer any of our prayers, but He will do things in miraculous ways at times. That is because He is a good God. He was a good God in the Old Testament portion as we have seen, and He is

still a good God. Malachi 3:6 NKJV says, "For I am the LORD, I do not change." Some have been told that God is not a good God in the Old Testament. Do not be tricked by this false doctrine.

That is not true. God did things for His people in Old Testament times. Think about all that He did for Israel in freeing them from their abuse in Egypt. When they were in the desert, God provided for them every day for 40 years and was present in the form of a cloud by day and fire by night over the Mishkan, the Tent of Meeting. Imagine being able to see this every single day. God did miracles and healings for Israel and there was even a school of prophets in the Old Testament; many of the New Testament gifts were present in the Old Testament.

God does not change; He still does good things for His people. Some people live like He is not involved with His people and even deny God's power, but the New Testament portion tells us that is not true. In fact, because we live in Messianic times, we can experience even more amazing things.

Years ago, I told my wife about a physical problem I was having, and she then prayed for me. The next day she asked me how I was doing, and I said I was healed, but I still had this other physical problem. She prayed for me again and then asked me the next day how I felt. I told her that God had healed me, but I still had another physical problem. She prayed for me again and again God healed me. I am not sure why that happened like that, but what a blessing it is for God to intervene in our lives and do the impossible for us.

One time a friend of mine at work told me that he had almost died the week before and was very concerned about his health. I began praying for him and as I was praying for him, he walked away. He was not a believer in Yeshua yet. He went back to the doctor for more testing and the problem that he had went away. He came up to me afterwards and thanked me for praying for him. The next day he thanked me again and said, "Thank you for praying for me, God healed me." He went from almost death to life in the name of Yeshua and became a believer in the Messiah! These are just a couple of the many examples I sometimes share.

Just recently, I was looking up at the clouds and they looked wonderfully amazing. I had never seen anything like that. God is the creator, and He can not only do things for us in the present, but He will create amazing things for us in the new eternal kingdom. After all, He is God. Do not turn away from Him and His commandments. Be strong and trust in Him and the Messiah Yeshua.

Here is just a couple of things to look forward to in the new kingdom.

Revelation 21:10-11 NKJV

"The great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."

Revelation 21:19-21 NKJV

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony,

the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoptase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

I want to see the streets of gold! God can do anything, and we couldn't even imagine what He will do. Do not just seek worldly things and worldly ways but seek God with your whole heart. Deuteronomy 11:1 NKJV says, "Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always." Loving and believing in God is to keep His commandments. He knows what is best for us and always has our best interests at heart. He does not change.

Our own efforts are important, but God can empower our efforts. Living life involves action; saying we are living life and doing nothing is not living life. Life involves all of what makes life what it is: goodness, joy, work, accomplishment, love, memories, and so forth. As we have already talked about, God is not just something we ascribe to or just have mental ascent toward, but He can empower our life in every area of life. He is worthy to be honored and followed.

God helped me get through college and provided amazing jobs for me, first in research and then in robotics. God has healed me on a number of occasions, protected me, provided for me when I needed His help, and I have witnessed God's amazing and wonderful power on the lives of many people I have known. Rabbi Shaul said in 1 Corinthians 4:20 NKJV, "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power."

Rabbi Shaul was a Jewish leader who was trained in Jerusalem. Shaul said, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" Acts 23:6 NKJV. His accusers then argued about the resurrection and not whether he was a Jewish leader. Some teach that Paul was not Jewish, how ridiculous. He was a Jewish believer in the Messiah Yeshua and his writings need to be understood within a Jewish context.

Shaul wrote in Romans 3:31 NKJV, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." He said the law is not done away with; then along comes the theology of lies that contradict him. Do not trust them. The Bible says that these liars will not be in God's future kingdom. Revelation 21:8 NKJV, "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." Some even say there is no hell; guess where they are going. These liars are keeping people away from a good God who wants to help us and bless us.

How will we choose to live out our lives? God created and designed us to live a certain way. We have the free will to choose to have a good inclination or an evil inclination. Since God knows what is best for us, following His commandments produces good.

God gave mankind a conscience, but without direction in life from the Bible, people can resist their conscience and form false ideas so that they may think they are doing good, but they are

doing evil. We need to apply God's direction in life and for life. For example, good people accepted an evil system of government called Communism. Communism is an evil system of government that teaches that everything should be in control of the state, and everyone should be equal.

In Communism, no one has anything to lose, there is no incentive and everyone underproduces and is poor. The state defines the needs of the people, so they do not apply themselves constructively. I once read that the Chinese had built a lot of empty office buildings. Not everyone wants to relocate their businesses to China. The Bible says that we are created in the image of God and therefore each person is valuable and not just part of a collective of people like Communism teaches. In ancient pagan societies, the people believed they were part of a collective and no one was special. Those who accept Communism believe in an ancient form of oppression.

The Bible says that we can own land and that if someone takes our land or what we own, it is stealing. Those who steal or who have a philosophy of stealing will not be in God's future kingdom. Coveting what others have is a sin. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV says, "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." We are to earn for what we have and those who work deserve a wage for their work.

Communism is a system that is counterproductive and people who want this system are being misguided into suppressing their conscience. The only ones who are doing well are those associated with the government. Think about it; they are the ones in control so who are they going to take care of? They are stealing from the people in order to make sure they do well. For example, under Communist Russia, in one instance a city needed food, so they went into a rural town, took their food, and left the town to starve.

What was thought would be a system of equality turns into a system of oppression. What was thought was good, is a system where people relinquish their rights to a few people who then control them. These leaders are free to commit murder and impose themselves on their own people. Stalin is said to have murdered some 20 million people and the Communist regimes of the 20th century murdered 101 million people. Communism and its philosophy is a philosophy of evil.

People come up with all kinds of ideas, but if they are not founded on the truths of the scriptures, they will bring disaster and distress. Some people think that taking care of the environment trumps all ideals. I am all for taking care of the environment, but some people go to extremes. When I was in the jungle, we went past this gigantic diesel guzzling boat that towered over our tiny boat. It had the name Greenpeace on it which is the name of an environmental group. I found out that Greenpeace was killing the people there by putting ropes across the rivers. One minute your family was going to town in their little boat and the next, they were dumped into the river. Greenpeace was committing murder and they thought they were doing good.

It goes without saying that we need direction for our consciences, so we need to take care of our spiritual lives. We need physical things for life, but we also need a spiritual life so we do not become misguided. Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV says, "Man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD." In the prayer for our portion for today, it talks about God looking upon us. My friend who got healed could have kept walking away from God after he got healed, but he did not. If you do not listen to God and **do not** keep His commandments, you have your back towards God and you are walking away from Him. If you are keeping His commandments, you are following Him and looking to God for the life you are leading. We follow God in this life which leads to eternal life with a good God sometime in the future. We are pilgrims on a lifetime journey to eternal life. 1 Peter 2:11-12 NKJV says, "Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable."

Violating God's commandments can lead to death and worst of all, spiritual death. Proverbs 14:12 NKJV says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." This seems a little drastic, but I have known people who made terrible mistakes with their lives. God has our best interests at heart so stay strong and do what is right. Do things God's way.

God will hear us if we are sorry for our sins, but we can keep God away by our self-willed sin. Isaiah 59:1-2 NKJV says, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." The worst part of this is your separation from God in the lake of fire for eternity. That is what it says in the New Testament book of Revelation, didn't it? Why miss out, decide you will instead be in God's future eternal kingdom. 1 John 1:7,9 NKJV says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we confess our sins to God and decide to keep His commandments, He will hear us and forgive us; He can hear us because He is God. Confessing your sin to a person does not give you forgiveness; they are not God.

God's ways give us peace and protection. You cannot feel more protected than being healed and helped in life by an almighty God who cares about us. Rabbi Shaul said in Philippians 4:6-7 NKJV, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Pray every day for all things. Rabbi also said, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;" Ephesians 6:18 NKJV. Live like God tells you to live and pray like you believe in and trust in God. We are to pronounce blessing on others and to ask for blessings from our good and merciful God.

More to Consider

Dig into the true way to live; the blessings of God; the work of the scriptures and the Holy Spirit. Think about how you can apply God's commandments. For example, the Bible says that we are to return someone's ox if we find it (Deuteronomy 22:1). So, we should try to return anything of considerable value to someone.

When my mom taught me that principle, I asked her how we could do that and she said we can turn things of value into the police and if no one claimed it, we could have it. I asked what about a dollar or some change and she said that is okay to keep. When my foster kids saw something laying on the sidewalk, they said let's stop the car and get it. I told them we should leave it there so the person who left it could get it back. It is easy to figure out how to apply God's commandments. We need to develop our abilities to follow God's commandments.

The Bible says to forgive and love others. Leviticus 19:18-19 NKJV says, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You shall keep My statutes." Shaul says in Ephesians to forgive and be kind in Ephesians. He is applying God's commandment from Leviticus. Ephesians 4:32 NKJV says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." We are to use our brains and figure out how to properly apply God's commandments. Hebrews 5:14 NKJV says, "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

I am not making up cleverly made-up stories when I share my stories with you. I know the details about the things I share. I am not lying. The people who are making up doctrine and telling us **not** to keep God's commandments in the Old Testament are the ones who are lying. Also, when I talk about the acts of God that my friends or that I have experienced, I can give you names, places, and details. I share these stories to raise your expectations and glorify God so you will have your own stories to tell.

The stories in the Bible really happened and many millions more; that is an understatement. God is at work all the time. In the future, He will restore the world and then sustain His promises for eternity. So, environmentalists take comfort; God will restore the world the way it is supposed to be in the future kingdom. It is only then we will be ruled by a good and righteous Messiah Yeshua.

God reaches out to us like a soaking rain. When we lived in San Antonio we were always hoping for rain and some of the time it came in buckets (amazing downpours). God can reach out to each and every person in the world; that is how big He is. Don't you want to experience God like a refreshing rain? It is only mankind's indifference to truth that keeps them from God.

God is there and at work powerfully. A friend of mine prayed for someone who was blind, and stuff started oozing out of the eyes of the man he was praying for, and he was healed of his blindness. I prayed for a woman in the jungle in the middle of nowhere near the Amazon River who had just heard about God. She had a bad back and her pain was completely gone. She cried for half an hour after her healing.

Another friend of mine who was an RN prayed for a teenage boy and while he had his hand on the boy's leg, the boy's leg grew instantly to the same length as the other. It must have been amazing. I personally have seen many miracles and healings. I have a two-volume book on miracles called, Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts by Craig Keener. He talks about Hume saying God did not do any miracles. When some people told Hume that is not

true, Hume said we know that God does not do any miracles. He was quoting himself! Do not underestimate God! Do not be afraid to pray. God may not answer every prayer, but God will answer some of our prayers. Through God we can be real life spiritual superheroes.

Torah Study

Again, the Torah portion for this week is Naso and Naso means, "to lift up." Naso begins with God instructing Moshe to take a census of the L'vi'im (Levites), the families of Gershon, M'rari, and K'hat, from 30 to 50 years of age. The Levites were camped closest to the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting, Tabernacle in the desert). They were given that status because they did not commit the sin of the golden calf. It is an object lesson; we see God using object lessons in the Bible. Those who are pure are closest to God, so we also should seek to be pure. The Levites were to do various acts of service for the Mishkan while Israel was in the wilderness. Anyone who had a discharge, tzara'at (affliction of skin, clothes, or house), or touched the dead were to go outside the camp. Restitution for someone we have wronged includes an extra 20 percent, a woman whose husband was jealous would go through a test, and a person making a nazir vow is described.

Making amends for damages is a commandment of God. Our country has incorporated this law into practice in our country as well as many other biblical commands. We have insurance to help us make proper amends for damages and determine what is just. Yeshua taught that we are to make satisfactory restitution in Matthew 5:40.

The person making the nazir vow was to eat or drink **no** grape products and that included raisins. Drinking fermented beverages is permitted (just no grape wine). They are to make offerings at the end of the vow and the typical vow lasted 30 consecutive days. The nazir vow was often made to obtain something like a baby or a healing. It could be made for almost any reason including just to be pious. At the end of the vow, the person was to shave their head and burn their hair. Any type of fast for the purpose of healing or just to be closer to God is a good thing.

I sometimes fast things like TV and video games, and food. I have to be careful with fasting food and people who could have physical issues from fasting food should be careful. The Torah teaches us to protect life (and to protect the lives of others) and taking care of ourselves is a commandment of God. For example, if we are supposed to be taking medication, we should take it unless we are healed. A medical professional can determine if we are healed.

I like to bring up different understandings at times. Matthew 2:23 refers to Jeremiah 31:6. Not all Hebrew manuscripts read the same and some Egyptian Torah scrolls refer to Yeshua being a Nazarene. Jeremiah 31:6 NKJV, "For there shall be a day when the watchmen will cry on Mount Ephraim." The word "watchmen" is the word for Nazarenes (Notzrim in Hebrew). In some Egyptian manuscripts it reads, Yesh will be called a Nazarene. (Ki Yesh ... notzri in Hebrew). It is possible that is what Matthew saw in his Torah scroll; namely that "Yeshua will be called a Nazarene." Informed rabbis (those that actually know the Old Testament) easily see a connection between Matthew 2:23 and Jeremiah 31:6 even without knowing about these other manuscripts.

There is a theology that was made up for Matthew 2:23. Theology is a belief system and not God's word. But this is a nice explanation. Yeshua grew up as a netzer of the line of David. Those in the line of David left Bethlehem to protect themselves against King Herod, the murderous Roman appointed king. A netzer is an underground shoot from a plant that begins growing in another place; in this case the theologians say it refers to those in the line of David, the netzer of the branch of the line of David, who had moved away from Bethlehem to protect themselves.

What is the easiest and most probable explanation? There were manuscripts that seemed to say that Yeshua would be called a Nazarene. The Jewish Rabbi Eliyahu Soloveitchik (who lived in the 1800s) said that Matthew 2:23 refers to Jeremiah 31:6. Even rabbis can figure this out so why not theologians.

Here is a sidenote on the murderous Roman leadership in Yeshua's time. Herod was appointed by the Roman Empire. The Roman appointed leadership also included the Roman appointed chief priest. They are the ones who put Yeshua to death. Those crying out for His death were sent to do that by the Roman leadership (Matthew 27:20). Yeshua said that the Roman leadership and the Gentiles would put Him to death (Matthew 20:18-19) and that is exactly what happened. The Roman Empire turned it around on the Jews and they blamed the Jews, but it was the Roman Empire who put Him to death. It seems that the curse the Romans proclaimed fell on them when they made up their pagan Roman/Greek religion. "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;" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV.

The Aaronic Blessing is given in Numbers 6:24-27. It says we are to put God's name on Israel, on those who believe in the true God. In our era, we are to still do this blessing over believers. The people of Israel were believers; believers in the Messiah Yeshua are believers. According to Exodus 3:15, God's name is Yě-hō-váh. God's real name has been found in 2,363 different manuscripts pointed as Yě-hō-váh, **never** as Yahweh, and once otherwise according to Doctor Nehemiah Gordon. It is not uncommon to find God's name pointed a number of times as Yěhōváh in a single manuscript. Years ago, I wanted to see if this was true, and it took me no time at all to find God's name pointed as Yěhōváh in the manuscript I was looking at. So, the people who say we do not know how to say God's name are wrong. Also, God's name as Yěhōváh is used over 6,000 times. So, the people who say we cannot say God's name because it is too holy to say are also wrong. The no namers will use Hashem which means "the Name." Calling God "it" is not respecting God and the name of Yěhōváh.

Yěhōváh is often translated as Lord in our Bibles. The word "Lord" in Exodus 3:15 is the Hebrew word Yěhōváh (יהוה, yud-hey-vav-hey). Exodus 3:15 NKJV says, "Moreover God said to Moses, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: The **Lord** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is **My name forever**, and this is My memorial **to all generations.**'"

Then the portion continues with articles of the Mishkan being consecrated and set up. Moshe accepts offerings from the leaders of the tribes, and they are described. The portion ends with God speaking to Moshe from above the Ark between the two K'ruvim (Cherubs).

The Tanakh often refers to those who worship idols as having committed adultery. Spiritual adultery is loving something more than God or worshipping idols. God is the husband of the believers in the Old Testament portion. Isaiah 54:5 NKJV says, "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name." This relationship remains the same for believers in Yeshua (see 2 Cor. 11:2); those who believe in the Messiah Yeshua should not worship any idols or believe in a different Messiah or they are committing spiritual adultery. Deuteronomy 12:31 NKJV says, "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." Doing any pagan ritual is wrong and even copying pagan practice is disgusting to God.

Also, the nazir vow teaches us to pursue God deeply to receive special blessings and to seek purity. In this portion, God defines how the priest is to bless the people. It is important for us to understand that God wants to bless us when we do things His way including how we pronounce blessings on the people. Also, just as God chose how we were to bless people, God chose speaking in tongues as a way to pray in this Messianic age; Shaul said that he wished all believers spoke in tongues, and he said the things he was sharing in 1 Corinthians 12-14 are commandments of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37). You can make all the excuses you want; they are commandments of God. Shaul said believers are to seek the spiritual gifts, "Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts;" 1 Corinthians 14:1 NKJV.

The Haftarah for Naso is Judges 13:2-25. The Haftarah portion is about an angel of the Lord coming to tell the wife of Manoach who was barren that she would have a child who was to be a lifetime nazir and gave her specific instructions for while she was pregnant. Since being childless was important in her time, she could have been deeply seeking the Lord for a child and even did a nazir vow herself. Her pregnancy involved not eating any grape products like in a nazir vow. Her son, Samson, would begin to rescue Israel from the power of the Philistines. Samson was empowered by God for his entire life with herculean strength; believers in the Messiah Yeshua are empowered supernaturally by God through the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is our helper (John 14:26). Believers in God are supposed to accept the Messiah Yeshua and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39). This is a blessing from God through the Messiah.

**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.)**

Those who are unclean are not to enter the area of sanctuary and to live outside the camp. Numbers 5:2-3.

When someone wrong's someone, they are to confess it to God, make restitution, and add 1/5 of its worth for restitution. Numbers 5:5.

A provision is made to exonerate a woman suspected of adultery. Numbers 5:12-15.

A nazir vow typically lasts for 30 consecutive days and includes not eating or drinking any grape products, not cutting their hair, not entering the tent of a dead person, not to become unclean, to shave their head at the end of the vow and burn the hair under the peace offering, and make a sacrifice. Numbers 6:2-21.

The Cohanim are to put God's name on His people and bless them with specific words. Numbers 6:23-25.

The Ark is to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. Numbers 7:9.

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

יְבָרֶכֶךָ יְהוָה, וַיִּשְׁמְרֶכָּ
 יֵאָר יְהוָה פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיַּחֲנֶנֶךָ
 יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פְּנֵיו אֵלֶיךָ, וַיִּשָּׂם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם

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.

Real Life Superheroes (An accompanying teaching for the Torah portion.)

Growing in our spiritual life and forming an understanding of how to apply the scriptures can make us into a new people, a people of light.

We become a people who are sensitive to what is right and wrong. Our behaviors are no longer opposed to God, but we have dropped all that opposes God and do things His way. The book of Hebrews says that those who sin have an evil heart; they are not following God. We are not to be deceived and begin to sin; we are to be "steadfast to the end." Hebrews 3:12-14 NKJV says, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."

I wonder how many of us have realized that when we accept sin in our lives, we have an evil heart. That is what it says. Not only that, but it says we are also not believing in God. It makes sense; when we do what God says, we are believing in Him and **when we do not** do what God says, **we are not believing in Him.**

Also, we need encouragement so we can stay on the right path. Shaul (Paul) said to Timothy to stay away from sinful desires (lusts) and to do what is right (righteousness). He says that those who do not know truth fall into the traps of the devil who keeps them captive.

2 Timothy 2:22-26 NKJV:

"Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

These are great scriptures. What kinds of sinful desires do you suppose Shaul is talking about? Of course, it is what the Old Testament tells us what a sinful desire is. Again, there was no New Testament at the time; early believers kept the Old Testament laws. It was in the 300s that our faith became infected with pagan doctrine; the Roman Empire made it illegal to keep God's feasts, enforced their false religion filled with paganism, and produced a Greek text filled with anti-Jewish sentiment to replace the Hebrew New Testament.

The Hebrew New Testament was put together around 150 AD. The Romans took over a Jewish movement where God was King of humanity and made it into a pagan Roman/Greek movement. That is what we have inherited and that is why we need to get back to our Jewish roots. Not the Jewish roots of extra unbiblical applications of the Bible through rabbinic Judaism though.

Our present-day understanding has mostly come from a complete lack of biblical context. While the Complete Jewish Bible uses Hebrew names which places the Bible in a better context (I like this version), **it still must be understood within the context it was written** whether Israeli, Jewish, or Roman contexts (Roman because the Jews were under Roman rule.). The King James or New King James uses a word for word translation and that provides a way to examine what the context was talking about. That is why I like to use the New King James Version in my studies. There are other good versions of the Bible like the King James Version, but that is what I like to use.

Newer versions of the Bible interpret what the Bible is saying, this does not allow us to look for biblical and cultural ways of understanding the Bible properly. **The Bible cannot be understood properly by just plainly reading it without its cultural context;** if that is what you are doing, then you are reading your own context into it. If you do not understand the Bible properly, **you do not have God's word.**

Shaul said that people who sin are taken captive by the devil. People who think they are exercising their rights to sin or think they are okay with God by just saying a prayer and still sinning are in fact making themselves slaves. Is that what you want to be? Yeshua said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin." John 8:34 NKJV. I do not want to be a slave and those who are living in sin are slaves to the devil and to the sins they are committing.

A note on context; we need to understand the Bible properly and within the biblical culture of that time. Kill the Canaanites applied to the pagan child killers that Israel was to replace when they entered the land of Canaan. That was a command for Israel back when they entered the

land. God gave Israel the land. We need to understand context. Of course, Israel has a right to defend itself. Israel gets pelted frequently by rockets from Gaza. I doubt most nations would have used the restraint that Israel has used.

We are to be a people who want truth and who settle our hearts on truth.

If we accept all the bad doctrine passed down to us, we will still be pagan Roman/Greeks and Shaul said no idol worshipper and no sexual sinner will be in God's future kingdom. In Acts it says that those who heard about the Messiah Yeshua read the Old Testament to see if what they were being told is true. Acts 17:11-12 NKJV says, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men." If the Old Testament is done away with as some say, then why did they bother going to the Old Testament to find truth? They did not have to be scholars and dissect the Bible as some do; they read the scriptures.

Some say we do not have to follow God's commandments in the Old Testament. Fair weights and measures are commands in the Old Testament. Is that done away with? If so, our way of life would end up in chaos. Some say we are just to love God and others. They then interpret for themselves how to live; the Bible says that is wrong. I heard of someone who thought loving someone else was to commit homosexual sin. The Bible says that no one who lives in homosexual sin will be in God's future kingdom.

God is big enough to define who He is and what is right and wrong. Proverbs 21:2 NKJV, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the hearts." God examines our hearts to see if we are keeping His commandments or just making up our own. Keep God's commands or end up in the lake of fire. "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. Understanding the Bible properly is important.

We should understand how the Bible fits together.

Yeshua (Jesus) quotes from the Old Testament and so does Shaul. If it was done away with, why did they bother substantiating what is true by using the Old Testament? Early believers followed Yeshua's teachings. Yeshua said in Matthew 15:9 NKJV, "In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Man-made doctrines are only going to lead us in the wrong direction. We must understand Shaul's writings based on what Yeshua taught. Shaul taught do not keep misapplied laws; **he did not say to not** keep the Old Testament. Romans 3:31 NKJV says, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." Those who say the Old Testament is done away with are lying or deluded.

Kefa (Peter) said about Shaul in 2 Peter 3:15-16 NKJV, "Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." They do not understand the Jewish

issues, so they twist the Bible to mean whatever they want to "their own destruction" (think, lake of fire). Do not believe them or you will end up with them.

Romans 14 is about believers who lived in pagan Rome where some of the meat came from pagan temples. Some just ate vegetables so they would not take the chance of eating this meat. A pastor quoted Romans 14:22 NKJV, "Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves." He said that if he commits adultery or steals, he does not condemn himself. It does not have anything to do with that! It said in Revelation 21:8 NKJV, "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." It is incredibly sad isn't it; unfortunately, we know where he is going. It is all about understanding context. God gave us brains and He expects us to use it. They were not eating meat because some of it came from pagan temples. That is the context; it has nothing to do with not keeping God's commandments.

God can sustain our walk, even in difficult times.

Our spiritual life is not perfect, and we face difficulties at times. I remember when I first got out of school. I lived in the outskirts of New York City (the outskirts is still city) and it is one of the most expensive places to live. God provided for me; I think it was a miracle. I was faithful to God, and He helped me. My black and white TV came from who knows what era, but I had everything I needed. Whatever we are going through, repent and stay strong. Yochanan (John) said we all sin, but when we sin, we need to repent and stop sinning. Through Yeshua we can be forgiven because He is the final sacrifice for sin and not just for Israel, but for everyone including believers from the Old Testament times. Adam expected a Messiah and everyone after him expected a Messiah to come so we could be forgiven of our sin (shortcomings).

1 John 1:8-2:2 NKJV:

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

It's great news isn't it! We confess our sins to God, repent and decide not to do it again, and God forgives us. He is God for the whole world. Read the Bible; God is an amazing and wonderful God of the universe. He wants us to believe in Him; we do not have to put all our trust in political parties, not in nations or nationalities, not in things made of wood or stone, not false demonic ideologies, or not in religions that impose autocratic rule. God is worthy of our trust; He is the creator of the universe; anyone can believe in Him. Talk to God; He is a forgiving and good God. Isaiah 1:16-18 NKJV, "Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.'"

Our lives are not perfect but keep moving forward and **do not give up**. Yeshua said in Revelation 3:5 NKJV, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Yochanan (John) says we have victory and can overcome sin through Yeshua. 1 John 4:4-6 NKJV says, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are of the world. therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God." We are of God, and we can overcome the world. Shaul said in Philippians 4:13 NKJV, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." We can do all through the Messiah. You can do it. If you sin, talk to God, and ask for forgiveness; tell God you will not do it again and be sincere. He will "cleanse" us from all sin Yochanan said.

Perhaps God doing a census in this portion shows us that God values us. Samson was a real-life superhero because God empowered him. We too are empowered by God for growing spiritually through the work of the Holy Spirit and can be real life superheroes by the power of God. Have faith in God and live right. Understand the context of the Bible; want truth and not made-up doctrine. The New Testament gets its understanding from the Old Testament. Both Yeshua (Jesus) and Shaul (Paul) quote the Old Testament portion. God wants us to do what is right and will forgive us when we repent and turn back to Him. He wants us to succeed, and He will help us.