



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
 Yĕhōvāh – 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)

This week is a double portion, Behar and Bechukotai. Behar means, “on the mountain.” The Torah portion Bechukotai means, “in my statutes.” The portions covered each week were instituted by God's holy prophets at the time of Nehemiah or perhaps even way before that. The prophets were led by God and the Torah portions ensure us that we talk about the various commandments and history that God gave us and wanted us to understand. I want to begin today by saying we need to apply ourselves spiritually.

Make the effort necessary to be clean spiritually and keep God's commandments.

Let's read this wonderful section of scripture in Psalms 119.

Psalms 119:9-16

How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.
 With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.

We need to decide to keep God's commandments in His word. We are to keep them close to us so that we do them. God is good and gives us good commandments. It is something to be excited about! So, enjoy your life in God and never forget His good ways.

When I did ministry in the jungle, I did not care if the water was a little tainted, but I enjoyed the opportunity to cool down in the jungle river. We would put on our swimsuits and take ivory soap with us because it floats and clean up. Cleaning up our lives can be a joy because God

gives us His good commandments so that we can have a better life. Maybe it can take some effort, but it is worth it. It is an opportunity to get excited about.

Make an effort to reach out to God and what He wants for us.

It is a natural response to God's effort to reach us. God has reached out to mankind since the Garden of Eden and give mankind grace. Adam and Eve received the promise of a future Messiah to come (see Genesis 3:15). The word grace means favor. The Bible says that Noah received grace. Genesis 6:8 NKJV says, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Mankind received grace when God saved us from the flood through Noah. Noah was a righteous man who did what was right and taught God's commandments. Genesis 6:9 NKJV says, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God."

We received God's grace when God gave us His commandments at Mount Sinai. Before this, God's commandments were passed down through believers like Noah, Abraham, and others. Genesis 26:5 NKJV says, "Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." The word laws is the Hebrew word Torah. God wanted His commandments written down, so He told Moshe to write them down.

Just like Noah and Abraham were righteous men, God has called us all to be His righteous and holy people and keep His commandments. In the portion Kedoshim in Leviticus we are told to be holy 3 times. Leviticus 19:2 NKJV says "You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." Kefa quotes this in 1 Peter 1:16 NKJV says, "Be holy, for I am holy." We are to keep God's commandments and be holy. For all of time, mankind is supposed to keep God's good commandments; they are "right and good" (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18).

Most of us are familiar with the favor (the grace) that we received through the Messiah and the giving of the Holy Spirit through our faith in Yeshua. God wants us to keep His good commandments and receive the help of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we wonder what we could have done to deserve God's help. The Old Testament teaches us that our God is a good, merciful, and caring God. Exodus 34:6-7 NKJV says, "And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, '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.'"

He has given us His help; it is up to us to make the effort to receive and keep His commandments and receive and utilize the Holy Spirit. God has given us His favor; it is up to us whether we will accept His favor.

Open up our hard hearts, allow God's word and the Holy Spirit to infuse our lives, and be strong and stable in our eternal God and King.

Proverbs 28:14 NKJV, "Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity." The Hebrew word in this verse for reverent means to fear or to shake in fear. We should always live our lives in awe of God and not harden our hearts to God. Hebrews 3:13 NKJV says, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." This verse is emphatic; we are to do it "daily" and "today."

Make your life easier by doing what is right. Infusion is the process of absorbing something. Some popular energy drinks are said to infuse us with energy. We need to be infused with God's word and the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 40:28-31 NKJV

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Those that wait on Yēhōvāh are those who have expectations in Him. We know God's word to be true and brings blessings; we also have expectation on the leading of the Holy Spirit. Romans 14:17 NKJV says, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The kingdom of God is doing what is "right and good." A righteous person is someone who keeps God's commandments. Those who endure, will rise from the dead and be in the future kingdom of God. In Matthew 24:11-13 NKJV Yeshua says, "Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because **lawlessness** will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

The word **lawlessness** is the Greek word *anomia*. *Nomia* is the word used for the Torah by the ancient rabbis. The "a" negates the word in the Greek. *Anomia* means to not to keep the Torah. Yeshua says that those who teach others to not keep the Torah are false teachers. We must keep doing Gods commandments until the end. Be faithful and stay strong in Yēhōvāh.

Romans 14 has been taken out of context by most in Christianity. The context in Romans 14 is about some who only ate vegetables because they didn't want to take the chance of eating meat that came from a pagan temple and the meat was polluted by pagan practice.

Shaul was okay eating only things God said is okay to eat, namely kosher meat, if he knew it didn't come from a pagan temple, but he did not want those who only ate vegetables to stumble because they did not want to take the chance of eating meat that came from a pagan temple. His command is a properly applied commandment derived from the command to not cause a blind man to stumble (see Leviticus 19:14). For example, we would not offer an alcoholic an alcoholic beverage because it could cause them to stumble.

The reason we need to understand that God does not want us to eat anything from a pagan temple is because God considers any incorporation of pagan ritual into our faith as terribly wrong. Also, the ritual slaughter of an animal is to be done humanely and is accomplished by removing blood from the meat which was not done in pagan ritual.

It was decided by Ya'akov, the first leader of the Messianic believers, as we see in Acts 15 to warn the new Gentile believers of these things and command them to keep the Torah. Acts 15:20-21 NKJV says, "**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."
 They preached the Torah on the Sabbath, and the Gentiles were to also learn the Torah and keep it. It was Moshe who wrote down the Torah for us.

Yeshua said we are not to eat meat sacrificed to idols and He says in no uncertain terms that it is wrong because He expected people to keep His commandments that were given at Mount Sinai. Revelation 2:14 NKJV, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality."

I tell you some of my stories so you will be encouraged in your faith. Some of you have heard my stories before, but I also tell them to give glory to God and show that He is an active and loving God. I share my stories to help you to seek your own stories.

For example, every year we are to remember the stories about what God did for us at the time of the Passover. God wants us to talk about what He has done for us; it is not bragging; it is 'the power of God and not of us.' We also need to hear God's word over and over, daily. Consider what part of the Shema says in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 NKJV, "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up." This is an emphatic statement.

Also, we talk about things we need to know and understand about our faith. Here are some examples:

The New Testament tells us to keep God's commandments in the Old Testament (see Acts 15:21).

It is wrong to cause people to stumble from keeping God's commandments (see Leviticus 19:14 and Revelation 2:14).

We must keep God's commandments and endure to be saved (see Matthew 24:11-13).

God is good and caring, and He gave us His commandments to help us in life (Exodus 34:6-7).

God has given grace to mankind since the inception of time. God gave Adam and Eve the promise of a Messiah and gave Noah grace by saving him from the flood (see Genesis 6:8).

Noah kept God's commandments and taught them. He was righteous. He did what was right. Genesis 6:9 NKJV says, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations." Righteous people keep God's commandments and do what is right.

God's commandments are "right and good" (see Deuteronomy 6:17-18).

Being holy and righteous means that we actually act holy and righteous. People do not receive a stamp of holiness or a stamp of righteousness when they accept the Messiah. Genesis 6:9 NKJV says, "Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." The word just in this verse in the Hebrew can also be translated righteous according to Strong's Dictionary. Hebrews 10:29 NKJV says, "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace." Those who live in sin will be punished. Do not live in sin.

There is a lot more to know, be patient, learn and grow.

Also, we need to know how some lead us the wrong way:

Romans 14 is about some people going to extremes to keep God's commandments and eating only vegetables. It does not mean we are allowed to eat meat that God says not to eat in the Old Testament. Daniel did the same thing and ate only vegetables. Also, some use Romans 14 to mean they do not worry about doing what is wrong. They are wrong.

There are insertions in the Greek manuscripts that mislead us. Many of them were put in by the Roman Empire that was trying to take over the true faith and make it into a Roman faith. For example, the Hebrew James says we are to keep the Torah. The Greek says law of liberty. As we saw, the Bible says that Christians are to keep the torah (see Acts 15:21). Therefore, we need to be careful to keep God's commandments and reject any false doctrine that says we do not have to keep God's commandments.

Theology is a belief system that often misleads people. People have been indoctrinated into false belief systems by many different theologies. For example, Yeshua said that He has not come to demolish the Torah and the Prophets (see Matthew 5:17). Theology then denies what He said and completely negates Yeshua's words. He came to fulfil which is the Greek word to fill up. Yeshua is referring to the giving of the Holy Spirit. Shaul said in Ephesians 5:18 NKJV, "Be filled with the Spirit." He has not done away with His commandments but filled believers with the Holy Spirit.

There are anti-Jewish insertions in the manuscripts. In the Greek John 1 it says that the Jews rejected Yeshua. In the Hebrew manuscripts of John 1 it says the world rejected Yeshua. Luke tells the story of a man who kills those who are disagreeable towards him. Luke 19:27 NKJV says, "But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me." It alludes to killing the Jews and has been used that way. Even one Bible commentary I have says that it means to kill the Jews. The same story in Matthew refers to eternal punishment and not murder. Matthew 25:30 NKJV says, "Cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Those who have taught murder and committed murder will be punished by God. Murder is wrong.

People often find it more fun to go along with the crowd and keep false doctrine. They may even think that because people are enjoying false doctrine that it is okay to do. Matthew 7:21-23 NKJV says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" Those who do not keep the law will not be in the future kingdom of God.

Those who teach, "God's knows my heart" or "that a good God will accept my sin," teach false doctrine. We are to do what God tells us to do and keep His commandments because He knows what is best for us and has good intentions for us. Matthew 7:13-14 NKJV says, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." People who make up excuses to not keep God's commandments will not make it in the narrow gate.

There is a hell. Those who refuse God and His good commandments will go to the lake of fire. Revelation 20:13 NKJV says, "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works." Revelation 21:8 NKJV says, "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."

The Bible is a cultural book and must be understood within the Israelite and Jewish culture. For example, some say that 'to heap coals on someone's head' In Romans 12:20 comes from the Romans army bombarding people with fire. People use this to say we should shame people. It is a quote from Proverbs 25:22 which was written some 3,000 years ago. **There was no Roman Empire around at that time!** One Bible researcher from the orient said that someone used to go around towns and provide people with coals to light their fires in the morning and the man was warmed by the coals while doing so. It was their job. So, it more likely means to warm others with our kindness.

We are sharing things that are important. That is why we talk about them. There is a lot that we need to know.

These are only a few of the things we need to understand. Again, be patient and learn and grow spiritually. Have great joy that you can know the truth. The truth will set you free from false doctrine. John 8:32 NKJV says, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Will you be set free or remain stuck?

More to Consider

We can carry blessings with us as believers in the Messiah; we are often unaware of the extent of that blessing. Messianic believers are commanded to receive the Holy Spirit and God is at work in us through the Holy Spirit as we live out life. Believers in the Messiah are given the Holy

Spirit to help us. Shaul said in 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NKJV, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." The treasure he is talking about is the Holy Spirit which Messianic believers are commanded to receive. Isaiah says that God will reject those who rebel against God's gift of the Holy Spirit. Isaiah 63:10 NKJV says, "But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy."

It seems strange that people say they believe in God, but some people deny His ability as God. Some people are great speakers, but there is no power behind their ministry or some even deny God's power. Shaul said in 1 Corinthians 4:19-20, "But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power." So, the people who are saying that God created everything and then walked away and left us to ourselves are wrong. We have a Messianic treasure, and the power of God can be at work in us.

I wish that life was more automatic at times. We all are learning and growing no matter how long we have been a believer. 1 John 1:8 NKJV says we all sin at times. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." That is part of life; we must keep applying godly behaviors and make them become automatic. When we cooperate with God, our lives can be powerful because it is not only us at work, but the Holy Spirit can inspire and use us; we can become ready vessels for the work of God both in word and power.

When we do sin, God will forgive us if we are truly sorry and decide not to do it again. Yochanan said 1 John 1:9 NKJV, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is generous with His forgiveness. It says He will forgive us, so do not keep bringing back the past.

We have a choice how we want to live. Some think that what we do is just a matter of preference. As you can see, the Bible says there is a right way and a wrong way of doing things. I remember this story about an electrician shorting out some high-power wires behind some offices. He blew a hole in the wall! Doing what is wrong has effects; sometimes not much happens, but you do not want to be the one to blow a hole in the wall.

Are we powered by our own ideals? Taking chances with our spirituality can lead to disaster. Telling yourself that there are not any consequences for committing sin is completely wrong. Accepting sin is like telling God that you do not care about what He says. Sin can bring pain and hurt; for sure it is rejecting God. You can say you believe in Him, yet by not listening to God, you are not giving God honor and respect. Yeshua said about those who live in sin in Matthew 25:46 NKJV, "These will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." God will give those who do what is right (the righteous) a wonderful and amazing eternal life. It says that Noah was righteous because he did what was right. Some say we have a stamp of righteousness though our faith; that is false doctrine.

If we have faith in God, we will trust in what He says and do what He says.

In Jewish thought, we are blessed by Abraham. The Rabbis think that Abraham was not able to have all the blessings he should have had, so his blessing has passed on to them. Some take this to mean they are blessed by Abraham no matter how they live. Some believers in the Messiah Yeshua have a similar attitude about Yeshua. They say they are made right (righteous) by the Messiah no matter what. It should be obvious that we are righteous by actually doing what is right. Do not be tricked by their false doctrine. Yochanan said in 1 John 3:7 NKJV, "Let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous." He is saying a person is righteous by actually doing what is right. In verse 8 he says, "He who sins is of the devil." The Bible says that those who are practicing sin are of the devil so watch out for their false doctrine.¹

Man-made doctrine and mysticism are a broken way of living. Wearing all black clothes is a man-made doctrine. The Polish aristocracy wore black many years ago, so some Jews just kept on wearing black. Made up doctrine is not a commandment of God. Some things are logical and may be good to do. Using good sense is a commandment of God, but do not succumb to being micromanaged by man-made commandments. I remember being offended by the lack of sensitivity of some Gentiles toward my Jewish man-made beliefs. That should not have bothered me. On the other hand, we are to hate sin. Amos 5:15 NKJV says, "Hate evil, love good." I shared this last week. Follow what God says, not what man says. Isaiah 29:13 NKJV says, "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me, and their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men." Many are just following what man says and not what God says.

Sin often brings with it evil, pain, sorrow, destruction and hurt. Doing things God's way brings good so we are to keep God's commandments. Deuteronomy 6:17-18 NKJV says, "You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is **right and good** in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you."

*Doing what is **good** is to keep God's commandments.*

Superstition, amulets, good luck charms, praying to dead people, kneeling before objects, consulting devil spirits, witchcraft along with other forms of mysticism is wrong. People who do these things are trusting in their artifacts or false powers instead of God's power. It is a form of sorcery; it is also idolatry to trust in anything like you would trust in God; it is heresy because they are following false doctrine. Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV says, "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such**

¹ Matthew 3:9 NKJV says "And do not think to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones." With the above Jewish understanding we would just think that the blessings of Abraham will also be given to others (including them). The Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew says that God is able to raise up Abraham from these stones. This makes more sense. God then would give Abraham the blessings he deserves, and these people would then be left out. Perhaps Yeshua was referring to His own resurrection and the blessing that was to come through Him. If they do not follow the Messiah, they would be left out. Also, of interest there is a triple Hebrew play on words in Matthew 3:9. For example, we see in the Hebrew manuscripts of Matthew 1:21, 'Yeshua will yoshia (Yeshua will save) His people from their sin.' The play on words is *Yeshua – yoshia*. Yeshua means salvation and yoshia means will save.

things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Instead, why not help the world be a better place and do what is right and good.

Torah Study

Behar means, "on the mountain." This portion begins with God telling Israel that He will bless them if they keep His commands and that He would be against them if they did not. We talk about this a lot because God encourages us to keep His commandments a lot. God knows all; God knows what is best for us because He is the creator; and He is over all. Much like a father that hates to see his children suffering for doing what is wrong, He can prod us to do what is right, just as it says God would prod Israel for their sin in this portion. It talks about this in the New Testament portion too. The basis for the New portion is the Old Testament portion. We can only have a proper understanding of the scriptures by understanding the teaching of the Old Testament portion of the Bible.

If we follow God, He can bless us above all that we ask or think because He gave us His commandments as a tremendous guide filled with understanding and wisdom. Deuteronomy 4:5-6 NKJV says, "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.'" Those that do not follow the Old Testament lose out on what God intended to give us. God can also bless us more than we imagine through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:20). We receive blessings by keeping God's commandments and also blessing through the Holy Spirit.

Also, in this portion, it says that God broke the yoke of the Egyptians over Israel. The rabbis understand the word "yoke" as sort of a technical term for either following the yoke of the Torah or following the yoke of the false gods and the ways of this world (for example, see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). In other words, Israel was set free from the idols and worldly ways of the Egyptians so they could live right and follow the yoke of God's instructions (the yoke of the Torah). Therefore, if we sin, we are under the yoke of sin. Shaul (Paul) says this another way. He says if we sin, we are slaves to sin (see Romans 6:20).

*Just as God freed Israel from the Egyptians so they
could flee sin and do what is right, we are to flee sin.*

The portion Behar begins by saying that every seven years the land was to rest and that every fiftieth year was a Yovel year (a Jubilee year) and that the land was to rest that year. They could eat what naturally grows; they were not to till the soil. They were not to take advantage of the rules regarding the Yovel year. God would provide for three years for Israel. The Yovel year would demonstrate they trusted in God's faithfulness. God promised they would eat their fill; see Leviticus 25:19. God says we should not desire the lusts of the flesh nor covet what others have (see Exodus 20:17 and Leviticus 18). Riches can be a trap to some (see Psalm 69:22). We are to instead, trust in God; He "will not leave you or forsake you" (see Joshua 1:5 NKJV). We have no other King, Ruler, Provider, or God. In Deuteronomy 4:35 NKJV it says that Yě-hō-váh (יהוה) "Himself is God; there is none other besides Him." Yě-hō-váh is God's real

name forever (see Exodus 3:15) as seen in 2,300 different manuscripts to date. Haggai 2:8 says that the gold and silver of this world belongs to Yě-hō-váh. We dishonor and disrespect Yě-hō-váh by avoiding using His name. You would disrespect a person by not using their real name. So, we need to use God's name, but with respect.

If a person had to sell their land, the person or a relative could redeem the land and they were to prorate its use when redeeming the land. At the year of Yovel year, the land should be returned except in a walled city where it must be redeemed within a year. The Levites will always be able to redeem their land. They were to take no interest from a poor person. They could have slaves from the nations, but Israelite slaves were to be set free in the Yovel year or they could be redeemed beforehand; they were not to be treated harshly. If they were redeemed it was to be prorated. The Israelites belonged to God. They were not to make any idols and they were to keep God's Shabbats.

Wouldn't it make sense that as God's people, we would also keep the days we are supposed to meet with Him?

In Behar it talks about redeeming the land in the Yovel year (year of Jubilee) and we will see Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) doing this in Jeremiah 32 as a sign that Israel will return to ha-aretz, the land of Israel (from captivity). In the Brit Chadashah we see Yeshua (Jesus) rising from the dead and it is a sign that we, the believers in Yeshua HaMeshiach, will rise from the dead. Those who remain faithful to keep God's commandments will be redeemed by God. The Yovel year is not only a shadow picture of Yeshua redeeming us, it is also a picture of the new heaven and earth that is to come where all will be set free and everything will be restored to what God originally intended for mankind. We are not to love this evil world; it is passing away (see 1 John 2:15-17). The portion ends by saying the Israelites belonged to God. Believers in Messiah also belong to God. Rabbi Shaul (Paul) says that we have been bought with a price; we belong to God through the Messiah.

The Haftarah for Behar is Jeremiah 32:6-27. Jeremiah tells Hanam'el that he intends to redeem a piece of property that God told Jeremiah to redeem. The deed was to be kept as a witness that land would again be bought in ha-aretz, namely Israel. Then Jeremiah gives praise to the all-powerful and merciful God. He is just and sees all, He did signs in Egypt and continues to show His power. The disaster prophesied about Jerusalem is nearly now fulfilled. Israel did not keep God's commandments; this is why Jerusalem is going to fall. When Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) redeemed the land, it was a sign that Israel would come back from captivity to possess their land. Yirmeyahu says that nothing is too hard for God.

Jeremiah 32:16-17 CJB says, "After giving the purchase contract to Barukh son of Neriya, I prayed to Adonai: "Adonai, God! You made heaven and earth by your great power and outstretched arm; nothing is too hard for you." Yeshua also said in Matthew 19:26 NKJV, "With God all things are possible." Keep praying and believing, have hope in the Messiah.

I have experienced some amazing healings in the past and have seen the power of God. This one time while I was in the jungle, I began to feel sick. I have seen what happens when some

people get sick in the jungle; it is very ugly. I was starting to feel bad this one time and I had someone pray for me, and in about 15 minutes I felt better. Wow was I relieved, praise God! It was a big deal. Another time, as our group was on our way to the jungle, a friend of mine blew out her knee and had to be carried off the plane. We prayed for her right there in the airport and she was healed instantly and got up and walked. The people standing there watching began to shout and applaud. That is God at work!

Bechukotai means, "in my statutes." This portion begins with God saying that He would bring the Israelites rain, that they would have bountiful harvests and live securely in the land, that others would flee from them, and that God would increase their numbers, that God would put His tabernacle among them and that He would walk among them if they would keep His commandments. This reminds Israel that they are God's treasured people (see Deuteronomy 7:6). God broke the yoke of the pagan religion of the Egyptians so Israel could live right and follow the yoke of the Torah.

*The Torah is not hard to keep, but extra misapplied
man-made laws can make it difficult.*

The Hebrew word mitzvah means command. "For this mitzvah which I am giving you today is not too hard for you;" Deuteronomy 30:11 CJB. Do not believe the lies some people tell you; it says the Old Testament portion is not hard to keep. When Yeshua says His Torah (yoke) is easy (Matthew 11:30), He is referring to Deuteronomy 30:11. Yoke is a technical term referring to the Torah. We can either be under the yoke of sin and therefore slaves to sin or under the yoke of Torah.

It says in this portion that if they do not follow God's commands (mitzvot), then they will get sick, their crops will not grow, and other nations will destroy them. God will bring down their pride. increase their calamities, and if they are against God, God will be against them. God will bring down the places of their pagan worship and throw their dead bodies on their idols. Their land will become desolate, and they will be dispersed to the nations if they do not follow His commands. The land will then be repaid its Shabbats (its Shabbatot).

During this Corona virus crisis, perhaps some of us have thought about how Christianity has not kept God's true Shabbat but created their own Shabbat (So perhaps the land was being repaid its Shabbatot. I generally don't make speculations. It was just a thought.) Those that created the virus were surely doing evil. It was Constantine that changed the true day of Shabbat to the day of the Sun god; he was the head of the Sun god cult, Mithras, and his false doctrine got passed down into Christianity and people blindly follow this false doctrine. We are not to incorporate any pagan doctrine into practice. Deuteronomy 12:31-32 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. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it."

I believe this makes keeping the pagan day of rest, Sunday, a sin. I have heard some pastors say that people keep moving the line of sin, so they allow more and more sin into people's lives and society. I believe we need to move the line back to where it belongs. Why not do that? God

is a good and loving God who has our best interests at heart. Why not begin making changes to our lives to align our life with truth?

*God is not pleased with people making Sunday
the day of rest on the day of the pagan Sun god.*

The portion continues, those who are left in the land will be filled with fear and they will be sorry for their sin. If Israel repents, God will remember His covenant with Ya'akov (Jacob). When they are in foreign lands God will not reject them. For their sake, God will not forget His covenant with their ancestors.

Monetary values are then given to people, animals, houses, and land for the purpose of vows that are made for the upkeep of the sanctuary. The Cohen is to decide the value of an unclean animal, the value of a house, or the value of a part of a field. When someone wishes to redeem something, they are to add one-fifth to its value. The Yovel year (Jubilee Year) is taken into account for valuation. The tithes belong to the Lord and if a man wants to redeem what he tithed he should add one-fifth to what it is worth. The book of Vayikra (Leviticus) ends with it saying that God gave these commands to Israel at Mt. Sinai.

The Haftarah for Bechukotai is Jeremiah 16:19-17:14. This Haftarah portion begins by saying that the Lord is Jeremiah's strength and help. Jeremiah prophesies that the nations will come to God, and they will realize that they believed lies. God will make known to them His power. Cursed are those who trust in man but blessed are those who trust in the Lord. Israel will be blessed and yield fruit. The Lord searches our heart. This portion echoes the Torah portion and shows us that the Creator God is over all, knows all, and also that the nations will come to realize that they believed lies. Blessings come from God; the Lord knows what is in the hearts of man.

Jeremiah 16:19 CJB says, "Our ancestors inherited nothing but lies."

Our society teaches us that we can only rely on man. They have made up an alternate reality without God. We also have inherited lies through theology. Jeremiah 17:5 NKJV, "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD;" God is God and mankind is not. What makes people think that their man-made theology is okay with God? They obviously do not respect God because if they did, they would drop their man-made lies and actually begin to do what God tells us to do.

**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.)**

We are not to sow in our field or work on our trees on a sabbatical year. Leviticus 25:4.

We are not to harvest what grows wild in the sabbatical year. Leviticus 25:5. It does not say we cannot eat what grows wild. Harvesting is working the field for storing or for selling. Since harvesting is picking to store or sell, it would be different than a day to day picking for what you need.

A Jubilee Year occurs every 50 years and begins with the sounding the shofar on Yom Kippur. The commands for a Sabbatical Year are the same as the Jubilee Year. Leviticus 25:8-11.

We are commanded not to wrong others when buying and selling. Leviticus 25:14.

We are not to wrong others in any way. That would include verbal and nonverbal behavior. Leviticus 25:17.

Land is not to be permanently owned in Israel. Leviticus 25:23.

Land is to be returned to the original owner in the Jubilee year. In a city land must be redeemed within a year. Leviticus 25:24, 29-30.

Levites have a perpetual right of redemption and the open land around their cities is not to be sold. Leviticus 25:32-34.

We are not to charge believers interest. Foreigners can be charged interest. Leviticus 25:37; 23:20-21.

Fellow believers who are working off debt are not to be given difficult work like other servants. Leviticus 25:39, 43, 53.

Fellow believers are not to be sold like other servants. Leviticus 25:42.

Unbelieving servants and their offspring can be passed on to owner's heirs. Leviticus 25:45-46.

No idol or stone figure that is bowed down to is to be put on your land. Leviticus 26:1

The valuation of a person is to be set at a prescribed price. Leviticus 27:2-4.

An animal that has been given for sacrifice cannot be swapped for another. If animals are swapped, they are both holy. Leviticus 27:10. This is to prevent the priests from becoming merchants.

An unclean animal's valuation is to be set by the priest. Leviticus 27:11-12.

If someone vows the valuation of a house, they are to add 1/5th to it to redeem it. Leviticus 27:14-15.

If someone vows a field, the price is set by its production. Leviticus 27:16.

They were not to change what was required for the sacrifices. For example, if a lamb was required, they could not substitute something else. Leviticus 27:26.

Anything vowed to the Lord belongs to Yĕhōvāh and is not to be sold or to threaten to destroy it. The penalty for doing this is death. Leviticus 27:28-29. This would also apply for when someone loses something they put up as collateral they are not allowed to sell or destroy it. There should be a penalty of some kind.

A tenth of newborn animals is to be given to Yĕhōvāh each year and they were not to judge about what they gave. Leviticus 27:32-33. Perhaps they had second thoughts that they gave too much. Some years they were to give to the Levites and the poor and other years they were to bring their offering to Jerusalem. The ancient Rabbis increased the tax by having people always bring their offerings to Jerusalem. God had them only give a little over 10 percent every year because they were to leave the corners of their fields for the poor and strangers and not to re-harvest their fields.

We have completed reading the book of Leviticus so we say,
 Hazak, hazak, ve-nit-hazek.
 Hazak, hazak, ve-nit-hazek.
 Hazak, hazak, ve-nit-hazek.

Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened.
 Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened.
 Be strong, be strong and may we be strengthened.

Making Adjustments to Life **(An accompanying teaching for the Torah portion)**

God is there; seek Him. He is blessing and a light to those who find Him.
 Psalms 119:105 NKJV says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." My friend took his motorcycle to a jungle town and could not remember which path led to the town, so he got off his bike and walked ahead by foot. As he was walking, he heard a crash and decided to check it out.

There was a panther (a very big cat) trapped in a pit that had been stalking him. Talk about being on the right path! God's ways are the best ways; God knows the best way to live, so follow Him. Make adjustments to life so you stay on God's path.

Watch out for ugly chatter. Is that how we want to live?

I often start my day by committing myself to do what is right and committing myself to being good and kind. Any time of day is a good time to do that. I found myself doing that later today as I was doing things. We often can get caught up in the moment; do not let things get to you;

be who you want to be and do not live like those who are trying to impose their false philosophy of life on us.

Enjoy life and fellowship with God. Find ways to enjoy your relationship with God; sing and have joy.

Confess to doing what is right. Resist being drawn into the ridiculous behaviors that are pressing on our good nature and desire to live right. Shaul (Paul) suggests singing some spiritual songs and have carefree joy in your heart. Ephesians 5:19-21 NKJV says, "Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God."

Think of some good things to say instead of all the blah blah blah we hear. Shaul tells us to think those good things in Philippians 4:8. It must be the nature of humanity to get off track. We can make ourselves miserable by focusing on the negative. Why do that to yourself?

Name some ways that you can use to readjust your focus (thinking)?

- * Stop just thinking about yourself.
- * When we are faced with tension, we should remember to drop our defensive and aggressive behavior.
- * We should purposely avoid worldly talk and ideas.
- * We should talk about the productive things we are doing.
- * We can get involved doing things of value.
- * We can validate (give value and support) others; think good things about them.
- * We should guard against the urge to think and say negative things about others (lashon harah; evil speaking). Evil speaking is wrong (see James 3:5-12).
- * We can validate what we do and make sure that includes using our abilities for the kingdom of God and our spiritual gifts.

What other ways can you think of?

Continue to focus on our spiritual lives. Seek to live in God's ways; seek His light; come out from the tunnel vision of darkness.

Have you even gone through a mountain, and it seems like the tunnel goes on and on? I remember being relieved getting out of a long tunnel the first time I went through it. That is what we need to do; be focused on getting out of the tunnel of darkness and staying in a place and focus of doing right and keeping God's commandments and being at peace. Isaiah 26:3-4 NKJV says, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever." Trust in God and be at peace; allow God to be your strength in life and how you live.

We can focus on worldly or evil thoughts or have good thoughts. God knows what you are thinking. Matthew 9:4 NKJV says, "But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'" Guard your life from evil thoughts and ways; be diligent and work at it.

Proverbs 4:23-27 NKJV says,

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.

Keep your heart; stop focusing on worldly rhetoric and speech; think about what you are doing; and establish your life in godly ways. Do not get distracted and do evil.

God wants to bless us and give us wisdom and understanding that is better than all we can imagine it says in Deuteronomy 4:5-6. God knows what is best for us. God is real and can also bring us supernatural blessings as we follow Him. We need to seek Yě-hō-váh so we will have godly direction in our lives and His supernatural blessings. Why live by man-made ideas when we have a good God who wants to help us? Enjoy your good and godly life and stay focused. Adjust how you think and actively work at keeping your life in line with God and His commands. Stay on God's path. Watch where you are going; do not do evil; do not turn away from God.

The Aaronic Blessing

ADONAI or LORD in all caps in our Bibles is the name for God which is pronounced Yě-hō-váh. Yě-hō-váh is used over 6,000 times in the Old Testament portion. Since God's name is used that many times, it is evident that we should be using His real name.

According to Exodus 3:15, Yě-hō-váh is God's true name forever. Of course, we should use His name with respect. Yě-hō-váh is an acronym formed from the Hebrew verb hayah. Yě-hō-váh means, He existed, He exists, and He will exist. I want to honor God's name.

The ancient rabbis say that Yě-hō-váh (יהוה) is God's name. 2,363 different manuscripts of the Bible point God's name as Yě-hō-váh, once as Yě-hō-věh, never as Yahweh. The church Fathers said God's name is Yě-hō-váh. Yeshua said in Matthew 23:39 NKJV, "You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'" Yeshua is quoting Psalm 118:26; the word "LORD" in that verse in Psalms is Yě-hō-váh (יהוה). Numbers 6:27 says we are to put God's name on His people.

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

יְבָרֶכֶּךָ יְהוָה, וְיִשְׁמְרֶךָ
יְאָר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיַחַנֶּנֶךָ
יִשָּׂא יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ, וְיִשְׁלַם 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.