

#12 VaYechi Gen 47:28-50:26

By Moshe Schwab

While Praying:

- * Celebrate God's feasts.
- * We are God's people who live through God's power.
- * We are mistaken that there will be no judgment.
- * We are not manufacturing God; He is big enough to define who He is.

VaYechi means, “and he lived.” This portion begins with Ya'akov dying at the age of 147 after living 17 Years in Egypt. He asks Yosef (Joseph) to swear to him that he will bury him in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron. Jacob says that El Shaddai appeared to him at Luz (Bethel), blessed him, and said that the land of Canaan will belong to Jacob's descendants forever. Jacob includes Ephraim and Manasseh in the blessings of his children and he blesses the younger Ephraim first and tells Joseph that he is not making a mistake (even though his eyesight is bad). Also, he says that Israel should invoke a blessing that God would make His people like Ephraim and Manasseh (as in Genesis 48:20).

Jacob prophetically says that God will bring them back to Canaan and then speaks to each of his sons and includes some words of prophecy to them. Ya'akov prophesies that the messiah would come from Judah. He blesses each of his sons and the two sons of Yosef. The words he has for them are not all good words. Then Ya'akov dies, he is embalmed, and they mourn for him for forty days. The Egyptians mourn for him 70 days and then Yosef asks Pharaoh if he can go bury his father at the cave of Machpelah and a great number of people go up with him and mourn for him for 7 days there in Canaan and then return to Egypt. Yosef's brothers are concerned that Yosef will retaliate for their mistreatment of Yosef, but Yosef tells them not to be afraid and that God used the situation and turned it around for good.

Joseph dies at 110 and he gets to see the third generation of Ephraim's children. He asks to be buried in Canaan when God takes them back to the land of Canaan. In this we see a picture of hope that God would indeed return His people to Canaan; it prefigures the picture of God returning all His people to Him some day in the future, raising His people from the dead.

In this closing portion of Genesis, we see the death of two of our great spiritual leaders, Yaakov and Yosef. What do the stories in the Bible tell us so far? Mankind fell from their relationship and fellowship with God. The sin of man without God becomes so severe that God relents creating man. For the sake of the faith of Noah, God saves the world through a believer. Noah listens to God and he builds an ark that saves mankind from annihilation. May we all be like Noah who saved the world. Those who keep God's commandments give this world hope.

Abraham becomes the father of believers in the true God and God tells Abraham that the world will be blessed through him. Isaac and Jacob carry on the line of believers and each encounter God and are led by God just like the believers before them. Even though the believing prophet Joseph suffered as a result of his brothers' jealousy, he ends up saving them from a deadly famine. God prospers and protects His people of faith.

We see God saving mankind because of those who live in faith towards God, follow God's commands, and are led by Him. Let us be people of faith who bring God's blessings to the world. Let us be a people who listen to God's voice and follow Him just as our patriarchs did. True believers make the world a better place. The world needs us.

Also in this portion, we see the hope of God promising to return His people to Canaan; it prefigures the future time when God will raise the believers of Israel from the dead and those who believe on the Messiah Yeshua.

As believers in the true God, we have lots to celebrate. We can be thankful for believers in the past who brought us to this time. No wonder God's feasts are times of celebration. Mankind may celebrate their own works, their own accomplishments, their lives, and their special times (there is nothing wrong with feeling good about those things), but without God, man would not exist. Celebrating God's feasts keeps us in touch with reality. We would have nothing without God so don't be deluded into thinking grandiose things about ourselves; all things exist because of the creator God from whom all things come.

Most of God's feasts are for celebrating what God has done. Keeping Shabbat (the real Shabbat is Friday night and Saturday during the day) was established by God in Genesis. "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made;" Genesis 2:3 NKJV.

In Exodus 20:9-11 NKJV it 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."

Isn't this something. People say, what difference does it make? If we truly believe in God, we will want to do what He says. This suggests that even in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve kept Shabbat. Why wouldn't they? They were in perfect fellowship with God until they sinned. Why wouldn't they enjoy the day that God has made holy (sanctified). God has given us His feasts for our benefit and so we can stay in fellowship with God the way we are supposed to. What could be wrong with celebrating a day that God has blessed!

We are God's people who live through God's power. First of all, there would be nothing without God. So, doing what God tells us to do just makes sense. He knows something about us and His creation. God's creation decided to do things their own way and were incredibly violent, but along came Noah who decided to do what is right and save mankind. We should listen to God. Isaiah 45:9, 12 NKJV: "Shall the clay say to him who forms it, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands?' ... I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands — stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded."

Are we so daft so as not to acknowledge who God is and just do things our own way? God does not leave us to flounder along in life and wants to be part of our lives. He gives the Holy Spirit to all who believe on His Messiah Yeshua. The Holy Spirit is our helper; God wants to help us! That is amazing. Acts 1:8 NKJV says, " But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." You might have heard this next verse before; think about how amazing this is. "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us;" Ephesians 3:20 NKJV. Wouldn't you want what God wants for you?

Refusing what God wants to do for us is not only a big loss for our earthly lives, but it is a big loss for our future. We may be going on to a different era next week in our Torah study, but that is not the same change that will take place at the end of time. People talk a lot about being able to provide for themselves and about financial planning, but what about also planning for eternity? We are mistaken that there will be no judgment. We think that time goes on and nothing will change. Kefa (Peter) says it all in 2 Peter 3:10-13 NKJV:

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

Kefa sounds like he knows what he is talking about. I am a former amateur astronomer and there is a lot of violence going on in the universe. There are exploding stars and rocks crashing into our nearby planets. You only need to look at our moon to see thousands of collisions. The end time may not be that far off for us. I don't know when and no one knows the time Yeshua said. Don't be too proud and think that you have it all together and therefore leave God out of the equation of life.

Isaiah 2:11-12 NKJV

"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled,
The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down,
And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.
For the day of the Lord of hosts,
Shall come upon everything proud and lofty."

Believers in the true God did not manufacture God; He is big enough to define who He is. I get the impression that some people think that man makes up life and they think that mankind makes up God. Make no mistake about it; God is real and this life is not all there is; and, we need to get our heads in the right place. It's up to you. God is good, gracious and merciful and really wants to bless us. He is not a control freak; He wants what's best for us. Exodus 34:6-7 NKJV, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." God cares about us. If man made up God, he would no doubt use it to control others. The true God is not like that, but gives us the choice to do what is best, and then helps us and bless us.

In Genesis we see a God who is active in His creation. God saved man from the flood and He continues to try and help mankind. God gave us His feasts to celebrate and enjoy from the inception of creation. He wants to bring us into relationship with Him for our own good. God has given those who believe in the Messiah Yeshua the power and help of the Holy Spirit. We don't need to ask why; we know mankind needs help. The Bible says God stretched out the sky and according to science, it is still expanding. That won't go on forever though. There is an end time the Bible says. We don't know when that will be, but in the meantime, God has reached out to mankind and gives us the choice whether or not to choose His good ways and believe in Him and the Messiah Yeshua.