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The Open Bible
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A Note to the Reader:

This book uses many Hebrew terms in an effort to return to the truest meaning of the Bible. If you have questions about any words or usage please email the author at emetministries@gmail.com or visit www.emetministries.com

The following are Hebrew terms used in the place of their English translations:

- Elohim = God
- YHWH = The LORD
- Y'shua = Jesus
- Moshiach = Messiah
- Messiah = Christ
- Torah = Five Books of Moses or the entire Bible

These terms are not used to offend but to teach and use the most accurate representation of the Biblical text. For more on the importance of the Hebrew language and the Sacred Name of YHWH Y'shua please visit www.emetministries.com.

The Haftarah and New Testament texts in this book are taken from a guide provided by the Foundation for Leadership and Messianic Education. Other communities could possibly read more, less, or a different section of the Prophets or New Testament altogether. Please consult with your local congregation.

For a weekly reading guide visit www.flamefoundation.org.

CHAZAK, CHAZAK, v'NIT'CHAZEK.
Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened!



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Introduction

The Open Bible Series is a special book that features comments and teachings on the weekly Torah portions. What is a "torah portion?" Why is such a conversation worth reading?

Every Saturday, or "Shabbat" in Hebrew, millions of people around the world participate in a one year reading cycle of the Bible. This is part of a long-standing tradition of weekly read aloud and studying specific chapters of the Bible. People everywhere examine the same portion of Scripture and apply it to their lives. This tradition comes to us from Judaism and was kept by the Savior and his first followers. Call it the original water-cooler conversation. Consider this to be a pattern worth following. This isn't a vain tradition of man that makes void the word BUT an inspired tradition that was handed down from Moses and supported by Paul. Who are we to argue with them?

"What special privilege, then, has a Jew? The privilege is great from every point of view. First of all, because the Jews were entrusted with the word of YHWH," Romans 3:1-2. Clearly the Jewish tradition of reading the Bible through the year is a good one to follow. Is there more proof that we should be reading the Word aloud and discussing it?

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses spoke the commandments aloud as an example. He told the new nation of redeemed slaves to read the Word aloud. Later Ezra the Scribe instituted reading the Scriptures aloud on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturday afternoons as seen in Nehemiah 8:1 and in historical Jewish writings.

The Newer Testament continues this theme when it teaches that "faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word." Without the Bible being read aloud and discussed it is difficult for faith to truly set in. "Give attendance to the reading of Torah, to exhortation, to teaching," says First Timothy 4:13. Here we are commanded to gather with others to HEAR the Torah read. This doesn't just mean to get your family together and preach to them. Instead, if you have a group nearby, then you are to give attendance to the Torah reading and discussion. "Torah" is the Hebrew word for teaching and instruction. Torah is often mistranslated "law" in most English Bibles. The Torah is YHWH's instructions for mankind found in Genesis to Revelation. To the Jews, the Torah is specifically the first five books of the Bible.

The Torah has been divided into 54 readings that correspond to the calendar year. These portions contain various nuggets of truth that deal with every issue in life. The sections are usually named after the first important Hebrew word or phrase used in that section. For example, the section on the evil king Balak and the evil prophet Bilaam is titled "Balak." And the first portion in the Torah is called "B'reisheet" after the first Hebrew word found in the Bible, which means "beginning."

While most new believers start their Bible reading with the Gospels, it is the first five books that set a foundation for the rest of the word. You can't pick up a Stephen King novel and turn to the middle to begin reading. And you certainly shouldn't do that with the Bible. Start your reading cycle this week with the Torah and this study guide.

This book has been designed to aide your study and help you better apply the Bible to your life. You will read a short review of the Torah portion in easy to understand terms. This summary has been adapted from a Jewish website. There are also many study questions to consider and discuss which have been compiled from various sources. Each week you will also find a lesson on how to apply what you have learned from to Torah and a focus on the Messiah, or "Moshiach" in Hebrew.

One of the best ways to learn is to ask and answer questions. We see this example through Messiah Y'shua who often answered a question with a question in the Gospels. Each chapter of this book features many questions for discussion on the Torah portion. You can use these thoughts for personal study to dig deeper into the Bible or for discussion with other people.

Our Messiah certainly set an example for all believers when he attended the synagogue for Torah reading on many occasions. (Surprisingly he never went to church to hear a sermon!) "And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, according to his practice, He went into the synagogue on Shabbat, and stood up to read," Luke 4:16. The Savior never stopped the Torah reading in the synagogue to do start a new practice. If he wanted to preach a sermon or rebuke the Jewish tradition of Torah reading he could have done that. But he didn't. He participated in the Torah reading and thus put His seal of approval on this tradition.

To see Y'shua in the Torah, this book features a weekly discussion of Y'shua. Each week you will read of how the Torah speaks of Messiah Y'shua's life and sacrifice.

You will get the most out of your Torah study by reading the entire portion before the weekly time set aside. Read a little each day or study a little by little. Use this book to help you go deeper into the depths of YHWH's word.

The reading for the Torah and prophets generally correspond to the same subject. For example, this week the Torah portion begins with a few chapters from Genesis, then 3 chapters from Isaiah and a section out of the Newer Testament. The section from the Prophets and the New Testament can often vary from congregation to congregation. The text provided in this book is merely a guide, so it may be best to consult your local congregation to see which specific reading has been set.

Use this book to make this Saturday one to remember. Highlight sections, underline comments, and take notes to learn better. Begin reading and studying the weekly Torah portion. Gather your family together, discuss it at your worship center, or study by yourself. This is a great habit to start and one that will make your spiritual life better. "Study to show yourself approved, a workman that needs not to be ashamed who rightly divides the word of truth," 2 Timothy 2:5.

Parasha B'reisheet

- Genesis 1:1-6:8,
- Isaiah 42:5-43:10,
- Revelation 22:6-21

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The first Torah portion begins with the six days of creation and the giving of the Sabbath day for rest. YHWH forms a woman from Adam and places the first couple in the Garden of Eden. The serpent tempts them to eat from the forbidden tree, which results sin entering the world. Man is banished from the presence of YHWH and receives curses for disobedience. Eve gives birth to Cain and Abel who eventually have the first sibling rivalry. Cain murders Abel as wickedness increase in the earth. Another son is born to Adam, named Seth. From his lineage comes a righteous man named Noach.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The Messiah / Moshiach appears vividly in the very first words of the entire Bible. John 1:1-18 shows that the Word was with YHWH in the beginning and was a part of creation. The first sentence in the Torah portion reads in Hebrew, “B'reisheet bara elohim ALEPH-TAV ha shamayim va-et ha Eretz” – in the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth. The two lettered “aleph-tav” is a Hebrew pointer that directs attention to the subject of a sentence. This is also a direct reference to the Messiah – the Aleph and the Tav – the first and the last (Revelation 1:8.) The aleph-tav appears throughout the Hebrew scrolls at mysterious intervals. For example, the aleph-tav is found in Zechariah 12:10, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me ALEPH-TAV whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” These letters are no doubt prophecies of the Word made flesh.

The obvious implication to Messiah in Genesis 3:15 shows that Y'shua will eventually defeat the serpent and his ways. The first prophecy of Y'shua could actually be the creation of Adam, as Y'shua is the second Adam. And even Abel is a picture of the Messiah, who would give the best sacrifice of all and eventually be murdered. Finally, it is Noach alone that is considered righteous in his

generation. The ark builder's right standing points directly to Y'shua, the only righteous person to ever live.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

There are so many deep and wonderful events in this week's Torah portion that it is difficult picking just one subject to discuss. The creation, giving of the Sabbath, and the fall of mankind, hold within them treasures of understanding and ideas for application. The account of Cain and Abel as well has much for us today.

Cain presented an offering of some produce from the land to YHWH. Abel as well gave an offering. But, Abel's sacrifice was from the best of His flock. Cain's offering was rejected. Abel's offering was received. Cain became furious at the situation and took out his anger upon his brother. The Scriptures recount the story of the first murder in Genesis 4:1-8. These brothers provide for us two anti-types of attitudes and actions that we face today. We make a choice each day and with each breath to either be like Cain or to be like Abel. No one forced either to give an offering or to give their best. The sacrifice was from their heart and therefore showed the essence of their heart. Cain's heart was full of wickedness and jealousy. Abel's heart was one of love towards YHWH.

The book of James says that "where there is envy and strife, there is confusion and every evil work." We may not physically murder our brothers when we are upset with them. However, the words that we use against other people and the actions we take are truly precursors to murder. They may even be types of murder as slander or gossip murders another person's reputation. Jealousy or hatred murders another person's potential for relationship. 1 John 3:15 clarifies this, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."

Every interaction with another human being is in essence a choice to respond like Cain or like Abel. Every time we come to YHWH in worship we too must make a choice to respond like Cain or like Abel. Will we bring our best and present our lives to YHWH totally and fully? Or will we half-heartedly obey the commandments and hope grace covers all of our sins? The account of Cain and Abel reminds us of the daily decision to "uvacharta bachayim," which is Hebrew for "choose life."

We must also deal with the issue of hate. As believers we should despise or hate no one. There are to be no grudges in our hearts.

Hatred usually comes after hurt or disappointment. When hatred begins to take hold we must remember the words of Matthew 5:44, “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” Decide today to be like Cain or Abel. Don’t murder your brother any longer.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. This portion is named “B’reisheet.” What does this Hebrew word mean?
2. Read Isaiah 42:5-43:10. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Revelation 22:6-21. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. What basic concepts of our faith are established in this week’s Torah portion? Discuss: the start of our day, moon’s place in determining the feast days, the Sabbath, the Hebrew language of creation.
6. Since all of creation was considered “good” and “blessed” by YHWH then why do people “bless” their food?
7. What was really created on day one? Was this the sun or some star or something greater?
8. What was the first thing man experienced after being created? Why was the Sabbath important for Adam?
9. Adam was created from dust. The serpent is cursed to eat dust all the days of his life. How does the serpent eat dust/man today?
10. The woman was created from man to be a suitable helper and mate. His rib was taken to produce the mankind. The Scriptures state that the two should become one flesh. What does this mean? How does the re-unification of a man and woman symbolize the body of Messiah?
11. Read Genesis 3:4. Was the serpent correct?
12. Why did Adam and Eve hide from YHWH?
13. Adam was told to guard and keep the garden. What was Adam to guard the garden from? Did he succeed?
14. There are two types of sin – omission and commission. Adam didn’t obey YHWH to guard the garden and therefore sinned. Eve didn’t listen to the voice of YHWH and committed a violation against YHWH. Mankind has continued in this same pattern with men not obeying and women transgressing. Explain the difference between these types of sin and the effect upon mankind.

15. Genesis 3:21 states that YHWH gave animal skins to Adam and Eve. Where did this animal skin come from? Was this the first sacrifice of animals?
16. Who was Abel's father? How do you know this for sure?
17. Cain was the firstborn son. Shouldn't Cain have been his brother's keeper?
18. Genesis 5:3 states that Seth was made in Adam's likeness. What about Cain and Abel? Whose image were they created in? Why is this distinction made about Seth?
19. Enoch walked with YHWH and was no more. What happened to Enoch?
20. When Noah was born he was given a special name. What does 5:29 teach about Noah's name? How is this so?
21. In the sixth chapter of Genesis we see wickedness increasing upon the earth. The Bible also speaks of giants who walked the earth during these times. Who were these giants? What happened to them? Why is this discussion important?
22. "Noah found grace in the eyes of YHWH" according to Genesis 6:8. What does this word "grace" mean in context? Is "grace" a New Testament idea? Why is there such a misunderstanding of the concept of grace within many religious circles?
23. The Torah portion ends with the naming and birth of Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. What occurs to these sons in the future? From whose lineage does the Messiah come?

Parasha Noach

- Genesis 6:9-11:32
- Isaiah 54:1-55:5
- Matthew 24:36-46

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The world is totally consumed with violence and corruption. So, YHWH instructs Noah, the only righteous man, to build a large wooden ark, called a “teivah” in Hebrew. The ark is to be coated within and without with pitch. A great deluge, says YHWH, will wipe out all life from the face of the earth; but the ark will float upon the water, sheltering Noah and his family, and each animal species.

Rain falls for 40 days and nights, and the waters churn for 150 days more before calming and beginning to recede. The ark settles on Mount Ararat, and from its window Noah dispatches a raven, and then a series of doves, "to see if the waters were abated from the face of the earth." When the ground dries completely -- exactly one solar year (365 days) after the onset of the Flood -- YHWH commands Noah to exit the teivah and repopulate the earth.

Noah builds an altar and offers sacrifices to YHWH. The Almighty swears never again to destroy all of mankind through water because of their deeds, and sets the rainbow as a testimony of His new covenant with man. YHWH also commands Noah regarding the sacredness of life: murder is deemed a capital offense, and while man is permitted to eat the meat of animals, he is forbidden to eat flesh or blood taken from a living animal.

Noah plants a vineyard and becomes drunk on its produce. Two of Noah's sons, Shem and Japheth are blessed for covering up their father's nakedness, while his third son, Ham, is cursed for taking advantage of his debasement.

The descendents of Noah remain a single people, with a single language and culture, for ten generations. Then a group of Noah's descendents defied their Creator by building a great tower to symbolize their own invincibility; YHWH confuses their language so that "one does not comprehend the tongue of the other," causing them to abandon their project and disperse across the face of the earth, splitting into seventy nations and languages.

This Torah portion concludes with a chronology of the ten generations from Noah to Abram (later Abraham), and the latter's journey from his birthplace of Ur Casdim to Charan, on the way to the Land of Canaan.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Noah is a shadow of Messiah. We read in this week's portion that Noah was "righteous in his generation." This doesn't mean that he was perfect but that his heart was towards the Almighty. It is said in Genesis 7:5 that "Noah did all that YHWH commanded him." Noah understood the importance of obedience. He was given specific measurements to follow and he obeyed in all ways. This is similar to Y'shua the Messiah who came in the Father's image. Y'shua said, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does," John 5:19. What separates Noah and Y'shua is that though Noah's actions were admirable, he still wasn't perfect. The drunkenness of Noah and the events that ensued show a distinct difference between the patriarchs of our faith and Messiah.

Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and others were people of faith and we can learn from their lives. But, our true example should not be these sinful humans. Only the Messiah Y'shua is to be our role model and source of inspiration. We should always look for Y'shua in the lives of the Patriarchs. The lives of people like Noah simply point to the greatness of Y'shua.

Finally, Noah saved the world through his boat made of wood. The ark would be covered inside and out with pitch. The Hebrew word for "pitch" is "kaphar." This Hebrew term is usually translated "atonement" and "ransom" in the rest of the Old Testament. This coating is a picture of the atoning power of Messiah's blood, which atones for our sins. The one door on the side of the ark is a picture of the pierced side of Y'shua from which water and blood flowed. YHWH used wood to save the world with Noah. The Messiah used wood to save the world through Y'shua as he died upon a wooden beam or tree. May we never forget what our Master Y'shua did when he paid the death penalty for sin as he died upon the wooden execution beam. "YHWH showed His great love for us like this: while we were still sinners, Messiah died for us," Romans 5:8.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

When the people of the earth decided to build a tower to the heavens, they were joined together in perfect unity. They wanted to make a name for themselves. This is similar to how companies purchase the rights to name a high rise building

in major cities (like the Sears Tower in Chicago.) The Almighty makes an alarming confession regarding the people and their plan. In Genesis 11:6-7, "YHWH said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." Here, the Creator recognizes the power of unity.

They had unity in vision. The people were not building several cities or several towers. No, they all agreed to work together for the one purpose. We read of no one who wanted to have all the glory or build their own tower in their own name.

They had unity in language. The people all spoke in the same tongue and in a way that each other understood. This allowed people from various lands to aide in the building. We read of no one who spoke against this project in an effort to stop the progress.

They had unity in effort. The people acted upon their desires and began building a structure that could reach into the heavens. We read of no lazy people who stopped the work.

Much can be learned from such an example as the builders provided. First, if we desire to reach the heavens then we must choose to have unity. We must choose to look past the faults, issues, and errors of others for the greater good. We must accept the Mater's vision for His people which He expressed in Matthew 28. This vision hasn't changed! Y'shua came to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. If we are to be about our Father's business then we must have a heart for the lost and a vision for restoration. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in My Bane, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age," Matthew 28:18-20.

Our language must be the same as well if we will walk with unity with other believers. Our tongue must speak the dialect of the Spirit. Our words must be the Father's words, spoken in love at all times. 1 Peter 4:11, "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of YHWH." Too many times, our words harm other believers as we speak out of prejudice or pain. "The heart of the righteous weighs its answers but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil," Proverbs 15:28. For unity to prevail we must have a common language of hope and love. Remember that we "overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony," Revelation 12:11.

Finally, our efforts must be unified towards one common goal. Our goal should not be to build a ministry, gain knowledge, or to even get people saved. Our goal must be to walk in the authority that Y'shua has given believers and allow the Holy Spirit to draw people towards our witness. Then, as people are attracted to our life and ask questions about our Torah observance we can direct total attention to Y'shua. When we are asked about keeping the feast days, clean foods, or various commands we should always point people to the Messiah and make salvation the main issue. Torah observance doesn't do anyone any good unless they have a personal relationship with Y'shua and have accepted Him as their Master. Our common goal must be to lift up Y'shua that He would draw all men unto Himself. The tower builders had one goal and mind and worked towards accomplishing this. Our goal should be to present Y'shua to the world through our lives, attitudes, and actions.

When we do all of this, nothing shall be impossible for us. We can even ascend into the very heavens. Finally, think about a simple molecule of water. A small droplet of H₂O doesn't have much weight. One minutely small trickle of rain can't do much damage. But, a flood comes as a rain molecules come together in large mass. This is the power of unity. Together we have power to change the world.

Have you helped build unity in your assembly? Have you ever hurt the unity within a family or a group of believers? A believer must choose to walk in unity with others. This choice for unity must superseded minimal differences in opinion, doctrine, and personality. Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity. Indeed, "YHWH says, "I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the plumb line; hail will sweep away your refuge, the lie, and water will overflow your hiding place," Isaiah 28:17.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The name of this Torah portion in Hebrew is "Noach." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 54:1-55:5. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Matthew 24:36-46. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. From whose lineage is Noach from?
5. Noah was "righteous in his generation." This could mean that each generation has a level of sanctification. If Noah lived today, would he be

- considered righteous? If you lived during Noah's time, would you be considered righteous in his generation?
6. Did Noah take two of every animal into the ark?
 7. Read Genesis 7:2. Why is it taught that all animals came two by two when the Scriptures insist different?
 8. What purpose would there be in taking more clean animals than unclean animals on to the ark?
 9. Why would Noah be told to create a window into the ark?
 10. What type of animals did Noah sacrifice to YHWH?
 11. How long did the rain waters pour down from heaven? Why is this number symbolic?
 12. In the story of Noah and the ark, what type of people was destroyed and who was left behind?
 13. Noah and his family were saved from destruction. Did Noah's righteousness redeem his family?
 14. Where did the ark rest after the flood? Where is this mountain today?
 15. In Genesis 1:28 Adam and Eve are told to "be fruitful and multiply." This same phrase is spoken to Noah after the flood. How is Noah like Adam? Does this precept apply today? How?
 16. What does it mean that Noah's nakedness was uncovered?
 17. Where did the descendants of Shem camp after the flood?
 18. What language did the entire world speak before the Tower of Babel? (Hint, this is the language of creation that YHWH spoke to Adam and Adam taught his children.)
 19. What group of people left the east to make a name for themselves?
 20. Where the descendants of Shem part of the rebellion that built the tower of Babel?
 21. What language did the descendants of Shem speak after the fall of the tower?
 22. Who was Nimrod? What does it mean to be a "mighty hunter before YHWH?"
 23. Was Nimrod a firstborn son?
 24. Is there a connection between the tower of Babel and Babylon?
 25. What does the rainbow symbolize in the Torah portion? What does the rainbow symbolize today?
 26. The Biblical covenant of Noah is symbolized by the rainbow to never again destroy the world by water. What does this covenant mean today?
 27. What does this Torah portion state about Abram?

28. There are seven specific commands given in the creation and flood account that relate to man. These are called the Noachide laws and some sects of Judaism teach that a Gentile can become righteous if he obeys these precepts. Is this true? Review and discuss these laws in relation to holy living, salvation, and the resurrection of Messiah. The laws are as follows: Murder is forbidden. Theft is forbidden. Incestuous and adulterous relations are forbidden. Eating the flesh or blood of a living animal is forbidden. Idolatry is forbidden. Cursing the name of YHWH is forbidden (Blasphemy). Mankind is commanded to establish courts of justice.
29. What did you learn from this Torah portion that you didn't know before?
30. How can you apply this Torah portion to your life this week?

Parasha Lech Lecha

- Genesis 12:1-17:27
- Isaiah 40:27-41:16
- Romans 4:1-25

The Torah Portion at a Glance

YHWH calls Abram, commanding him to "go from your land, from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you." There, YHWH says, he will be made into a great nation. Abram and his wife Sarai, accompanied by his nephew Lot, journey to the Land of Canaan, where Abram builds an altar and continues to spread the message of One Elohim.

A famine forces the first Hebrew or "Ivrim" to depart for Egypt, where beautiful Sarai is taken to Pharaoh's palace; Abram escapes death because they present themselves as brother and sister. A plague prevents the Egyptian king from touching her and convinces him to return her to Abram and compensate the brother-revealed-as-husband with gold, silver and cattle.

Back in the Land of Canaan, Lot separates from Abram and settles in the evil city of Sodom, where he falls captive when the mighty armies conquer the five cities of the Sodom Valley. Abram sets out with a small band to rescue his nephew, defeats the four kings, and is blessed by Malki-Zedek the king of Salem (Jerusalem).

YHWH seals the, Covenant between the parts with Abram, in which the exile and persecution of the people of Israel is foretold and the Holy Land is bequeathed to them as their eternal heritage

Still childless ten years after their arrival in the Land, Sarai tells Abram to marry her maidservant. Hagar conceives, becomes insolent toward her mistress, and then flees when Sarai treats her harshly; an angel convinces her to return and tells her that her son will father a populous nation. Ishmael is born in Abram's 86th year.

Years later, YHWH changes Abram's name to Avraham ("father of multitudes") and Sarai's to Sarah ("princess"), and promises that a son will be born to them; from this child, whom they should call Yitzhak / Isaac ("will laugh"), will stem the

great nation with which Elohim will establish His special bond. Abraham is commanded to circumcise himself and his descendents as a "sign of the covenant between Me and you."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The idea of a pre-incarnate Messiah posits that Y'shua appeared in flesh and bones before the virgin birth in Bethlehem. (Think of the fourth man in the fiery furnace of the book of Daniel who "looked like the son of YHWH.") This idea verifies that Messiah is the eternal Savior who was, and is and is to come.

This Torah portion, shows how the Moshiach mysteriously appears to Abraham, not once but several times. First the Bible speaks of an unknown King of Salem named Malki-Zedek that visits with Abraham. This king is also a priest. "And Melchizedek the king of Salem brought forth bread and wine. And he was the priest of the most high Elohim. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of El Elyon, possessor of Heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high Elohim, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he gave him tithes of all," Genesis 14:18-20.

Who would deserve Abraham's tithe more than holy and righteous Elohim, Himself? Indeed, Melchizedek could very well be Y'shua before the incarnation. (Some suggest Melchizedek was Shem or the angel Michael or some other figure.) The English name Melchizedek is a transliteration of two Hebrew words, "melek" and "tzedek." The Hebrew term "melek" means "king" and the word "tzedek" is translated "righteous." Who is the king of righteousness but Y'shua Ha Moshiach, Y'shua the Messiah?

Melchizedek is mentioned in the book of Psalms, the book of Hebrews and even in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Melchizedek, like Messiah, is a priest forever according to Hebrews 7:3. Also see Hebrews 7:17 and 5:6. It is also interesting that Melchizedek was without descent. The Bible gives no records of his ancestors or descendants. "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of YHWH he remains a priest forever," Hebrews 7:3. Of Y'shua it says that He was of ancient times. "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times," Micah 5:2.

In 1947, scrolls from the Jewish Essenes were discovered which affirmed that they believed Melchizedek would return as the Messiah. Melchizedek was/is a righteous priest in whose lineage Y'shua ministered as seen in Psalm 110:1-4.

Another clear reference to Y'shua is made in Genesis 15:1, "after this, the word of YHWH appeared to Abram in a vision: 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.'" A casual reading of this verse would miss the literal Hebrew word picture. "The word of YHWH" doesn't normally appear to someone! Words are usually heard and not seen! Yet, to Abraham the word of YHWH appeared! "The word became flesh and dwelt among us," John 1:14. The Hebrew and Aramaic rendering of this passage in Genesis makes such an appearance of Y'shua even more believable.

During the times of Y'shua the Old Testament was translated into the Hebrew dialect Aramaic so most of the Jewish population could read the text. These translations are called "targums." In the Aramaic Targum, the term for "word" is "memra." The term "memra" is found throughout the Old Testament as a character in the Bible. Before the book of John was written, the Jewish people were familiar with the Almighty being the "memra" or "word." The "memra" appeared to Abraham in a vision. After the "memra" appeared to Abraham, the Scriptures declare that "Abraham believed the WORD of YHWH." The Aramaic Targum reads, "And Abraham trusted in the Memra of YHWH, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Y'shua is the "memra" – the Word made flesh. Y'shua is the priest, the King of Righteousness.

Finally, consider these words from Y'shua in John 8:54-59, "Y'shua answered, If I honor myself, my honor is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your Elohim: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Y'shua said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am. Then they took up stones to cast at him: but Y'shua hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

Y'shua is in this Torah portion. He is in the Old Testament. Y'shua can be seen in indeed be seen in every verse if we will simply open our eyes to His magnificence.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

“If you belong to Christ/Messiah you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise,” Galatians 3:29. This verse from the book of Galatians shows us that all who are born again are of the very seed of Abraham. The word “seed” in this verse is “sperma.” Believers are physically descended from the sperm of Abraham and part of the commonwealth of Israel. This is the seed of the righteous that has inherited the covenants of blessing made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

As the chosen people, YHWH has promised to give us the Land of Israel. YHWH has promised to make us innumerable. YHWH has promised to bless those that bless us and curse those that curse us. YHWH has promised and YHWH keeps His promises.

As descendants of Abraham; as bondservants of Messiah we have a duty to make a difference in our world. Everywhere Abraham went; his life shared the message that the Almighty blesses those that seek Him in faith. Abraham’s life was an example of how a person lives through faith in YHWH. He wasn’t perfect, but he prevailed through the tests and trials he faced. It was in Ur of Chaldeas, or Babylon, that Abraham was living when he heard the still small voice of YHWH calling him out. Our father left the comfort zone of his father’s home without any true knowledge of where he was going or what would come of his journey. He survived famine, made peace with those at odds with him, and even obeyed when he was told to cut the skin of his own body.

Y’shua said in John 8:39 that “if you are the children of Abraham then you should do the things Abraham did.” This call was to the religious crowds who kept the minutia of Torah and yet lacked true faith in YHWH. It is our trust; our belief; our faith in YHWH that moves mountains and sets us apart from others who simply go through the religious motions. “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the Promised Land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is YHWH,” Hebrews 11:8-10.

The pattern in the patriarch’s life is very similar to how YHWH works today. First, Abraham heard the call of YHWH while in the land of sin and the bondage

of Babylon. Then Abraham made a confession of faith and began his journey towards the Promised Land. When he arrived in Canaan he built an altar to YHWH and YHWH blessed him saying, “to your offspring I will give this land.” As his sojourn continued the blessing grew. First he was promised the Land and a blessing. Then he was promised multiplicity and the “length and breadth” of the ground that he walked. As Abraham walked faithfully with YHWH he would continually build altars and would continually receive additional blessings. When Abraham’s faith was exhibited through continual obedience he continued to experience the presence of YHWH. The faith of Abraham was powerful to sustain him through the trials of his life. Do you have such trust? Would you leave your home, job, and comforts to travel to a place you have never seen? Abraham did and in the end was blessed for his faithful obedience.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name of this portion is “Lech Lecha.” What does this mean?
2. Read Isaiah 40:27-41:16. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 4:1-25
4. What did you learn from studying these passages?
5. From what land was Abram called from? Where is this located today? Why is this significant?
6. Is the blessing and curses given to Abram still applicable today?
7. How old was Abram when he left the land of his fathers? Why do people give or retire when they reach 60 or 70? Should a person’s ministry end when they reach a certain age?
8. What does it mean that the “word of YHWH appeared to Abram?” Who or what was this referencing?
9. The famine caused Abram to journey to Egypt. How is this similar to Joseph’s family that would later go to Egypt and endure a famine?
10. Did Abram sin when he told Sarai to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister? Did Sarai sin by obeying Abram?
11. When Abram left Egypt did he leave empty handed or did he take with him the best of Egypt? How was this similar to Exodus 12:36?
12. Why did Lot and Abram part ways? Is such a break sometimes necessary for people today?
13. Lot chose a land that was well watered like Sodom and Egypt. What is significant about how these areas watered their land? Did these lands have to depend upon the early and the later rains?

14. Abram is promised descendants as numerous as the stars and the sand. His seed will be so great that it can not be counted. Is this just the Jewish people? Why or why not?
15. What can be learned from the battles of war between the kings in Genesis 14?
16. Malki-Zedek appears to Abram with bread and wine. Who is/was Malki-Zedek?
17. What does the bread and wine symbolize? How has this tradition been repeated by mainstream Judaism?
18. Before the Law was given from Mt Sinai we read of Abraham tithing to Malki-Zedek. Should believers follow this example and give a 10% tithe to the local priest or teacher?
19. In Genesis 15 YHWH makes it clear that Isaac is the heir of Abram. What about Elizer's son? What about Ishmael?
20. Genesis 15:3 says that Abram believed the word of YHWH and it was accounted to him as righteousness." Was it solely belief that blessed Abram or did works play a part? What does "righteous" mean?
21. The cutting of the sacrifices in Genesis 15 is a puzzling event. Reread this section and then discuss the sacrifice, horror of Abram, prophecy of exile, return from Egypt, judgment of plagues, and death of Abram.
22. A "smoking furnace and burning lap" passed between the sacrifices in Genesis 15. Is this the same cloud by day and fire by night that led the Israelites in the wilderness?
23. Abram had sexual relations with a woman that was not his wife in Genesis 16. Was this sin? Did it end in a blessing or a curse?
24. "The angel of YHWH" met Hagar to encourage her. Who is this messenger? Is there a difference between "AN angel of YHWH" and "THE angel of YHWH?"
25. In Genesis 16 the angel of YHWH prophesies about the descendants of Ishmael. Who are these people today?
26. Ishmael's seed is prophesied to be a "wild man whose hand is against everyman." How is this true today?
27. YHWH commanded Abram to "walk before me and be perfect" in Genesis 17. Is such a walk possible? How does this walk of holiness connect to Genesis 15:3?
28. Abram's name is changed to "Abraham." Sari's name is changed to "Sarah." What do these changes mean? Why would YHWH make such changes?

29. The command of circumcision or “brit milah” is given in this week’s Torah portion. Is brit milah necessary for salvation today? Was brit milah ever required for salvation?
30. What does brit milah symbolize? Do you think the procedure of circumcision is the same today as it was thousands of years ago?
31. What does it mean that the uncircumcised person “will be cut off” from among the people?
32. Genesis 17 shows an amazing confession about Ishmael. Did Abram want Ishmael to be the son of promise?

Parasha Vayeira

- Genesis 18:1-22:24
- 2 Kings 4:1-37
- Luke 1:26-38, 24:36-53

The Torah Portion at a Glance

“Vayeira YHWH” are the first two words found in this week’s Torah parasha. The phrase simply means “YHWH appeared.” In this portion, YHWH reveals Himself to Abraham three days after his circumcision at age 99; but Abraham rushes off to prepare a meal for three visitors who appear in the desert heat. One of the three announces that in exactly one year, the barren Sarah will give birth to a son. Sarah laughs.

Abraham (or “Avraham” in Hebrew) pleads with YHWH to spare the wicked city of Sodom. Two of the three messengers arrive in the doomed city, where Abraham's nephew, Lot, extends his hospitality to them and protects them from the evil intentions of a Sodomite mob. The two guests reveal that they have come to overturn the place, and to save Lot and his family. Lot's wife turns into a salt pillar when she disobeys the command to not look back at the burning city as they flee.

While taking shelter in a cave, Lot's two daughters get their father drunk, lie with him, and become pregnant. The two sons born from this incident father the nations of Moab and Amon.

Avraham moves to Gerar, where the Philistine king Avi Melech takes Sarah -- who is presented as Avraham's sister -- to his palace. In a dream, YHWH warns Avimelech that he will die unless he returns the woman to her husband. Avraham explains that he feared he would be killed over Sarah.

YHWH remembers His promise to Sarah and gives her and Avraham a son, who is named Isaac (“Yitzchak” in Hebrew, meaning “will laugh”). Isaac is circumcised at the age of eight days; Avraham is 100 years old, and Sarah 90, at their child's birth.

Hagar and Ishmael are banished from Avraham's home and wander in the desert; Elohim hears the cry of the dying lad and saves his life by showing his mother a

well. Avimelech makes a treaty with Avraham at Be'er Sheva, where Abraham gives him seven sheep as a sign of their truce.

YHWH tests Abraham's devotion by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem. Isaac is bound and placed on the altar, and Abraham raises the knife to slaughter his son. A voice from heaven calls to stop him; a ram, caught in the undergrowth by its horns, is offered in Isaac's place. Abraham receives the news of the birth of a daughter, Rebecca, to his nephew Bethuel.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

It is possible for two people to look at the exact same object and see something totally different. Some glance at a rose and view the thorns, while others can look at the same flower and focus on the color of the petals. Judaism, as a whole, looks at the offering of Isaac at Mount Moriah as an extreme test of Avraham's faith. The Encyclopedia Judaica says that the "Akeidah has become in Jewish thought the supreme example of self-sacrifice in obedience to the Almighty's will." For centuries believers in the Old Testament have spoken this Biblical account, coupled with two short prayers every morning as a way to remember obedience to YHWH. The Jewish people call this reciting the "Akeidah." (The prayers and the recitation are provided below.) This daily recitation is a reminder of the mercy and judgment of YHWH coming together in perfect unity.

"Akeidah" is the Hebrew word for "binding." It is only used in one verse in the entire Bible in B'reisheet 22:9, when Avraham actually bound up or tied up his son to the altar to kill him. This specific usage of the Hebrew word is found nowhere else in the Scriptures. It appears here to stress the fact that Avraham was willing to sacrifice everything for YHWH.

We can read the account of "Akeidah" and see Abraham's test of faith AND a startling prophecy of our Master Y'shua. The story of Avraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice is a vivid portrayal of how the Savior offered His life and was later resurrected. Avraham offered his only son. YHWH did the same with Y'shua. Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice. Y'shua carried the wood of His sacrifice. The similarities go on and on to show us the Almighty's plan of the ages. The enemy didn't surprise YHWH when he plotted to have Y'shua nailed to the tree. This plan was already set as Y'shua is the "lamb slain from the foundation of the earth."

So, if the prophetic death of Y'shua is so clear to us, why is it so difficult for others to see? Why is it that many Jewish people never consider the similarities between the Akeidah and the sacrifice of Y'shua?

The Apostle / Rabbi Paul states, "You should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in," Romans 11:25. Jewish Israel is blind to the Messiah. The good news is that this blindness is only in part and is only temporary. The scales of darkness cover the sight of Israel until the "fullness of the gentiles comes in." We are experiencing this very move of YHWH today. The Gentiles, the nations, are recognizing their identity and the emptiness of man made religion. The emptiness of the Gentiles is causing millions throughout the world to search for the Hebrew roots of Christianity and find fullness in the Messianic faith of the Apostles.

This move towards Hebraic worship is allowing the Jewish people, who have accepted Y'shua, a place to worship and be welcome. For centuries, conversion to mainstream Catholicism or Christianity was the only choice if a Jewish person wanted to accept the Jewish Messiah of the New Testament. Times are changing. The blindness is being removed and the original faith of the apostles is being restored. Jewish people are recognizing that Y'shua of Nazareth is the Messiah. Many are coming to faith in Him because of the witness of the Scriptures that speak prophetically of Messiah. This week's Torah portion is an eye-opening revelation of Messiah that can change lives. As you study, take extra time to pray for the Jewish people. Ask YHWH for their eyes to be opened to Y'shua. Pray that as people study the Torah that they will come to the realization of the Living Torah Y'shua.

Below is a chart of the various types and shadows of our Savior found in the Akeidah. As you read and study these passages, pause to pray for the lost. Take time to praise YHWH for His Son Y'shua.

Avraham and Isaac	Y'shua's Death and Resurrection
Avraham offered his only son (Genesis 22:2-12).	YHWH offered his only Son (John 3:16).
Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:5).	Y'shua carried the cross for the sacrifice (John 19:17)

Isaac cried out to his father (Genesis 22:7).	Y'shua cried out to His Father (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).
Isaac escaped death after three days (Genesis 22:4).	Y'shua rose from the dead on the third day (Matthew 16:21; Mark 16:2-4; Luke 9:22).
Avraham indicated YHWH will provide a lamb for the sacrifice (Genesis 22:8).	YHWH provided Y'shua as The Lamb for the sacrifice (Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29-36, Revelation 5:6, 7:17).
YHWH provided a ram, a male sheep, as a substitutionary sacrifice (Genesis 22:13).	YHWH provided a male, Y'shua, as a substitutionary sacrifice.
The ram was caught by its horns (head) in a thicket (thorns) (Genesis 22:13).	Y'shua wore a crown of thorns on his head (Matthew 27:29), a symbol of the sin He bore (Genesis 3:18).
Sacrifice offered at specific location on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22:2,9).	For hundreds of years, sacrifices would be offered from the same spot inside Solomon's Temple and the Second Temple (2 Chronicles 3:1). When Y'shua is crucified outside the city walls on the same mountain, the veil within the Temple is rent in two (Mark 15:38).
The ram was YHWH's provision (Genesis 22:13-14).	Abraham prophetically named the place pointing to the crucifixion where YHWH made the ultimate provision: the sacrifice of His Son for sin (Hebrews 9:26-28).
Abraham believed that YHWH would raise Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:19).	YHWH raised Y'shua from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Abraham is known as the patriarch who showed unwavering kindness and hospitality. This week's Torah portion demonstrates the willingness of Avinu Avraham (Our Father Abraham) to care for others. The reading begins by stating that Abe was meeting with YHWH in His tent alone. Surely, this one on one prayer time with the Creator of the moon and stars was an opportunity not to be missed. But miss it he did. Genesis 18 shows that while Abraham was in the middle of his prayer time, he lifted up his eyes and saw a group of sojourners coming towards his tent. Avraham immediately ran to meet the visitors. (Can you imagine running just a few days after being circumcised? Ouch!) The Jewish Talmud asserts that hospitality should take priority even over "welcoming the Divine presence."

Abraham greeted his visitors with sincerity and care. He gave them food and washed their feet. Avraham had Sarah prepare her "world famous" flour cakes for them to taste. Abraham showed hospitality to these visitors before he even knew who they were. This is true kindness. This is true chesed.

The Hebrew word "chesed" is most often translated as "grace" or "kindness" in English Bibles. This term implies an action of unmerited favor in a physical manner. Grace isn't something you believe. Grace/chesed is something you do. Abraham showed grace to his visitors. In a similar fashion, Lot showed chesed to the visitors of Sodom and Gomorrah. He insisted that they spend the night in his home and not on the street. Perhaps it was the chesed that Lot showed to the visitors that allowed him to be rescued from destruction. Perhaps it was the kindness that Abraham shared that led to the blessing of Isaac.

Kindness has reciprocal effects that set in motion a chain of good events. When you reach out to someone to meet a need, you are in essence putting your needs in YHWH's hands. Abraham left his own tent of meeting to welcome guests and was never the same.

Y'shua said the greatest commandment was to love YHWH and to love your neighbor as yourself. One way in which we express love to YHWH is through the kindness / chesed that we show others. This week, look for new ways to be hospitable. Ask the Ruach HaKodesh/ Holy Spirit to reveal to you a way to show kindness each day of this week. Spend time in prayer for others and spend extra

time meeting the needs of others. As you replicate Abraham's actions you will experience the blessing of chesed yourself.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?
2. Read the Haftarah portion of 2 Kings 4:1-37. How does this relate to this week's Torah portion?
3. Read the Newer Testament sections of Luke 1:26-38, 24:36-53. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week's reading? What did you learn from these words?
4. Who were the three people that met Avraham in Genesis 18?
5. How did Avraham greet his visitors and show hospitality?
6. Avraham prepared milk and meat for his guests. Later the Torah says not to "boil a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19.) Did Avraham violate the Torah? Is eating a cheeseburger wrong?
7. Avraham's son was named Isaac or "Yitzchak" in Hebrew. What does this name mean?
8. YHWH doesn't automatically destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sin. The cry of their sinful ways reached the ears of Heaven and YHWH sent messengers to the city. How does this show YHWH's mercy?
9. Did Avraham overstep his relationship with YHWH when he pleaded with the Almighty not to destroy the city? Even Abe said "I am but dust and ashes."
10. How was Avraham's negotiation with YHWH for the cities similar to Moshe's pleading for Israel in Deuteronomy 9:13-14?
11. What does it mean in Genesis 19 when the Torah says that Lot "sat at the gate of Sodom"?
12. Why would Lot pressure the two messengers to stay in his home and not in the streets of Sodom?
13. What food did Lot and the messengers eat the night of Sodom's destruction? What could this be symbolic of?
14. Where 10 righteous people found in the city of Sodom or Gomorrah?
15. Did YHWH destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their sinfulness or was the land destroyed because YHWH could not find a remnant of righteousness in the towns? Is there a difference?
16. A famous television evangelist once said that "If God doesn't destroy the United States of America, he owes an apology to Sodom and Gomorrah." Do you agree? Aren't there more than 10 righteous people in America?

17. Lot's wife looked back towards the destruction. How does this compare to Luke 9:62 when Y'shua said, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of YHWH"?
18. The daughters of Lot thought they were the only people left in the world. They seduced their father to preserve his seed and the human blood line. Did Lot's daughter's sin? Would Lot have lain with his daughters if he had not been drunk? What are the dangers of drinking too much alcohol?
19. The Moabites and the Amorites descended from Lot's daughter's relationship with their father. Who were these people?
20. Again, Avraham tells Sarah to answer the authorities that she is his sister. Was this wrong?
21. A type of plague came upon the king who took Sarah into his home even though he did not have relations with her. Why? What was in the heart of the king?
22. In Genesis 20:18, the king refers to Avraham as a prophet or "navi" in Hebrew. What does this mean?
23. Avraham reveals that Sarah is the daughter of his father but not his mother. When Sarah said she was Abe's sister, was she telling the whole truth? When is it permissible to only reveal partial truth?
24. How old was Isaac/Yitzchak when Avraham circumcised him? Why?
25. In Genesis 21:18, YHWH promises to make a nation of Ishmael. Why? Who are these people today?
26. When Hagar is cast out, she puts Ishmael under a tree and prepares to die. YHWH hears her prayers and answers her. Ishmael is saved. Was this part of YHWH's plan? Why would YHWH hear her prayers?
27. What is the meaning of the covenant made between Avraham and Avimelech that was made at Beersheva? Where is Beersheva today?
28. Genesis 22 states that YHWH tested Avraham? How many times was Abe tested? Can you name at least 10 tests of his faith?
29. Explain how the binding of Isaac was prophetic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Messiah Y'shua.
30. On what mountain was Isaac offered? Why is this important?
31. "Avraham rose very early in the morning" to obey YHWH's directions to sacrifice his own son. Do you obey YHWH with a willing heart? Do you get up early to meet with YHWH?
32. The place where YHWH provided a ram in place of Isaac was called "YHWH Yireh" or "YHWH provides." What does this mean to you? How has YHWH provided supernaturally for you?

33. Read and pray the Akeidah prayers below to grow your relationship with YHWH.

Akeidah Prayers:

“Our Elohim and Elohim of our forefathers, remember us with a favorable memory before you, and recall us with a recollection of salvation and mercy from the primeval loftiest of heavens. Remember on our behalf – O Elohim, our Elohim – the love of the Patriarchs, Avraham, Yitzchak, an Isra’el, Your servant; the covenant, the kindness, and the oath that You swore to our father Avraham at Mount Moriah, and the Akeidah, when he bound his son Yitzchak atop the altar, as it is written in Your Torah.”

Genesis 22:1-19 recitation

“Some time later Elohim tested Avram. He said to him, “Avram!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then Elohim said, “Take your son, your only son, Yitzchak, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about.” Early the next morning Avram got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Yitzchak. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place Elohim had told him about. On the third day Avram looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” Avram took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Yitzchak, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Yitzchak spoke up and said to his father Avram, “Father?” Yes, my son?” Avram replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Yitzchak said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Avram answered, “Elohim himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place Elohim had told him about, Avram built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Yitzchak and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of YHWH called out to him from heaven, “Avram! Avram!” “Here I am,” he replied. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear Elohim, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.” Avram looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Avram called that place YHWH Yireh - YHWH Will Provide. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of YHWH it

will be provided.” The angel of YHWH called to Avram from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares YHWH, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” Then Avram returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Avram stayed in Beersheba.”

Akeidah Prayers:

“Master of the Universe! May it be Your will, YHWH, our Elohim, and Elohim of our forefathers, that You remember for our sake the covenant of our forefathers. Just as Avraham our forefather suppressed his mercy for his only son and wished to slaughter him in order to do Your will, so may Your mercy suppress Your anger from upon us and may Your mercy overwhelm Your attributes. May You overstep with us the line of Your Torah and deal with us – O YHWH our Elohim – with the attribute of kindness and the attribute of mercy. In Your great goodness may You turn aside Your burning wrath from Your people, Your city, Your land, and Your heritage. Fulfill for us, YHWH, our Elohim, the word You pledged through Moshe, Your servant, as it is said: ‘I shall remember My covenant with Ya’acov; and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham shall I remember, and the land shall I remember.’ Awmain.”

Parasha Chayei Sarah

- Genesis 23:1-25:18
- 1 Kings 1:1-31
- Matthew 1:1-17

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Abraham's wife Sarah dies at age 127 and is buried in the Machpeilah Cave in Hebron, which Abraham purchases from Ephron the Hittite for 400 shekels of silver.

Abraham's servant, Eliezer, is sent laden with gifts to Charan to find a wife for Isaac. At the village well, Eliezer asks YHWH for a sign: when the maidens come to the well, he will ask for some water to drink; the woman who will offer to give his camels to drink as well, shall be the one destined for his master's son.

Rebecca, the daughter of Abraham's nephew Bethuel, appears at the well and passes the "test". Eliezer is invited to their home, where he repeats the story of the day's events. Rebecca returns with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, where they encounter Isaac praying in the field. Isaac marries Rebecca, loves her, and is comforted over the loss of his mother.

Abraham takes a new wife, Keturah and fathers six additional sons, but Isaac is designated as his only heir. Abraham dies at age 175 and is buried beside Sarah by his two eldest sons, Isaac and Ishmael.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

It is from Genesis 24-25 that the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony finds its origins. It is also in this passage of Scripture that we can learn about Messiah and His bride – the believing assembly.

For the wedding, Abraham's servant Eliezer played the role of match maker by seeking out a bride for Isaac. Not just any woman would do! The better half of Yitzchak would have to be from the same faith and the same family. Eliezer prays and receives favor from YHWH as Rebekah, or "Rivkah" in Hebrew, proves herself to be a bride worthy of marriage. Then, Eliezer offers gifts to Rivkah when he proposes the marriage covenant. He also provides additional gifts to the family as a type of bride price. Rivkah accepts the proposal and immediately

enters into the time of betrothal. She and Eliezer journey home to Isaac as a type of engagement period. When she approaches the homeland, she sees Yitzchak from afar. Rivkah veils her face and then presents herself to him. The marriage is consummated under the chuppah of Sarah's tent and the two begin building their family.

When the caravan approached their destination the Torah states that Isaac was "in the field meditating." The posture and presence of Isaac in prayer show his overall devotion to YHWH and His bride. When Eliezer was on the road working for a bride, Yitzchak was at home praying and believing for a wife. So to, when Y'shua was on the earth, he spent much time meditating in prayer. Luke 4:16 says that Y'shua "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." Prior to his choosing the disciples and to his offering of his life upon the tree, Y'shua "went out to a mountainside and spent the night praying," Luke 6:12. Moshiach Y'shua would step away from the hustle and bustle of life and reflect upon the world, the Scriptures, and His impending sacrifice. Both the Messiah and Isaac found power in prayer and meditative contemplation. They both also found a bride.

The comparison of Y'shua to Isaac and Isaac to Y'shua must also extend to a discussion of the bride. Rivkah was a willing and determined bride-to-be. She served, loved, and even took time to veil herself. As the bride of Messiah, the worldwide believing assembly of believers must follow this matriarch of Israel. We are to be a people willing to serve like Rivkah served and trust like Rivkah trusted. Hebrews 7:25 states that Y'shua is still making intercession for us in order to prepare his bride for the coming marriage.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Servant hood is a major theme in the Torah portion "Chayei Sarah." We read of Abraham's servant who is sent to find a suitable helpmate for the chosen son Isaac / Yitzchak. This servant is presumably Eliezer of Genesis 15:2, though the Torah never makes this distinction. Eliezer readily accepts his task and long journey to find a bride from among the Hebrew people. While on his way, Eliezer prays for favor. "Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. Then he said, "O YHWH Elohim of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming

out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'; let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master,"
Genesis 24:10-14

Eliezer realizes that the perfect spouse for Isaac would be a woman willing to serve. Rivkah answer the prayer and offers water for Eliezer and his ten camels. A parched camel can drink 14 gallons of water. This means that Rivkah brought up to 140 gallons of water and served them while running! "So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels," Genesis 24:20. Rivkah is chosen above all the women of the earth because of heart to sacrifice and serve.

In the Hebrew texts, the word most often used for "servant" is "eved." This phrase is used to describe Eliezer as a slave of Abraham and Daniel as a servant of YHWH. In Nehemiah 1:10 an "eved" is seen as a worshipper of YHWH.

"Eved" is from the Hebrew root word "abad," which literally means to "labor, work, and serve." Adam was placed in the garden to work or "abad" the Land. Jacob served seven years for Rachel. Men aged thirty to fifty served in the Temple as an act of worship. Today, a true servant of YHWH will follow the pattern set by those in this week's Torah portion and the term "eved."

Eliezer was willing to go as his Master requested. He didn't fuss or fight Abraham. He was glad to play a part in helping the family. Judaism traditionally teaches that Eliezer was a disciple of Abraham and had learned the ways of Torah in the tents of Abraham. We must also be willing to follow YHWH and yield to his ways.

Eliezer prayed for favor. He didn't just get busy doing his Master's whims. The servant prayed and believed that he would be answered. He knew his task was important and that it needed to be covered in prayer. Our acts of kindness and compassion to others must be preceded with prayer. Our willingness to serve should be coupled with prayers of success and blessing. Eliezer took a chance to ask for confirmation from the actions of total strangers. His prayers were answered exactly.

Eliezer, the servant, was served by others. The actions of devotion by Eliezer were reciprocated when Rivkah saw the need and filled the need. "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is

dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much,” Luke 16:10. He was blessed for his servant hood and then Rivkah was blessed for her servant hood. Rivkah served Eliezer without persuasion. The process of service that Eliezer exemplified began again in Rivkah’s life.

Never in her wildest dreams could she have imagined that her simple act of fetching water would have led to marriage to Isaac. Rivkah became a matriarch of Israel because of her willingness to care for others.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew term for servant “eved” is spelled ayin – vet – dalet. There is only a one letter difference between “servant” and the term “Hebrew.” The word “Hebrew” means “an over comer” and is spelled ayin – vet – reish. The letters reish and dalet look very much alike, so it is possible to see the word play. A true Hebrew is a servant. Abraham was called a Hebrew or “Ivri” in Genesis 14:13. His family has followed suit in standing out in the world through service to others. A true “ivri” will serve, or love YHWH and other people.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?
2. The portion recounts the death of Sarah and not her life. Why was it named such?
3. Read the Haftarah portion of 1 Kings 1:1-31. How does this relate to this week’s Torah portion?
4. Read the Newer Testament sections of Matthew 1:1-17. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week’s reading? What did you learn from these words?
5. How old was Sarah when she died? What is this number symbolic of? How does this number relate to Queen Esther?
6. Where was Sarah buried? Where is this today?
7. Why did Abraham insist on paying for Sarah’s burial ground when he could have received it for free?
8. Efron charged Abraham 400 shekels for the land and burial cave. Was this a fair price? What did this high price reveal about Efron?
9. Abraham sent a servant to find a bride for his son. Genesis 24 states that this servant “placed his hand under Abraham’s thigh” as he took an oath to accomplish his task. What does this strange custom mean?
10. Genesis 15:2 shows that Abraham’s servant was named “Eliezer of Damascus.” The name “Eliezer” means “mighty, divine helper or El’s helper.” How did this name describe his actions?

11. Abraham's servant, Eliezer, had to swear that he would NOT find a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites. Why?
12. Yitzchak's / Isaac's wife was to come from his father's family. Why?
13. How many camels did Abraham's servant have? Why is this number important?
14. Eliezer placed a type of "fleece" before YHWH concerning the bride of Isaac. This was also done by Gideon in Judges 6:36-40. Is such prayer necessary or acceptable today?
15. Does a prayer fleece take faith or is such used in place of faith?
16. How does the fleece prayer compare to Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of YHWH"?
17. The woman who draws the water for Eliezer is named "Rivkah" in Hebrew. What does this moniker mean?
18. Rivkah fed the camels countless gallons of water. What does such an action say about Rivkah's attitude and spirit?
19. Where Rivkah and Isaac related? How?
20. Who was Rivkah's brother?
21. The servant Eliezer refused to eat with his host family until he had recounted the miracle of answered prayer that he experienced. Do you regularly share the testimony of answered prayer with others?
22. When told of Eliezer's actions and the proposal of Rivkah's marriage, Laban refrained from making his own comments. He said, "This is from YHWH; we can say nothing to you one way or the other." How could using such a response today glorify YHWH? Is this statement repeated throughout the Scriptures in one form or another?
23. Was Rivkah willing to go with Eliezer immediately or did she want to stay with her family?
24. As the bridal caravan approaches the homeland, Isaac is out "meditating in the field." He lifted up his eyes and saw the camels approaching. What is Biblical meditation? What do the Scriptures teach about this practice?
25. Rivkah took a veil and covered herself before meeting Isaac. How is this tradition continued today in Christian and Jewish weddings?
26. Where did Isaac and Rivkah consummate their marriage?
27. The Torah says that after Isaac took a wife, that he was comforted from the death of his mother Sarah. How does this relate to Genesis 2:24 which states that "a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife?"
28. Abraham took another wife after the death of Sarah. This new wife bore Abraham more descendants. Where these the children of promise?

29. Genesis 25:1 and 1 Chronicles 1:32 seem contradictory as they speak of Keturah. One text calls her Abraham's "wife," while the other says she was "Abraham's concubine." Which is correct? Are the terms interchangeable? Also consider Jacob's relationship with Bilhah in Genesis 29:29 and 35:22.
30. How old was Abraham when he died? Where was he buried? Who buried Abraham?
31. What did you learn from this Torah portion? How can you apply this portion to your life and faith? Who can you share the message of this portion with this week?

Parasha Toldot

- Genesis 25:19-28:9
- Malachi 1:1-2:7
- Romans 9:1-13

The Torah Portion at a Glance

This portion is Toldot or "generations." Isaac, or "Yitzchak" in Hebrew, marries Rebekah. After twenty childless years their prayers are answered and Rebecca conceives. She experiences a difficult pregnancy as the "children struggle inside her." YHWH tells her that "there are two nations in your womb," and that the younger will prevail over the elder.

Esau emerges first. Jacob, or "Ya'acov" in Hebrew, is born clutching Esau's heel. Esau grows up to be "a cunning hunter, a man of the field"; Jacob is "a wholesome man," a dweller in tents. Isaac favors Esau; Rebecca loves Jacob. Returning exhausted and hungry from the hunt one day, Esau sells his birthright (his rights as the firstborn) to Jacob for a pot of lentil stew.

In Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, Isaac presents Rebecca as his sister, out of fear that he will be killed by someone coveting her beauty. He farms the land, reopens the wells dug by his father Abraham, and bores a series of his own wells: over the first two there is strife with the Philistines, but the waters of the third well are enjoyed in tranquility.

Esau marries two Hittite women. Isaac grows old and blind, and expresses his desire to bless Esau before he dies. While Esau goes off to hunt for his father's favorite food, Rebecca dresses Jacob in Esau's clothes, covers his arms and neck with goatskins to simulate the feel of his hairier brother, prepares a similar dish, and sends Jacob to his father. Jacob receives his fathers' blessings for "the dew of the heaven and the fat of the land" and mastery over his brother. When Esau returns and the deception is revealed, all Isaac can do for his weeping son is to predict that he will live by his sword, and that when Jacob falters, the younger brother will forfeit his supremacy over the elder.

Jacob leaves home for Charan to flee Esau's wrath and to find a wife in the family of his mother's brother, Laban. Esau marries a third wife --Machlat, the daughter of Ishmael.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

In this week's reading, the scriptures recount a story of Esav selling his blessing of birthright and position as the first born for a simple bowl of soup. "Once when Ya'acov was cooking some stew, Esav came in from the open country, famished. He said to Ya'acov, "Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I'm famished!" Ya'acov replied, "First sell me your birthright." Esav said, "Look, I am about to die. What good is the birthright to me?" But Ya'acov said, "Swear to me first." So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Ya'acov. Then Ya'acov gave Esav some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. Esav despised his birthright," B'reisheet/Genesis 25:29-34. Why did Esav do this? Why was this exchange so important and tragic? Did Esav trade his preeminence just because he was hungry or was there a deeper issue? What is so bad about this event that because of this the scriptures say that Esau was "godless" and not worthy of following?

To answer these questions one must first understand the cultural and Biblical significance of the birthright of the firstborn. The birthright of the firstborn is a central theme and part of the Israelite lifestyle and lifecycle.

The firstborn son of a Hebrew father is given special rights and is highly valued. He is the heir to the family and head of the household when the father is absent. The firstborn or "bikhor" in Hebrew would receive double the inheritance of the other sons when the father passed. "The father must acknowledge the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him," Devarim (Deuteronomy) 21:17.

The "mishpat bikhor" or "right of the firstborn" is to serve as a priest for the entire family and act as the family ruler. This first child is to be dedicated to YHWH. The firstborn of every womb is YHWH's possession. "YHWH said to Moses, "Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal," Shemot (Exodus) 13:2. The bikhor is YHWH's special and unique treasure that is destined to serve as priest and minister unto YHWH Adonai.

The bikhor is to be redeemed, or bought back, in a service called the "pidyon ha'ben" meaning the "redemption of the firstborn." This Biblical custom is found in Shemot (Exodus) 13:11-15. Just after the last plague, which was the death of

the firstborn of Mitzrayim/Egypt, the Creator called the firstborn from each family to serve as priests. This was until YHWH's plan called for the Levites to take up the position. The bikhor were still dedicated to YHWH through a service of sacrifice and prayer, the pidyon ha'ben. Y'shua the Messiah went through this pidyon ha'ben in Luke 2:22-40 and was set apart as the bikhor of his family. After this service the bikhor were free to serve YHWH through their family rather than be raised by the priesthood and work as a priest for life.

To put it plainly, the firstborn is YHWH's and is to be dedicated to service to YHWH. This is either full time service as a Cohen or priest or full time service as the leader of a family that serves YHWH.

According to the Torah, Esav "despised his birthright." He evidently did not want the inheritance and the power and responsibility that came with being the son of Isaac / Yitzchak and the grandson of the patriarch Avraham. Hebrews 12:25-17 tells believers that Esav was "godless" and therefore would not be the rightful heir to the promise of the faith. Clearly Avraham's blessing of dominion, multiplication, and place in YHWH's plan was to be passed on to the son of promise.

One might casually look at the story of Ya'acov and Esav trading the birthright and think that Ya'acov was being overly deceptive and took advantage of a famished man. But this is simply not the case. Esav did not sell his birthright simply because he was hungry. Esav sold his birthright, his mishpat bikhor, because he had not concept of its meaning. Again, Esav despised his position and inheritance. This word for "despised" is "bazah." The Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Dictionary states that this word literally means, "to disesteem:-despise, disdain, contemn (-ptible), + think to scorn, vile person."

Believers are to not be like Esav. We must not despise our birthright, our destiny and inheritance as Isra'el. The temptation is present and the trade looks pleasing but we must be careful not to follow Esav's example.

Consider these verses...

- "YHWH says, 'Isra'el is my firstborn,'" Shemot (Exodus) 4:22.
- "If you belong to Messiah you are a seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise," Galatians 3:29.

- "I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son," Yermi'yahu (Jeremiah) 31:9

As a physical descendant of Avinu Avraham (Father Abraham) you are Isra'el. As a believer in Messiah you are Isra'el. Don't be mistaken and don't be talked out of it. You are Isra'el. You are YHWH's firstborn bikhor and you are YHWH's special possession that is destined to inherit family leadership, serve as ruler, and minister as a priest. "For you are a people set apart for YHWH as kadosh (holy) for YHWH your Elohim. YHWH your Elohim has chosen you from out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His Own unique possession," Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:6.

We must not loose interest in the privilege of being YHWH's bikhor and we must not fall into the sin of Esav who despised his birthright. Esav did not esteem the honor of being the son of Elohim. What about you? The sin of despising the birthright can manifest in many ways. Just think about these few areas...do you ever think that YHWH's Torah is too hard to follow or too big of a burden? Do you have any ant-Semitism hidden inside of you? Have you accepted Israel as your identity? Have you dealt with the false teaching that says the church has replaced Israel? Do you live out your heritage and culture of Israel or are you scared of what others may think or say about you? Do you ever feel that something the Bible commands you to do is simply "too Jewish?" Is your lifestyle more like the world around you are is your life patterned after the Bible and it's holy days and way of life?

As Isra'el you have been called to be in the family of faith. The name Isra'el itself simply means, "one who reigns and rules with El." You have been given a special double portion inheritance from the Father through Messiah Y'shua.

What is the double portion? "I have come that you might have life, and life more abundantly," Y'shua said in Yochanan 10:10. The Father's legacy of life today is a way of living that has significance and meaning. His legacy is also life in the hereafter - with Him in the realm of the Spirit. This is possible through the Messiah, the firstborn of the dead and the firstborn resurrection. "Y'shua Ha Moshiach, is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth," Revelation 1:5. The firstborn blessings were to follow YHWH in abundance and then multiply and fill the earth.

When Isaac blesses Ya'acov he tells him to "be fruitful and multiply." This is a

direct repetition of words spoken to Adam, Noah, and Abraham. When YHWH instructed Adam and Eve to be fruitful, He used the word "parah." This Hebrew term means to "grow, increase, bear fruit like a vine, and bring forth, to open." This word parah is used many times throughout the Scriptures in reference to the fruit of a vine. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing," John/Yochanan 15:4-5.

Fruit is nothing more than the life giving seed source of a plant. The primary point of the family is to bear the fruit, or life, of the Almighty Vine. You are to produce the same life as the Savior. Remember that the book of John calls Y'shua the 'word made flesh,' so the Savior is the Living Word or Living Torah. Therefore to bear the fruit of the Vine Y'shua is to bear the fruit of Torah. To resemble Y'shua is to live His life and resemble the Torah. To put it plainly, the family is to live out the Divine Will as revealed in the first five books of the Bible.

So, when YHWH told Adam and Abraham to 'be fruitful' He was telling them to connect to the Vine and establish their lives as a place where the Almighty would be honored and therefore bring forth life. This wasn't all though. They were also to 'multiply.'

The word for multiply in the Hebrew is "rabah." This Hebrew term means to 'increase, excel, enlarge, continue, nourish, store, to shoot out like an arrow, to cast together, to multiply, ten thousands.' First you are to bear the fruit of Torah and then you should pass on the Biblical heritage to others. We are to multiply the fruit of Torah and others will follow.

YHWH is the Elohim of the family of Avraham, his children, and his grandchildren. Avraham was indeed fruitful when it came to imparting belief to his children. "For now YHWH hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land. And he went up from thence to Beersheba. And YHWH appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the Elohim of Avraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Avraham's sake," Genesis/B'reisheet 26:22-25.

And to Ya'acov, "Elohim said unto him, I am Elohim Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall

come out of thy loins," Genesis/B'reisheet 35:11. The same family mission given to Adam is passed to Noach and to Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

YHWH is calling out is bikhor - His first born son Israel to understand his identity and walk in the fullness of Torah. As we understand the birthright of faith then we can be fruitful and multiply in the world. Pray today for workers for the harvest, for the fields are plentiful but the workers - those who know they are bachor - are few.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Y'shua is the firstborn of the firstborn - the head of the family. Because of His love and life we have been made into the "ekklesia of the firstborn" or "family/congregation of the firstborn." It is Y'shua's family, His congregation, "For those Elohim foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified," Romans 8:29-30.

YHWH sees Israel as His bikhor, and all firstborn are in need of redemption. Israel is in need of someone to pay the price, to buy Israel back, and to make a sacrifice. To meet this need the Father sent forth His bikhor Y'shua. Y'shua is the redeemer and the sacrifice. The Encyclopedia Judaica says, "Owing to his favored status, the firstborn was considered was considered the most desirable sacrifice to a deity where human sacrifice was practiced." Y'shua was the sacrifice that the Father used to redeem the firstborn Israel. This sacrifice of death brought life and established Y'shua as the firstborn of the resurrection, "He is the image of the invisible Elohim, the firstborn over all creation," Colossians 1:15. Even the Psalmist refers to the Messiah as the firstborn in Psalm 89:27.

Study and consider the following verse in light of your new understanding of Y'shua being the firstborn. "See that no one is godless like Esav, who in exchange for a single meal gave up his rights as the first born," Hebrews 12:15-17. How is despising your birthright as an Israelite also despising Y'shua?

How can you praise YHWH today for His firstborn son Y'shua?

"For YHWH so loved the world that He sent His firstborn and only son. That whosoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life," John 3:16.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Toldot." What does this mean?
2. Read Malachi 1:1-2:7. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 9:1-13. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. When Rivkah / Rebekah was barren and could not conceive, what did she do?
5. What does it mean that the children struggled within Rivkah? Does this show that life begins at conception? How does this parallel the movement of John in the womb of his mother Elizabeth in the Newer Testament?
6. Rivkah prayed to YHWH and asked why the children fought so terribly within her. Then she listened and waited for a response. What did YHWH say? What did it mean then? How is this message playing out in today's world?
7. Who were the twins? What do their names mean?
8. Esav was a mighty hunter. Who else is described as such in Genesis 10:9? Does this simply mean that these two were good at hunting down animals?
9. Ya'acov was a "plain man who dwelt in tents." This description of Jacob is a Hebrew idiom with a specific meaning. Do you understand this phrase?
10. If Isaac loved Esav, could he have been all that bad?
11. Esav is called "Edom" in Genesis 25. What is the significance of this term?
12. Who were/are the Edomites?
13. Why was the blessing of the firstborn so important? How is this concept spoken of in the Bible?
14. In Genesis 26 there is a famine in the land. YHWH appears to Isaac and tells him not to go to Egypt. Why? When would Isaac's descendants go to Egypt during a famine?
15. When Isaac moved around during the famine he told his wife Rivkah to tell others that she was his sister and not his spouse. How is this similar to what Abraham did with Sarah?
16. Did Abraham pass down a "lying spirit" to his son?
17. What happened after Isaac spent too much time in the land of Avimelech?

18. In Genesis 26, Yitzchak sowed in the land and was blessed with 100 fold return. What is this number symbolic of? Is a 100 fold return guaranteed for Bible believers?
19. Envy caused the Philistines to plug up the many wells of Isaac. How does James 3:16 show how envy stops the flow of blessing?
20. Isaac left the land of the Philistines and settled in the land of Gerrar. What had previously occurred in this land?
21. YHWH appeared to Yitzchak at Ber Sheva. What was the Almighty's message to Isaac?
22. In Genesis 26 the enemies of Isaac come to him to make peace. They recognized the presence of YHWH upon Isaac. How does the presence of YHWH cause your enemies to live at peace with you? How does this compare to Proverbs 16:7?
23. When Esav took to himself two wives it caused grief to Rivkah and Isaac. Why?
24. From what land and nationality were Esav's wives from?
25. Again a meal involves a trading of blessing in Genesis 27. Explain what occurred in this chapter and if Rebekah and Jacob were wrong for deceiving Isaac?
26. Did Rivkah ever tell Isaac of YHWH prophecy that her older son would serve the younger? Could this knowledge have made a difference?
27. Jacob was concerned that his actions would make him to be perceived as a "deceiver" to his father. Does the Torah teach that Jacob was full of deception?
28. How are Rivkah's actions to ensure the blessing was give to Jacob by Isaac similar to those of Tamar with Judah in Genesis 49?
29. Describe the blessing that Isaac spoke to Jacob. How are such words important?
30. How did Isaac respond when he realized he blessed the "wrong" son?
31. Why is the custom of speaking a blessing so special?
32. Isaac does speak prophetically to both Jacob and Esav. The blessing to Jacob is an almost exact repetition of what was spoken to Isaac. What does Isaac say of Esav?
33. Explain the meaning of Isaac's blessing to Esav when he says "you shall live by the sword."
34. Who are the descendants of Jacob today? Describe some of their character traits.
35. Who are the descendants of Esav today? Describe some of their character traits.

36. Rivkah sends Jacob to her brother Laban to hide from the angry Esav. What comes of such a visit to Jacob's relatives?
37. In Genesis 28 Ya'acov is told to not take a foreigner as a wife. Whom should he marry?
38. Isaac blesses Ya'acov and tells him to be "fruitful and multiply." To who were these words were spoken before in the scriptures?
39. The Torah portion ends with Esav adding another wife. This was just no ordinary woman. Esav marries a daughter of Ishmael. This dangerous mixing of Ishmael and Esav results in future trouble for Jacob and his descendants. What people originate from the seed of Ishmael and Esav? How do these people play a role in prophetic end time events?

Parasha Vayitzei

- Genesis 28:10-32:3
- Hosea 11:7-14:10
- John 1:19-51

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Jacob leaves his hometown Be'er Sheva and journeys to Charan. On the way, he encounters "the place" and sleeps there, dreaming of a ladder connecting heaven and earth, with angels climbing and descending on it; YHWH appears and promises that the land upon which he lies will be given to his descendents. In the morning, Jacob raises the stone on which he laid his head as an altar and monument, pledging that it will be made the house of Elohim.

In Charan, Jacob stays with and works for his uncle Laban, tending Laban's sheep. Laban agrees to give him his younger daughter Rachel -- whom Jacob loves -- in marriage, in return for seven years' labor. But on the wedding night, Laban gives him his elder daughter, Leah, instead -- a deception Jacob discovers only in the morning. Jacob marries Rachel, too, after agreeing to work another seven years for Laban.

Leah gives birth to six sons -- Reuben, Shimon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun -- and a daughter, Dinah, while Rachel remains barren. Rachel gives Jacob her handmaid, Bilhah, as a wife to bear children in her stead, and two more sons, Dan and Naphtali, are born. Leah does the same with her handmaid, Zilpah, who gives birth to Gad and Asher. Finally, Rachel's prayers are answered and she gives birth to Joseph.

Jacob has now been in Charan for fourteen years and wishes to return home, but Laban persuades him to remain, now offering him sheep in return for his labor. Jacob prospers, despite Laban's repeated attempts to swindle him. After six years, Jacob leaves Charan in stealth, fearing that Laban would prevent him from leaving with the family and property for which he labored. Laban pursues Jacob, but is warned by YHWH in a dream not to harm him. Laban and Jacob make a pact on Mount Gal-Ed, attested to by a pile of stones, and Jacob proceeds to the Holy Land, where he is met by angels.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The Messiah speaks of our current Torah portion in John 1:19-51. Here, Y'shua clarifies that Jacob's vision of a ladder was actually a vision of Messiah Himself. What does such a revelation mean?

Ya'acov / Jacob saw the vision of the ladder when he rested his head upon a stone. The Hebrew word in this passage for stone is "eben," spelled with the ancient letters aleph – bet – nun sofeet. This term for stone contains the Hebrew word for son – "ben." This word is spelled bet - nun sofeet. From the word play, we can see that when Ya'acov rested in the Son's stone, he was able to experience the presence of Y'shua in a profound way. It was an awesome manifestation!

Ya'acov's ladder was more than just a dream. It is an actual portal to heaven. It is the place where angels ascend and descend to earth. Jacob's ladder – the person of Y'shua of Nazareth – is the gate to Father YHWH (Genesis 28:13). A ladder is like a bridge that grants access to something higher. This is the perfect representation of Y'shua. We are told in Philippians 2:5 to "put on the mind of Christ / Messiah." We are also told in Isaiah 55 that "His thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways His ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than your ways, and His thoughts than your thoughts." As we climb Jacob's ladder our life, our mind, our heart, and our will changes. Our thinking is elevated and each rung takes us closer to being like Him.

A ladder involves effort. Y'shua is not an escalator that briskly pushes us higher. We must make the effort to move forward with Him. This effort is to first be made in "tehillim" or prayer. The sages of Judaism have recognized Ya'acov's ladder as the power of prayer. The Hebrew word for ladder is "sulam." The numerical value of its letters is 136. The word "kol" has the same numerical value. "Kol" is Hebrew for voice, as in the voice of prayer. When we pray and seek YHWH's face we can come into His presence and transcend the cares of this world. Our worries and concerns change when we begin to see things from His perspective. From the height of a tall ladder everything below seems so much smaller. Through Tehillim we become one with YHWH's thoughts we see the "bigger picture." Our huge problems are actually very small from the height of YHWH's glory.

This exact place of the dream is named “Bethel” or “Beit-El” in Hebrew. “Beit-El” means “house of El.” It is understood that this exact spot was the mount that Abraham offered Isaac and the Temple Mount would later stand.

After his dream, Ya’acov does something very strange. “Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it,” Genesis 28:18. This was the very first anointing in the Torah and a prophetic event that would culminate with Messiah.

Jacob’s anointing of a stone is foretelling of the Anointed Messiah. When YHWH later speaks to Jacob He introduces himself by reminding him of this deed. “I am the Elohim of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and go back to your native land,” Genesis 31:13. The Hebrew word for “anointed” in this passage is “mashach.” This word is the exact Hebrew root of the phrase “Moshiach” or “Messiah.” Y’shua is the Anointed One of YHWH. “And we know how YHWH anointed Y’shua of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because YHWH was with him,” Acts 10:38.

Jacob rested in Moshiach, had a vision of Moshiach, and then worshipped Moshiach all in this week’s Torah portion. The Torah is a presentation of Y’shua. May we be like Jacob and have our minds and eyes opened to the anointed one Y’shua.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

We read in this week’s Torah portion about the birth and naming of Ya’acov’s twelve sons. Each name tells part of the parasha, each child’s designation speaks of his place in the family.

In Biblical times, as it should be today, names carry great significance and importance. Naming a child was and should be something done with much thought and consideration as a name is reflective upon a person’s behavior and character. Just think about what comes to mind when you hear the name “Michael Jackson” and you will get the point. “The ancient Israelites believed that names had mystical powers and that in many ways they reflected the character of a person,” says one source. Unfortunately though, if you pick up your King James Version or NIV and read through the scriptures the English names you find aren’t really the correct names of the individuals. What you do find are poor substitutes and charades. The words and names found in your Bible were not the words and names used thousands of years ago.

You see, the Bible was originally written in Hebrew. When Hebrew is changed or translated into any other language MUCH is lost in the process. No other language can adequately convey the message and inspiration of the set apart Hebrew tongue. Even English in all of its grandeur is a poor alternate for Hebrew. That is why it is so important to learn to pray, read, and talk in Hebrew. It is a great mitzvah/commandment to use the holy language in study and worship. The restoration of the Hebrew language and the abandonment of gentile dialects are just part of the restoration of all things as spoken of in Acts 3 and Zephaniah 3:9, “For then will I return to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of YHWH, to serve him with one consent.”

Did you know that Joshua was never called Joshua? And Moses was never called Moses? While the Hebrew words of the Scriptures were translated into (poor) English “equivalents” the original names of the Biblical characters were transliterated or changed to something similar. The Hebrew family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob never heard the English names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This name changing that has taken place removes the Israelite identity of the people and creates a story of English speaking people with English sounding names.

When the name of a person is changed so is there character and what you think about a person. For example the Hebrew parents of the Messiah were not the very English couple of Mary and Joseph. Their names were very Hebrew – Miriam and Yosef.

Converts to Judaism have for centuries adopted a Hebrew name that is usually used at religious activities and services, but can be employed all the time. Many congregations hold “naming celebrations” where the Hebrew name is announced to the public. It is certainly not a bad idea to adopt and use a Hebrew name. Nor is it a bad idea to name your child with the holy tongue. One Biblical custom has arisen of not using the child’s name until it is formally announced to the community at brit milah (circumcision) or a naming service. The Rabbi or the father usually makes this announcement with the words “let him/her be known in the house of Israel as _____.” (Consider how Zechariah named his son “Yochanan” or “John” in the Gospels.)

The Messiah himself set the example for believers “on the eighth day when it was time for his brit milah, he was given the name Y’shua, which is what the angel had called him before his conception,” Luke 2:21. Yochanan the Immerser, aka John the Baptist, was not named after his father as was one custom. Instead he

was named at the time of brit milah the name an angel had given him. This is yet another example for believers to follow.

The purpose of donning, having, and using a Hebrew name is profound for many reasons. One of which is that a Hebrew name is reflective upon the Hebrew characteristics and lifestyle of a person. Another aspect of this is that as others speak your Hebrew name they are calling forth the true meaning and worth of your new self. Choosing a Hebrew name is a great action to take after a person comes to a revelation or unveiling of who they really are as an Israelite.

Many people in the Bible had their names changed by YHWH after their character was changed by an encounter with YHWH. For example Avram became Avraham and Ya'acov became Isra'el.

Who have you become? Are you the same person you used to be? Has your encounter with the emet, the truth, of your Israelite culture and identity made a huge change in you? Could a Hebrew name reflect this change to those around you? Pray about adopting a Hebrew name. Yes, it is a little weird. But, think about the profound meanings of a Hebrew name. Wouldn't a name change just be the next step towards your intimacy with YHWH and other Israelites? Wouldn't your new name tell more of the restoration in the family of Israel?

The twelve sons of Ya'acov were named according to their place in the family.

Now follow the birth order and meaning of their names to understand the struggles of this parasha through the power of the Hebrew names:

- Re'uven - see, a son (named this as a reminder of the firstborn son, a sight to see)
- Shimon – hearing (named this because YHWH heard the prayer for another son)
- Levi – joining (named because Le'ah thought this child would join her and Ya'acov)
- Y'hudah – praise (named this as the family praised YHWH for another boy)
- Dan – he judged (named this as YHWH judged in Rachel's favor and gave her a child)
- Naftali- my wrestling (named this as a symbol of the wrestling between Rachel and Le'ah for Ya'acov's favor and love)

- Gad – good fortune (named this as a testimony to good fortune found by Zilpah, Le’ah’s slave girl)
- Asher – happy (named this because this child would bring much happiness to Le’ah)
- Yissakhar – hire, reward (named this as a testimony to YHWH that he rewarded Le’ah for giving her slave-girl to Ya’acov to have relations with)
- Z’vulun – living together (named this as hope that this son would cause Le’ah and Ya’acov to live together)
- Yosef- may he add (named this as a prayer to YHWH that another son would be added to Rachel and Ya’acov)
- Bin’yamin – son of the right-hand (named this by Ya’acov at the death of Rachel)

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Vayeitzei.” What does this mean?
2. Read Hosea 11:7-14:10. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in John 1:19-51. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How is Messiah Y’shua pictured in this Torah portion?
5. What happened when Jacob/Ya’acov slept upon a stone pillow? Does YHWH still speak to people through their dreams?
6. Ya’acov dreamed of a ladder bridging heaven and earth. Who / what is this ladder?
7. The Torah says that the angels on the ladder where “ascending and descending.” How is this order important?
8. On what land did Jacob’s dream occur? What is special about this exact place?
9. When Jacob awoke he declared the presence of YHWH. Do you remember a time when you awoke from spiritual slumber and spoke the praise of Elohim?
10. Genesis 32:10 states that Jacob took nothing with him when left the land of Canaan. If this is true, then where did the anointing oil come from that Jacob used upon the stone?
11. The name of the city Luz was changed by Ya’acov to what?

12. In B'reisheet / Genesis 29 Jacob sees his future wife at a well. Ya'acov moved a stone to open the well so Rachel could water the sheep. How is this account similar to Rebekah's actions at a well?
13. Ya'acov revealed himself as kin to Rachel. How did the people rejoice? Who did Jacob live with and work for?
14. "Ya'acov served seven years for Rachel, but they seemed as only a few days." What is the number 7 symbolic of? How does this passage from Genesis relate to 2 Peter 3:8, "a day with YHWH is as a thousand years"?
15. A great wedding feast was held to celebrate Ya'acov taking a wife. How did he marry the wrong woman?
16. Laban said that his country's custom was not to wed the younger daughter before the firstborn. How is this birth order / birth right reminiscent of Isaac's blessings to Jacob and Esav?
17. Ya'acov worked 7 more years for Rachel. Now, Ya'acov had two wives and two hand maidens. Genesis 29:30 states that Ya'acov loved his second wife Rachel more than Leah. Where in the Bible is such prohibited?
18. Leah conceived and gives birth to Re'uven. What is the meaning of his name?
19. Leah again gives birth and names her second son Simeon. What comes of him and his descendants later in the Bible?
20. Leah's third son was named "Levi" or "Lewi." How is this name prophetic to the ministry of the tribe of Levi?
21. Leah's fourth son is named Judah or "Yah'hudah" in Hebrew. Why is this name appropriate?
22. Genesis 30 starts with Rachel being angry that she had not become a mother. Ya'acov response shows that "children are a gift YHWH, the fruit of the womb is a reward," Psalm 127:3. What comes of Rachel's envy?
23. Bilhah gives birth to a son named what? Genesis 49:17 says what exactly about this tribe?
24. With great strife Bilhah wrestled to have a son named Naphtali? Was Bilhah Jacob's wife?
25. Leah took Zilpah, her hand maiden, and gave her to Ya'acov "to be his wife." How many wives did Jacob have? Was this a good thing?
26. Zilpah gives birth to whom?
27. What were the "love apples" spoken of in Genesis 29?

28. Leah gives birth to 2 more children. How do their names speak of her relationship with her husband?
29. Rachel delivers a son named Joseph after YHWH hears her prayers. Explain how the power of prayer is once again revealed in the book of Genesis.
30. Ya'acov wants to leave Laban and go to his own land. Laban doesn't want him to leave. What comes of the agreement for Ya'acov to only take the speckled sheep?
31. Did Jacob deceive Laban concerning the farm animals?
32. When Ya'acov listened to the voice of YHWH to leave Laban, he did so with a greater herd and more blessings. How is this similar to when the Hebrew people plundered Egypt or when Abraham left the land of Avimelech?
33. Laban catches up with Ya'acov after he tried to flee. Laban isn't happy his children and grandchildren are leaving. Nor is he pleased that someone has taken his idols. Why would Rachel steal and hide Laban's gods?
34. Does Jacob's statement in Genesis 31:32 come true?
35. How long did Ya'acov work for Laban? Was Laban a fair employer? Was Jacob a good employee?
36. Laban and Ya'acov used a pillar to signify their agreement to be kind to one another. What exactly did such a promise ensue?
37. Laban begins his journey towards the Promised Land and is met by whom?

Parasha Vayishlach

- Genesis 32:3-36:43
- Obadiah 1:-21
- Hebrews 11:11-20

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Jacob returns to the Holy Land after a 20-year stay in Charan, and sends angel-emissaries to Esau in hope of reconciliation, but his messengers report that his brother is on the warpath with 400 armed men. Jacob prepares for war, prays, and sends Esau a large gift (consisting of hundreds of heads of sheep and cattle) to appease him.

That night, Jacob ferries his family and possessions across the Yabbok River; he, however, remains behind and encounters the angel of YHWH, with whom he wrestles until daybreak. Jacob suffers a dislocated hip but vanquishes the supernal creature, who bestows on him the name Isra'el, which means "He who prevails over Elohim."

Jacob and Esau meet, embrace and kiss, but part ways. Jacob purchases a plot of land near Shechem, whose crown prince -- also called Shechem-- abducts and rapes Jacob's daughter Dinah. Dinah's brothers Simeon and Lewi avenge the deed by killing all male inhabitants of the city after rendering them vulnerable by convincing them to circumcise themselves.

Jacob journeys on. Rachel dies while giving birth to her second son, Benjamin, and is buried in a roadside grave near Bethlehem. Reuben loses the birthright because he interferes with his father's marital life. Jacob arrives in Hebron, to his father Isaac, who later dies at age 180 (Rebecca has passed away before Jacob's arrival).

Our par shah concludes with a detailed account of Esau's wives, children and grandchildren, and the family histories of the people of Se'ir among whom Esau settled.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The identity of Jacob's wrestler has perplexed Bible students for millennia. Judaism traditionally explains the wrestler was the guardian angel of Esav. Genesis 32:24, "And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." The word in this verse for "man" is the Hebrew word "ish" and is translated properly as "man." The text makes no mention that he wrestled with an "angel" or "mal'ak" in Hebrew.

Ya'acov wrestles for a blessing and doesn't give up until his name is changed to "Yisra'el." This new name literally means "one who wrestles with El." At the end of the wrestling match the man says "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with Elohim and men and have prevailed," Genesis 32:28.

Later, Jacob names the place of such strife "Peniel, meaning, 'I have seen Elohim face-to-face, and yet my life has been spared,'" Genesis 32:40. This word "elohim" is used throughout the Hebrew texts and literally means "mighty one or ruler." Usually elohim is translated as "god." Sometimes it is translated as "angel" and even once, in Psalm 82:6, mankind is called "elohim."

The book of Hosea adds to the confusion. Jacob "took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with Elohim: Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us," 12:3-4. In this passage from the Prophet, the word "mal'ak" is used for "angel."

So, taken together, Jacob wrestled with an ish-elohim-mal'ak! The wrestler is a man-god-angel. Who could this be? How is the Messiah shown in this section of the Torah? For your answer, consider these verses:

- John 1:1, 14
- Hebrew 1:7
- Psalm 8:5
- John 1:18
- Exodus 33:20-23

Applying the Portion to Life Today

One of the wonderful things about the Torah is that it does not portray Bible characters as perfect saints who always do perfect things. The Torah openly and honestly displays the humanity of the humans involved in the divine struggle. Thank goodness that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were real people with real problems!

Our Torah portion is named “vayishlach” which means “he sent out.” The reading begins with Jacob preparing to meet with his estranged brother Esau. He sends out his family into two camps. His fear and his favoritism are shown clearly by his actions. His wife of choice and his youngest son are separated from the others in an effort to spare their lives should the family reunion turn sour. The mere fact that the family quibble between the two brothers is mentioned in Torah again reminds us that the Torah gives directions for every day life. We can learn much from how Jacob, Esau, Isaac, and others treated their families.

Jacob later has a wrestling match and fights for a blessing. Even though Jacob was a man of faith, his blessings didn’t always just drop from the sky. He had to fight and travail for his wife, possessions, and even his life at times. Don’t be fooled – the life of faith is not easy. The patriarchs showed us this. There are times when we seem to be wrestling with the Creator Himself. Then there are times when we must be as cunning and wise as a serpent and as meek as a dove.

This Torah parasha also teaches us to be careful to guard against vengeance. We must not take revenge into our own hands like Simeon and Lewi did. Their sister Dinah was taken advantage of by a man and this band of brothers allowed their tempers to get the best of them. They deceived the relatives of Shechem into thinking they could be part of the covenant people. Well, instead of showing them favor and mercy, Simeon and Lewi murdered many and plundered the people. They were eventually punished for such vengeance.

We should also learn from Rachel who died while giving birth to Benjamin on her way into Bethlehem. She was buried in a roadside tomb. Sometimes for new life to come there must be death. Y’shua said in Luke 9:23, that while we are on our own unique journey that we too are to “die daily.” It is only as we choose to offer our lives fully to YHWH that He can fully use us.

Torah is accurate in its portrayal of mankind. We are imperfect people in an imperfect world, trying to serve a perfect elohim. Families fight. Struggles occur.

Loved ones pass away. Life is hard sometimes. Through it all, YHWH will use what occurs for his plan and his glory.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Vayishlach.” What does this mean?
2. Read Obadiah 1:1-21. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 11:11-20. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How is Messiah Y’shua pictured in this Torah portion?
5. Jacob met a group of angels at a place called “mahanayim.” What does this term mean?
6. Ya’acov was distressed about meeting up with Esau. Why?
7. How was the division of Jacob’s camp similar to the division of the 12 tribes of Israel into the Northern and Southern tribes later in the Bible?
8. Ya’acov took numerous gifts to Esau. Is it a good thing to show kindness to your enemy?
9. Ya’acov heaped “burning coals” on Esau by showing kindness. How did Jacob accomplish the commands of Y’shua to “pray for those who spitefully use you” and “bless those that curse you.” Who do you need to bless and show kindness to today?
10. Before Esau and Jacob meet, the Torah states that Jacob wrestled with “a man” until the breaking of the day. Who did Jacob wrestle?
11. Ya’acov would not let go of the wrestler until he received a blessing. What blessing did he accept?
12. What was Jacob’s name changed to? Describe the meaning of this name.
13. Ya’acov asked for the name of the “man” that he wrestled. Do you think the man revealed his name to Jacob?
14. Ya’acov named the place where he wrestled “Peniel.” Why?
15. Where is the phrase “face to face” spoken of again in the Bible? Explain how the name “Peniel” relates to Yom Kippur.
16. Genesis 32:33 states that since the time of Jacob’s wrestling match that the “people of Israel do not eat the meat of the hip area of animals. Is this verse suggesting that believers are not to eat sirloin meat, which is normally found at this location of an animal?
17. Explain the actions that Ya’acov takes as he prepares to meet Esau. How does Esau eventually respond?

18. Genesis 33:4 says, “and Esau ran toward him and embraced him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.” What type of kiss was this?
19. Why did Esau have a change of heart?
20. Jacob settled and names a place called “Sukkot.” Do the children of Israel return her on their journey out of Egypt?
21. How did Shechem defile Dinah? He loved her, wasn’t love enough?
22. When Ya’acov first heard that Dinah had been defiled before marriage what did he do?
23. The father of Shechem wanted Jacob’s sons and his daughters to intermarry. Was this a good idea? Why or why not?
24. The sons of Jacob answered the father of Shechem deceitfully. Where did they learn to deceive?
25. On the third day after the circumcision Simeon and Lewi enacted revenge upon the people of Shechem. Was this of YHWH?
26. What did Ya’acov say to Simeon and Lewi about their actions?
27. Where did the sons of Jacob get the idols mentioned in Genesis 35:2?
28. Up until Genesis 35 Jacob still uses the name Jacob. After this point the Torah uses the name “Isra’el” more. Why?
29. YHWH speaks the same blessing to Jacob that was given to others. He was told to “be fruitful and multiply.” Who had YHWH spoken this to before?
30. Genesis 35:11 is a highly prophetic verse. Here YHWH says, “be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a multitude of nations shall come into existence from you, and kings shall come forth from your loins.” Who is the singular nation that comes from Jacob/Israel? Who is the “multitude of nations” that would come from Jacob/Israel? Explain how this prophecy relates to 1 Kings 15.
31. What happened to Rachel when she gave birth to Benjamin? Was this death prophetic?
32. Where was Rachel buried? Where is this place today?
33. Read and discuss Matthew 2:17-18 and Jeremiah 31:15 and how these verses relate to Rachel’s death.
34. Re’uven lay with Jacob’s concubine. What was the result of this sexual relationship?
35. The descendants of Esav became known as the Edomites. Who are / were these people?

Parasha Veyeshev

- Genesis 37:1-40:23
- Amos 2:6-3:8
- Matthew 1:1-6, 16-25

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is 17-year-old Joseph/Yosef, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two dreams he has which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Simeon and Lewi plot to kill him, but Re'uven suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Yah'udah/Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph's special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife Tamar is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed and he, too, meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined to have a child from Judah's family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself.

Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David and Messiah Y'shua) and Zerach.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh's slaughterhouses. YHWH blesses everything he does, and soon he is made overseer of all his master's property. Potiphar's wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her and has him thrown in prison. Joseph gains the trust and admiration of his jailers, who appoint him to a position of authority in the prison administration.

In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph's predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

A study of the Torah is a study of the Messiah Y'shua.

Once again we can clearly see how characters in the Torah picture our Master Y'shua. This week's reading, which introduces us to Yosef is another clear foreshadow of Moshiach. Yosef was the favored son. Yosef is the recipient of his brother's jealousy. His brothers mock him, forsake him, and then eventually sell him off. Yosef does not fight back. Yosef is cast into a pit and later comes out alive. The sons of Jacob then dipped his garment into blood and presented the blood-stained garment to their father.

Y'shua goes through the same events as Yosef. He was placed into the pit tomb of the grave and was resurrected. Y'shua's garments were ripped from him and were covered in blood as well. Revelation 19:13, "And he was clothed with vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called the Word of YHWH."

Below is a chart for further study on the similarities between Joseph and the Messiah. Read through these verses and experience the magnificence of the Torah to vividly portray Y'shua's life, death, and resurrection.

Yosef the Dreamer	Y'shua the Messiah
Genesis 37:1	John 10:1-18
Genesis 37:3-4	Matthew 3:17 & 17:5
Genesis 37:6-10	Matthew 26:64
Genesis 37:11	John 12:18-19
Genesis 37:14	Matthew 15:24
Genesis 37:15-17	Luke 19:10
Genesis 37:18	Matthew 12:44
Genesis 37:24	Matthew 27:60
Genesis 37:28	Luke 24:1-20
Yosef the Dreamer	Y'shua the Messiah
Genesis 39:1	Philippians 2:6-7
Genesis 39:3-4	Matthew 3:17 & 12:18

Genesis 39:16-18	Hebrews 4:15
Genesis 39:7-12	Hebrews 4:15
Genesis 39:21-23	Luke 23:47
Genesis 40:2	Matthew 24:38
Genesis 40:14	Psalms 16:10

Applying the Portion to Life Today

It is not easy to be like Yosef. Following his example is difficult while living in a society of self-gratification and sensual entertainment. It is very challenging to stay pure; to be undefiled; to turn away; to control the mind; to close the eyes. Yosef was presented with a solicitation to sin sexually with Potiphar's wife yet he refused. "Lie with me," she said to him. Does this sound familiar to you?

This is the same message, the exactly identical enticement that solicits today. Yet now it is not Potiphar's wife that brings the invitation, rather it is web sites, magazines, emails, television channels, and music. Day after day the onslaught of the sexual bombards man. To be like Yosef and stop the roaming eyes and thoughts of the mind; to say "no" is every man's battle. There are lingerie commercials that expose too much and even advertisements for shampoo that contain the risqué. What would be considered profane in the 1950's is proudly appealing and stylish today.

The attack is everywhere - billboards, commercials, and all around the supermarket and mall. A person cannot even stand in line at the gas station without seeing magazine covers and full magazines that just should not be printed.

Potiphar's wife wanted to be intimate with the handsome Yosef. She tempted him and pursued him. "She sits at the door of her house or on a seat at the heights of the city, calling to those who pass by," says Mishlei (Proverbs) 19:14. The call of seduction sounds loudly even to this modern age...

"This isn't hurting anyone"

"Just one look won't bother anything"

"No one will ever know"

Yosef heard the same words, yet Yosef remained pure. Yosef refused to surrender to his lusts. Surely he had the desires but he conquered those desires. "And as much as she coaxed Yosef day after day, he did not yield to her request to lie with her or even be with her," B'reisheet (Genesis) 39:10.

While working as a slave, Yosef determined that he would not be a slave to his lusts. He would not give himself over to his flesh, to his yetzer hara.

To help himself with the battle he would not even give himself the opportunity to yield to her temptation. Remember that it says, "he did not yield to her request... or even be with her." Yosef was smart. He knew that if he wanted to stay out of trouble then he needed to stay away from trouble. He could not give these demons of sin a foothold.

Yet, one day Yosef messed up. Yosef came into the house to do his work and there was Potiphar's wife awaiting him. There she was. And they were alone. None of the household was inside except the two that didn't need to be. It was Yosef and the tempter. Traditional Jewish writings say that he came "to engage in the Torah and obey its commands." Yosef had good intentions yet he was at the wrong place at the wrong time. Or was he? Was Yosef put in a place of compromise or victory?

The Torah teaches that she called out to him again and this time she grabbed him. Now Yosef was face to face with his tempter. Her breath was touching his face and he could smell her aroma. At this moment in time Yosef had to make a decision, a choice. He had to run. But run which way? He could run to Potiphar's wife or he could run away from her. He could give in to the desire and temptation. Who would ever know? Or, Yosef could use this experience to prove that he was a person of character and integrity. Yosef was a set apart Hebrew wasn't he?

"What is the difference between the righteous and the wicked? The wicked are under control of their heart while the righteous have their heart under their control," says a traditional Jewish proverb.

The Rabbis of Judaism say that Yosef came to the house "to engage in the Torah and obey its commands." And he did just that. Yosef acted upon the teachings of the Torah..."You shall not commit adultery," Shemot (Exodus) 20:14. His obedience is a powerful example on how to go through your day-to-day life without giving in lust. Just run away. Avoid it. Close your eyes to it.

A recent study shows that the average male has one sexual thought every seven seconds. Either these thoughts are allowed to flourish or they are stamped out. What is done with the idea; with the sexual thought is the heart of the issue at hand. "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart" said the Messiah Y'shua. The Redeemer was not saying that it is wrong to have a thought about intimacy. To do so is only natural, as mankind was created with a desire to reproduce. It is not the desire that is sinful. It is what is done with this desire that leads to the sins. When the Messiah said, "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery" He was drawing people to the original intention of the Torah command found in Exodus 20:14. If you don't look with lust then you won't commit lusts like adultery. Sin starts in the mind; in the hearts; in the eyes; in the yetzer hara. "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death," James 1:14-16.

Honestly, it is extremely difficult to remain pure in a world of the profane but it can be done. Yosef did it and so can you. Here are a few things we can learn from Yosef's experiences.

Know that you are not alone in the struggle. "Now Yosef was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Yosef and said, "Come to bed with me," B'reisheet 39:6-7.

Understand that you are hurting more than just yourself. "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against Elohim?" B'reisheet 39:9

Refuse the daily assault of the sensual. "And though she spoke to Yosef day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her," B'reisheet 39:10

Run away from temptation. "One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house," B'reisheet 39:11-12

When you are by yourself be very careful. "One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house," B'reisheet 39:11-12

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Vayeshev." What does this mean?
2. Read Amos 2:6-3:8. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Matthew 1:1-6 and verse 16-25. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How is Messiah Y'shua pictured in this Torah portion?
5. Explain how you can apply this week's study to your life?
6. Joseph brought an "evil report" about his brothers to his father. Was he speaking evil speech / lashon hara? Should he have said these things?
7. Explain the coat of many colors. What was this prophetic of? How did it speak of Jacob's love for Joseph?
8. What was the reaction of Yosef's brothers regarding his dream of the sheaves? How was this dream prophetic?
9. Why did Jacob rebuke Joseph regarding his dreams?
10. Was Yosef a shepherd like his brothers or did he spend his time elsewhere?
11. What happened to Yosef when he went to Shechem?
12. What was Reuven's plan to rescue Joseph?
13. What type of people purchased Yosef as their slave? How much did they pay?
14. Re'uven had plans to rescue Joseph but his brother interfered. Is the road to hell paved with good intentions?
15. How did Ya'acov react at the news of Joseph's death?
16. Who purchased Joseph from the Ishmaelites?
17. Compare Yosef's two dreams (see 37:5-10) to Yitzchak's blessing of Yaakov in 27:28-29. In what manner are they similar? In what manner are they different?
18. In your opinion, when the brothers sit down to eat (37:25), do they sit down nearby (or in sight of) Yosef's pit, or much farther away? Is Re'uven sitting down to eat with them, or did he go away? If he did go away, where did he go to and why?
19. In Genesis 38, Judah's first born son "Er" was "wicked in the sight of YHWH" and "YHWH killed him." Why would YHWH kill Er and not Ishmael, Esav, or Nimrod?
20. Onan's actions led to his death as well. What did he do that was so bad?
21. Judah told Tamar to remain a widow. Was this acceptable? Why?
22. Judah had relations with a harlot but was not struck dead. Is this fair?

23. Judah left his staff with Tamar. What does a staff mean in Eastern culture? How does this relate to Ezekiel 37 and the two sticks or "two staffs?"
24. Tamar conceived from Judah. Were her actions righteous?
25. Judah was going to execute capital punishment upon Tamar for her promiscuous relations. Wasn't such judgment by Judah hypocrisy? Wasn't he guilty of the same?
26. When Judah acknowledges his fling with Tamar, what did he do? Explain what this means?
27. Tamar gave birth to twins named Peretz and Zerach. Study and explain the meaning of their names. How are these names prophetic of the Messiah?
28. Who is the true first born of Tamar? Why is this recognition important?
29. Joseph was "brought down to Egypt." What does it mean to "go down to Egypt" and "up to Jerusalem?"
30. Did Yosef allow the fact that he was rejected by his family stop him from serving YHWH and serving others? Explain.
31. How did Yosef take a stand for holiness with Potipher's wife? Does this suggest that it is better for a man and woman not to be alone together?
32. What anti-Semitic statement did Potipher's wife use to accuse Joseph?
33. Did Potipher hear the testimony of 2 or 3 witnesses regarding his wife's complaint? Did this stop him from making a righteous judgment?
34. Jacob used clothes as he pretended to be Esav. Joseph's brother used his coat to pretend that Yosef had died. Did Jacob reap what he sowed? How does clothing play a part in Genesis 39:10-18.
35. How was YHWH with Yosef in the prison?
36. Whose dreams did Yosef interpret while in prison?
37. Did Yosef interpret the dreams after or before prayer?
38. During Pharaoh's birthday party, the chief baker was put to death and the butler was spared. What happened at a birthday party in Matthew 14:6-8?
39. Did the butler remember Joseph as he promised?
40. Read Genesis 40:12-15. In your opinion, was Yosef correct in asking the butler to intervene on his behalf to free him from prison?
41. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?

Parasha Miketz

- Genesis 41:1-44:17
- 1 Kings 3:15-4:1
- Matthew 27:15-46

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Joseph's imprisonment finally ends when Pharaoh dreams of seven fat cows that are swallowed up by seven lean cows, and of seven fat ears of grain swallowed by seven lean ears. Joseph interprets the dreams to mean that seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of hunger, and advises Pharaoh to store grain during the plentiful years. Pharaoh appoints Joseph governor of Egypt. Joseph marries Asenat, daughter of Potiphar, and they have two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Famine spreads throughout the region, and food can be obtained only in Egypt. Ten of Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to purchase grain; the youngest, Benjamin, stays home, for Jacob fears for his safety. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him; he accuses them of being spies, insists that they bring Benjamin to prove that they are who they say they are, and imprisons Simeon as a hostage. Later, they discover that the money they paid for their provisions has been mysteriously returned to them.

Jacob agrees to send Benjamin only after Judah assumes personal and eternal responsibility for him. This time Joseph receives them kindly, releases Shimon, and invites them to an eventful dinner at his home. But then he plants his silver goblet, purportedly imbued with magic powers, in Benjamin's sack. When the brothers set out for home the next morning they are pursued, searched, and arrested when the goblet is discovered. Joseph offers to set them free and retain only Benjamin as his slave.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Our reading this week focuses on the life of Yosef and how he is taken from the pit, to the prison, and then to the palace. This is an exact representation of Y'shua Ha Moshiach.

As Yosef was lifted above his brothers, so too Y'shua rules and reigns. And as Yosef's brothers came to him and did not recognize him, the Jewish people today do not quickly recognize Y'shua. The Torah says that Yosef was clean shaven like an Egyptian. He didn't look like a Hebrew. Yosef also spoke through an interpreter. He didn't sound like a Hebrew. Today, mainstream Christianity portrays a Gentile Jesus with blue eyes and blond hair. It is very hard for Jewish people and other unbelievers to recognize their Messiah because of how he is portrayed by the interpreter of Christianity. Thus, our mission becomes clear.

We must present to the world the true representation of Y'shua. And we must show others unconditional forgiveness. In next week's portion we will read of Yosef granting forgiveness to his brothers and THEN the 12 sons of Jacob are reunited. It is only through our efforts to worship and witness of the Hebrew Messiah that the lost sheep of the house of Israel will come together. Pray today that YHWH will use you to witness about Y'shua to someone searching for the truth.

Below is another chart that describes the many parallels between Y'shua and Yosef. Study this to see how YHWH was using Yosef to be a prophetic example of Y'shua.

Parallel	Yosef	Y'shua
Most favored of their fathers	Genesis 37:3	Mark 1:11
Brothers hated them because of their special status	Genesis 37:4	Matt 21:33-41 (Y'shua is the "son" of the parable)
Given vision into the future	Genesis 37:6	Matt 24:3
Hated for their teachings	Genesis 37:8	John 7:7
Brothers plotted to kill them	Genesis 37:18	Matt 26:4
Put into the ground	Genesis 37:24	Mark 15:46
Raised three times	Raised up out of the pit(Genesis 37:28) Raised up to be ruler of Egypt (Genesis 41:41)	Raised up on the cross(John 19:17-18) Raised up from the grave (Matt 18:5-6) Raised up to heaven(Acts 1:9)

	Raised up ("made alive" again) when Jacob was told he was still alive(Genesis 45:26-28)	
Given over to gentiles	Genesis 37:28	Acts 11:1
Sold for the price of a slave	Genesis 37:28	Matt 26:15
Taken into Egypt to avoid being killed	Genesis 37:28	Matt 2:13
Dead to his father	Genesis 37:33	Luke 23:46
Resisted temptation	Genesis 39:8-9	Heb 4:15
Gained the confidence of others quickly	Genesis 39:3	Matt 8:8
Became a servant	Genesis 39:4	Phil 2:7
Falsely accused	Genesis 39:14 (Potiphar's wife)	Mark 14:56 (chief priests)
Silent before their accusers	Genesis 39:20	Mark 15:4
Condemned between two prisoners - one was saved the other was not	Genesis 40:2-3	Luke 23:32
Held for two, and freed on the third	Genesis 41:1	Luke 9:22
Taught by YHWH	Genesis 41:16	John 5:19
The Spirit of YHWH was in them	Genesis 41:38	Luke 4:1
Arose into a new life	Genesis 41:41	Mark 16:6
Began ministry at 30	Genesis 41:46	Luke 3:23
Saved people from certain death	Genesis 41:55, 42:1-2	John 10:27-29
Everyone (both Jew and Gentile) came to him for their provision	Genesis 42:5-6	Acts 4:12
Gave bread to hungry people	Genesis 41:57	Mark 6:41
Not recognized by their own brothers	Genesis 42:8	Luke 24:37
Tested people to reveal their true nature	Genesis 42:25	Mark 11:30

Brothers bowed down before them	Genesis 44:14	Phil 2:10
Humble and unspoiled by wealth	Genesis 45:7-8	John 13:12
Became lord/Lord	Genesis 45:8	Rev 19:16
Loved people freely	Genesis 45:15	John 13:34
Returned to their father/Father	Genesis 46:29	Mark 16:19
Seeing them was a "prerequisite" before the death of a person	Genesis 46:30	Luke 2:26
Returned good for evil	Genesis 50:20	Matt 5:44

Applying the Portion to Life Today

What happened to Joseph and what happens in your life occurs to expose the light of YHWH. One author has written that “humans were created with two distinct aspects to their nature – darkness and light. The darkness is in the human ego – as in Everybody’s Got One. This is also where the light hides. Light is in the human soul, which is obscured by the ego. The purpose of your existence is to allow the full intensity of light to shine in your life and in this world. You have two ways to conduct your life:

- 1) Through your ego, doubting or oblivious to the truth of the Light, considering only yourself.
- 2) Through the humility of your soul, constantly finding the Light and considering the needs of others

Your career, your family, and your friends are here for one purpose – to provide the opportunity for you to carry out your personal transformation, they give you the chance to let go of your ego, selfishness, and envy, and in turn, find the Light.” These two aspects of the human nature are the flesh and the spirit, the yetzer hara and the yetzer tov. Believers in Messiah are not to live in darkness but walk in the Light. “You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness,” 1 Thessalonians 5:5.

The events of your life shape your character and personality into what it is today. "In every sorrow there is profit," says Mishlei (Proverbs) 14:23.

This week's parasha is called "miketz" which literally means "at the end." This portion begins with the verse that says, "at the end of two years." It had been two years since Yosef had correctly interpreted a pair of dreams from the chief cupbearer and the baker. These were two full years of imprisonment, darkness, and loneliness. During this time Yosef learns to overcome sin and release the Light of YHWH. Yosef discovers that it's the events of your life that make you who you are. Yosef now understands that it is not anything in him that can interpret the dreams; rather it is the Almighty's power working through him.

When Yosef is brought out of the pit of prison and before Pharaoh it is like déjà vu all over again.

Pharaoh reveals his two nightmares and then says the same exact words the cupbearer and baker used. Pharaoh said, "no one can interpret" his dreams in B'reisheet 41:15. What is amazing about this event is that though the situation is the same Yosef responds differently. He does not respond as he did in the past. No, Yosef has changed. Yosef has learned to release the Light. He does not say "relate it to me" like he done so in the past to the cupbearer and the baker. This time Yosef tells Pharaoh "Elohim will answer." Instead of hiding the Light with ego and selfish ambition Yosef points Pharaoh to the Light.

In the Scriptures, Light is the Hebrew word "ore." According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and Dictionary "ore" literally means "to be luminous literally and metaphorically: break of day, glorious, kindle, set on fire, shine." The word "ore" appears 5 times on the first day of creation, representing the 5 books of the Torah that bring Light to the world. Light is also used as a synonym or Hebrew idiom for the Torah. So when the scriptures speak of Light they are in fact many times speaking of the Word of YHWH, the Torah. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light (Torah) unto my path," says Tehillim (Psalm) 119.

Light is also symbolic of the Messiah Y'shua. "When Y'shua spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life," Yochanan 8:12. So, light symbolizes Torah and light symbolizes Y'shua. This makes since because Y'shua is the living Torah!

In the Sermon on the Mount Y'shua told his followers to let their light shine. He was saying to let their Torah observance shine as a witness to everyone that the Messiah has come. Y'shua was reminding them of the principle that inside man

is the darkness of the flesh yet inside man was ability to choose Light. “Let your light (Torah) so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Mattitياهو 5:16

When Light/Torah/Y’shua penetrates through the darkness, lives are changed, hurts are healed, and people understand their purpose in life. Yosef went through many trials, which in turn brought forth much Light. The trials you are going through now are happening for the same reason. What happens in your life occurs to bring forth Light. This doesn’t mean YHWH has caused the events that are occurring but He has allowed it. It occurs to provide you an opportunity to grow. Hardships and suffering fan the flame of Light in the darkness of your world.

Light and darkness cannot coexist at the same time. Remember that in the beginning the Father said “let there be Light” and from the darkness came Light. Well, by simply understanding how Light shines you will discover your destiny as a person and find fulfillment in your life. How does the Light of Messiah shine?

First of all, don’t immediately ask YHWH to remove a sickness, hardship, trial, problem, or area of conflict when they occur. When you have a bad day, don’t go into super rebuking mode and cast out everything including the demon of wrinkled clothes. Before you pray to the Father to release you from a sickness, hardship, or circumstance, first ask Him what you are supposed to learn from it. Maybe you are going through something just to learn a specific lesson in the process. “Trials and difficulties mark the beginnings of darkness, but there is always the Light of salvation to look forward to even as the sons of Israel were brought out of Egypt at night in Devarim 16:1,” wrote Avi Ben Mordechai. Remember that Y’shua knew about the trials of Kefa (Peter). Y’shua knew in advance that Kefa would be tempted to deny the Messiah but Y’shua did not pray that the trials would be removed. Instead Y’shua prayed that Kefa’s “faith would remain.” Kefa needed the trials to prove his faith!

Light also comes forth when a person goes through either a spiritual transformation or suffering. Light is blocked when a person walks in the flesh and fulfills the lusts of the soul.

One Rabbi teaches that, “when we suffer we experience pain, when we undergo grief and heartache, the hurting actually purges ego and self-interest from our nature. The soul- our true self – shines brighter at that moment. This is why we

suddenly feel a sense of love and unity with others when planes crash into buildings and those buildings collapse on national television. This is why we feel a shift in our priorities when the rubble of human remains litters the landscape as a result of war, terror, or tragic accidents. Our egos diminish from the emotional pain and our souls suddenly blossom.” Suffering brings people to the revelation and understanding that life is not all about satisfying selfish desires and ambition. The Almighty uses suffering to call people back to Himself, to humble people to the realization that life is not all about self.

Pain brings revelation of human nature but the pain lessons over time. The pain is forgotten and forsaken for selfishness, sinful actions and thought. Don’t you know that churches are full of people when there is a national tragedy? Many spend time at the altar confessing a “spiritual” renewal but a few weeks later those same people are nowhere to be found when the church bell rings. Nothing lasting has taken place because the truth of the Light, the Torah is not taught. The light of suffering will soon diminish and people will return to their old ways.

Suffering is temporary and so the light of suffering is temporary. A person stays humble for only so long. Darkness soon overtakes the light as the pain of tragedy is forgotten and there is a return to walking in the flesh and looking out for self.

To turn the Light switch on indefinitely you must experience a spiritual transformation akin to the caterpillar transforming into the butterfly. “The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light (Torah/Y’shua). Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with Adon Moshiach Y’shua, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature,” Romans 12:12-13. Your life must change from going with the flow of the flesh to submitting to the Torah if you want the Light of Messiah to shine for good.

To keep the power of the light shining you should be like Yosef – you should learn from your pain and experience the life-changing presence of the Almighty.

You must deny yourself and follow the Messiah; follow the Torah; follow the Light. “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: YHWH is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in

the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Y'shua, his Son, purifies us from all sin," 1 Yochanan 1:5-7.

Pain is evitable. The experiences of life cannot be stopped. What happens to you happens for a reason – so your life can show forth the Light and glory of YHWH. If you don't believe this, just ask Yosef. Or ask the Messiah. "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through YHWH," Yochanan 3:19-21.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Vayeshev." What does this mean?
2. Read Amos 2:6-3:8. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Matthew 1:1-6 and verse 16-25. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How is Messiah Y'shua pictured in this Torah portion?
5. Explain how you can apply this week's study to your life?
6. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
7. The portion begins with a specific reference to "two years" having passed. The Jewish sages comment that these were two years that YHWH added to Joseph's prison term for not trusting Him fully and instead appealing to the chief of cup bearers (imprisoned along with him at the time) to "put in a good word for him to Pharaoh." Do you agree? Why or why not?
8. What was the meaning of Pharaoh's dreams of the corn and cows?
9. Did Pharaoh sin by going to the magicians?
10. The chief butler confessed his faults, proclaimed his sin, and held true to his word to remember Joseph. How were his actions an acceptable pattern of true Biblical teshuvah / repentance?
11. Before Yosef could appear before Pharaoh he had to be smoothly shaven. How is the bald shaved look of the Egyptians different than the bearded Hebrew custom?
12. When given the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh's dream, Yosef said "it is of YHWH." How was this statement of faith different than when Yosef interpreted previous dreams?
13. An east wind devoured the corn in Pharaoh's dream. What is significant about a wind from the east?

14. Yosef said that "Elohim has showed Pharaoh what he about to do." In your opinion, does YHWH speak to pagan unbelievers? Can unbelievers easily understand YHWH's revelations?
15. Pharaoh dreamed two dreams on the same subject and Yosef interpreted the dream. How did these actions line up with the Torah provision that everything must be established by two or three witnesses?
16. In what manner are Pharaoh's dreams similar to Yosef's dreams (at the beginning of Parasha Vayeshev)? [Note primarily their 'double' nature.] Does this help explain how Yosef is able to solve Pharaoh's dream?
17. Pharaoh acknowledged that the Ruach / Holy Spirit was upon Yosef? How did he sense this?
18. Yosef was made "ruler over all the land of Egypt." Explain how Yosef went from the pit to the prison and then to the palace.
19. Yosef's name was changed by Pharaoh. How did taking an Egyptian name help Yosef assimilate into the pagan culture? How is this similar today?
20. Did the exile of the Hebrew people start with Yosef or later?
21. How old was Yosef when he stood before Pharaoh? Why is this number significant?
22. Yosef took the daughter of Potipher as a wife. Was she a Hebrew?
23. Who were Joseph's sons? What is the meaning of their names as given in the Torah?
24. Who are Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, today?
25. Since Yosef's wife was not Hebrew, are her children full-blooded Israelites? Does the Biblical bloodline run from the mother or the father?
26. How did Pharaoh use the famine to grow the power of Egypt?
27. Who was kept in Egypt as a hostage?
28. Joseph made known to his brothers a way of deliverance through substitution. Who in the last two thousand years have been making known to the world the way of deliverance through the substitutionary work of Messiah Y'shua the Son of Joseph?
29. Jacob sent 10 sons to Egypt but held back Benjamin. How is this similar to Jacob splitting his family into two camps as he approached Esav?
30. Jacob sent 10 sons to Egypt but held back Benjamin. How is this similar to the splitting of the two houses of Israel into Ephraim and Judah?
31. Why did Joseph speak roughly to his brothers and then accuse them of being spies? How did this behavior help?

32. Yosef put his brothers in prison for three days. Who was left behind?
How is this like how his brothers treated Joseph when they through him in prison?
33. What language did the 10 sons of Joseph speak?
34. Who offered to be surety for Benyamin?
35. Why was it an abomination for Hebrews and Egyptians to eat together?
36. Was Joseph being deceptive by hiding his cup in the bags of his brothers?
37. Judah laid down his life for his brother. Why? What is this prophetic of?
38. Prophetically, would YHVH accept children of mixed marriages to be grafted in to the olive tree of Israel to become full citizens with equal standing and rights as full-blooded Israelites? (Read Romans 11:13–24.)
39. Who does Paul say these Gentiles are? (See Rom 9:25–26 and then read the Hosea passage Paul is quoting from Hosea 2:23. Also read Eph 2:11–19; Rom 4:16; 9:8, 11; and Gal 3:7, 9, 14, 28, 29.)
40. This Torah portion reading occurs every year at the time of Chanukah. Why? What does this story have in common with the account of the Festival of Lights?

Parasha Vayigash

- Genesis 44:18 – 47:27
- Ezekiel 37:15-28
- Luke 6:12-16

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Judah approaches Joseph to plead for the release of Benjamin, offering himself as a slave to the Egyptian ruler in Benjamin's stead. Upon witnessing his brothers' loyalty to one another, Joseph reveals his identity to them. "I am Joseph," he declares. "Is my father still alive?"

The brothers are overcome by shame and remorse, but Joseph comforts them. "It was not you who sent me here," he says to them, "but YHWH. It has all been ordained from Above to save us, and the entire region, from famine."

The brothers rush back to Canaan with the news. Jacob comes to Egypt with his sons and their families –seventy souls in all -- and is reunited with his beloved son after 22 years. On his way to Egypt he receives the Divine promise: "Fear not to go down to Egypt; for I will there make of you a great nation. I will go down with you into Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again."

Joseph gathers the wealth of Egypt by selling food and seed during the famine. Pharaoh gives Jacob's family the fertile county of Goshen to settle, and the children of Israel prosper in their Egyptian exile.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The historical and Biblical Messiah Y'shua was not hyped up on the modern psycho-babel that spews from many of today's popular televangelists. No, the Scriptures record a highly emotional Messiah who was often moved with compassion towards others. He wasn't fearful, stressed or anxious. Nor did he ever put his needs before others. Instead, Messiah cared for the needy and even wept at the death of his friend Lazarus. The prophet Yesha'yahu calls the Moshiach a "man of many sorrows." Isaiah 53:3-4, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of YHWH, and afflicted."

When we consider such, we can compare Y'shua ben Yosef to the Yosef in our weekly Torah portion. Yosef didn't conceal his emotions much, but allowed his feelings to show. He was moved by his brother's care for their father and he was overjoyed to finally meet his brother Benjamin. Y'shua showed his compassion in these verses:

- Mark 6:34, "When Y'shua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things."
- Matthew 14:14, "When Y'shua landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick."
- Matthew 20:34, "Y'shua had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."
- Matthew 15:32, "Y'shua called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."
- Hebrews 13:8, "Y'shua the Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever."

Yosef fed and cared for the very same family that had betrayed and sold him. Yosef was sold for silver, falsely accused of sin, and forgotten for two years. Such events would cause anyone to be emotionally raw and unforgiving. Yet our Torah portion shows that Yosef did not retaliate against his family. He showed love and compassion to his brothers, even though they didn't deserve such. The Torah records that Yosef, like Y'shua, was also a man of many sorrows. His life was not all roses. He faced hardship and pain at every turn. Y'shua fed and cared for the very same people that would later yell "crucify." The Moshiach Y'shua also showed forgiveness on the execution tree when he cried "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Yosef and Y'shua used their emotions to manifest the divine will of YHWH. Our emotions should cause us to react positively towards others in an expression of love and forgiveness. Take a few moments to pray about your attitude and actions towards others. Do you show the compassion of Y'shua and Yosef? Do you view other's needs as more important than your own? Are you a good representation of Y'shua's emotions?

Applying the Portion to Life Today

This week's Torah portion provides an excellent example of the power of forgiveness. Just read the parasha and see how gracious Yosef is to his brothers. While coming in contact with his long estranged family Yosef gains the upper hand. He could really get revenge. He is the person that the eleven stars, the sun and moon are bowing to. Yosef is the wheat sheaf that is surrounded by the other stalks as they revere him. Yosef is in the place of power in Egypt and could act as the judge and the jury. He could return "tit for tat" and seek revenge upon his family. Yosef had been wronged and mistreated; yet there remains in Yosef a desire for restoration. Yosef wants to forgive his family. Yosef understands a few facts about forgiveness.

Forgiveness Fact # 1: Forgiveness is absolution

There are several words in the Hebrew language for forgiveness. The one most often used today is "selichah" or in plural form "slichot." If you were on the streets of Israel today and bumped into someone you would simply say "slichot" for "forgive me" or "pardon/excuse me." This word means a total absolution and pardoning of the offense. Slichot is also the name of a section of prayers spoken during times of repentance and on Yom Kippur. Because a person either sins against the Almighty YHWH or against another person, slichot is a two dimensional action. Slichot is given either from man to man or from the Creator to man. This teaching will deal specifically with human forgiveness. In Hebrew these sins are called "bein adam le-havero" or injury against a fellow man. Interestingly these sins against other people must be forgiven before forgiveness from YHWH is granted.

The Messiah's comment on this subject in the book of Matthew reflects the rabbinical teachings of his time. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins," Matthew 6:14-15. The Talmud has several sayings that read almost identical to this verse. Both the person who has sinned and the person who has been sinned against have an obligation to accept and give. "All who act mercifully (forgivingly) toward their fellow creatures will be treated mercifully by Heaven, and all who do not act mercifully toward their fellow creatures will not be treated mercifully by Heaven," says the Talmud.

Forgiveness Fact # 2: To get it grant it

To get forgiveness you must grant forgiveness. Forgive when asked. That's pretty basic isn't it? Well, it is also pretty hard. When you've been hurt, when your

integrity has been questioned, when people are untrustworthy it is very difficult to put the past behind you. Yet you must. Messiah Y'shua taught this when he told his talmidim to pray, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us."

This parasha begins with Yosef's brother begging for forgiveness and a pardon for his younger brother Binyamin. "Y'hudah went up to him and said: "Please, my master, let your servant speak a word to my master. Do not be angry with your servant, though you are equal to Pharaoh himself," Genesis/B'reisheet 44:18. Y'hudah and the brothers have realized their wrongs and don't want to bring any more grief to their father. Even though the brothers did not know Yosef's identity, they approached Yosef to seek a different outcome than what has been determined. The brothers could have treated Binyamin just like they had previously treated Yosef but they did not. Instead Y'hudah offers himself as a substitute and proves that he has learned his lesson. Messiah Y'shua taught that to get forgiveness you must give it, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us," He said.

Forgiveness Fact # 3: It considers other people

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my master's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father," B'reisheet 44:33. Forgiveness brings harmony and shouts out "it is not all about me!" It wipes the slate clean, fixes the broken, and reaches out in love. In B'reisheet 37:26-27 the very same brother, brother Y'hudah, who sold Yosef into slavery offers himself as a slave to Yosef in order to spare Binyamin (and Ya'acov). Through this selfless act of substitution Y'hudah was actually seeking slichot and righting the wrongs of the past. Messiah Y'shua acknowledges this when He said "greater love hath no man than he who lay down his life for his friends."

The Rabbis of Judaism have said, "if you have done your fellow a little wrong, let it be in your eyes great; if you have done him much good, let it be your eyes a little; if he has done you a little good, let it be in your eyes great; if he has done you a great wrong, let it be in your eyes little."

Forgiveness Fact # 4: It reveals your true self

During the course of events of this parasha Yosef breaks into weeping a total of three times until finally he can restrain himself no more. “Then Yosef could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone leave my presence!” So there was no one with Yosef when he made himself known to his brothers. And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard him, and Pharaoh’s household heard about it,” B’reisheet 45:1 & 2. True forgiveness does this for you. It breaks down the walls that have been built over the years. It reveals what is hidden beneath angry faces and harsh words. Forgiveness brings to surface the pains of the past and acknowledges that wrong is wrong.

Forgiveness Fact # 5: It is a gift of unmerited favor

Yosef knows that forgiveness is absolution from the sin. So instead of punishing the brothers for what they have done to him, Yosef pardons them and embraces them. “Then he threw his arms around his brother Binyamin and wept, and Binyamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him,” B’reisheet 45:14-15. Yosef keeps the mitzvah found in Vayikra (Leviticus) 11:18, which says, “though shalt not take vengeance nor hold a grudge.” This act of mercy, this act of forgiveness is not earned. Forgiveness is to be given freely to a repentant person. It is not optional.

Slichot realizes that to “err is human.” People will be offended. And just as Yosef gave a huge tribute of gifts to his brothers and father, forgiveness gives those involved the gift of a new beginning. With Yosef and his brothers slichot brought hugs, smiles, tears, kisses, and a fresh start. “Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as YHWH forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity,” Colossians 3:13-14. Slichot should put an end to bitterness and strife and help bring healing to the family of Messiah.

Forgiveness Fact # 6: It reveals the truth

While revealing his identity to his brothers Yosef is not scared nor is he slow to remind them of their sin. The truth is that they sinned against him. Just as Judah/Y’hudah drew near to offer repentance/teshuvah, now Yosef draws near to offer forgiveness. Please note that before forgiveness can come there must always be teshuvah. “Then Yosef said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Yosef, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for

selling me here, because it was to save lives that Elohim sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But Elohim sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance,” B’reisheet 45:4-8. While YHWH used the course of events in Yosef’s life, what his brothers did was still a grievance.

The truth is that Yosef forgives them of this hideous injury AND admits that it was from YHWH. While Yosef had earlier interpreted many dreams, now Yosef is interpreting the events of his life. What has happened has happened; the past is the past and it cannot be changed. A person must be accountable and responsible for their actions for restoration to take place. This might even mean humbling yourself to admit a wrong you did or did not do. This is the truth and the truth will set you free.

There was once an old and wise Rabbi who was teaching a group of children about repentance and forgiveness. As he concluded his lesson he wanted to make sure that he had made his point. The ancient Rabbi leaned towards the children and said, "Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?" There was a short pause and then, from the back of the group, a small boy spoke up. "Sin," he said. Sin, hurt, and pain can be erased, healed, and forgiven through a proper understand of slichot and a proper offering of forgiveness.

Whether you are a Rabbi yourself or just an ordinary Joe there is much still to be learned about forgiveness. Y’shua said to offer this pardon even if you are sinned against seventy times seven times. Forgiveness is a supernatural power able to bridge the gap between offended parties while restoring fellowship through love.

Forgiveness. Just think about the emotions this word conjures up. Imagine Americans forgiving other Americans for years of segregation and racism based upon skin color. Visualize a guilty death row inmate being mercifully pardoned because of life changes. Envision Yosef graciously forgiving his brothers for throwing him into a dark pit, selling him into a life of slavery, and blaming his disappearance on wild animals. Imagine forgiveness restoring friendships or relationships in your life. It can if you can replicate the actions of Yosef and let go of the pain. When you apply this week’s Torah portion to your life, you will never be the same.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Vayigash.” What does this mean?
2. Read Ezekiel 37:15-28. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 6:12-16. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
6. Why does Yosef test his brothers regarding the cup, money, and even Simeon? Do you think he was trying to decide if they had learned from their previous sins?
7. This portion begins with the phrase “Judah came near.” How is this phrase important?
8. Judah speaks to Yosef about his father Ya’acov in a loving manner. It was Judah that originally wanted to mislead and emotionally hurt his father by selling Joseph into slavery. Why the change?
9. What does it mean that Jacob’s life “was bound up in Benjamin’s life?”
10. How are Benyamin and Yosef connected?
11. Who offered himself as surety for Benyamin?
12. When Yosef made himself known to his brothers he was very emotional. How is this symbolic of Y’shua being “the man of sorrow?”
13. Yosef said “I am Yosef” and his brothers could not respond. Explain why this is similar to how all believers will be silent when we stand before the judgment seat of YHWH.
14. Discuss how the statement “I am Yosef” is being repeated today by believers who are coming to the knowledge of their Israelite identity.
15. Yosef said “elohim sent me before you to preserve life.” How is this similar to Romans 8:28?
16. How many years had the famine ravaged the world at the time of Yosef’s reunion with his family? Compare this to the resurrection of Messiah and the return of Messiah.
17. Why did Yosef use the word “remnant” in Genesis 45:7?
18. Where did the Israelites dwell as they came to the land of Egypt? Why is this land important?
19. Why did Yosef want his family to live in the land of Goshen?
20. Had Yosef and Benyamin ever met?
21. “Yosef fell upon the neck of Benyamin and wept” in Genesis 45:14. How is this different than Esav falling upon the neck of Jacob in Genesis 33:14?

22. Pharaoh promoted Yosef and his family and gave them the best land of Egypt. Is this a representation of Proverbs 16:17?
23. How did Ya'acov respond when he heard that Yosef was alive and well? Is this similar to Thomas in the book of John chapter 20?
24. On the way to Egypt, Jacob stopped at Beer Sheva to offer sacrifices. Why? What came of such worship?
25. What did YHWH promise Jacob about his journey to Egypt?
26. Study the words found in Genesis 46:3 which says, "I am YHWH, the elohim of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation. The terms for "great nation" is "goy gadol." What is significant about this phrase? Who is a goy?
27. In Egypt, Yosef had two sons named "Ephraim" and "Manasseh." Were these boys full blooded Israelites? Why or why not?
28. Benjamin named each of his sons in honor of Yosef. What are the meanings of these names in the Hebrew: Bela, Beker, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim and Ard
29. How many Israelites went down into Egypt? Explain the differences found in Genesis 46:26 and 46:27 AND Acts 7:14. Why do these verses give different numbers?
30. Who went first to Yosef? See Judges 20:18.
31. What was the trade of the Israelites? Why was this an abomination to the Egyptians?
32. Explain how the lifestyle of the Hebrews separated them from the Egyptians. Was Goshen the best of the land?
33. Why would Ya'acov bless the evil Pharaoh?
34. How did the famine make Egypt rich? Compare this to Amos 8:11.
35. Who were Pharaoh's original slaves? How did the sons of Jacob become slaves to Pharaoh?
36. What did you learn from this week's "Open Bible" teaching?

Parasha Vayechi

- Genesis 47:28-50:26
- 1 Kings 2:1-12
- 1 Peter 1:1-9

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Ya'acov lives the final 17 years of his life in Egypt. Before his passing, he asks Joseph to take an oath that he will bury him in the Holy Land. He blesses Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, elevating them to the status of his own sons as progenitors of tribes within the nation of Israel.

The patriarch desires to reveal the end of days to his children. Jacob blesses his sons, assigning to each his role as a tribe: Judah will produce leaders, legislators and kings; priests will come from Lewi, scholars from Issachar, seafarers from Zevulun, schoolteachers from Simeon, soldiers from Gad, judges from Dan, olive growers from Asher, and so on. Re'uven is rebuked for "confusing his father's marriage"; Shimon and Levi for the massacre of Shechem and the plot against Joseph. Naphtali is granted the swiftness of a deer, Benjamin the ferociousness of a wolf, and Joseph is blessed with beauty and fertility.

A large funeral procession consisting of Jacob's descendants, Pharaoh's ministers, the leading citizens of Egypt and the Egyptian cavalry accompanies Jacob on his final journey to the Holy Land, where he is buried in the Machpeilah Cave in Hebron.

Yosef, too, dies in Egypt, at the age of 110. He, too, instructs that his bones be taken out of Egypt and buried in the Holy Land, but this would come to pass only with the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt many years later. Before his passing, Joseph conveys to the Children of Israel the testament from which they will draw their hope and faith in the difficult years to come: "YHWH will surely remember you, and bring you up out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Ya'acov."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The actual name of our Messiah is found hidden behind the translator's words in this week's Torah portion. Genesis 49:18 is just one example of how we miss so much in the Scriptures because we don't read and study in the Hebrew. There

are so many facets of truth that can only be discovered in the Hebrew texts. In this verse, the translation disguises the Messiah's name and prevents the casual reader from accepting the Savior's presence throughout the Old Testament.

Genesis 49:18 in English reads, "I have waited for Your salvation, O YHWH." In Hebrew the verse is "Le Y'shua tehka keyoo eet'ee YHWH." Here, the exact word for "salvation" is the exact name of the Messiah as given to him by the heavenly messengers in Matthew 1:21. This verse could also be translated "To thy Y'SHUA I am looking, O YHWH." In this passage, Jacob is actually calling out the name of Y'shua and professing faith in the Moshiaich before his incarnation. This isn't the only time the Savior's name is made known in the Tanakh. In Psalm 9:14, King David of Israel said "I will rejoice in thy salvation/Y'shua." The Prophet Isaiah agreed in 12:2&3, "Behold, Elohim is my Y'SHUA/salvation; I will trust, and be not afraid: for YHWH is my strength and my song; he also is become my Y'shua/salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Y'shua/salvation." Later in Isaiah 62:11 we read, "Behold, YHWH hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation/Y'shua cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." And in Habakkuk 3:13 we find a startling verse that actually call's Y'shua the anointed Messiah! "Thou wentest forth for the salvation/Y'shua of thy people, even for salvation/Y'shua with thine anointed/messiah..."

Y'shua is found throughout the pages of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings if we will just look. May YHWH open our eyes that we could behold wonderful things from His Torah as Y'shua is the Torah made flesh.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

The Jewish people have kept the Torah for thousands of years. They have an understanding of what it means to obey the majority of the commandments. The Rabbis and Sages of Judaism have studied, discussed, fussed, and made decisions on the various mitzvah or commands. A single action of obeying a Torah command has developed overtime into a tradition through repetition. The action also has progressed into the culture as an accepted practice, thus becoming part of the Jewish identity. To put it plainly, the Jews have the Torah and so to learn how to obey the Torah you can learn how the Jews do it. The Jewish people's Torah keeping is a witness to the world on how a Bible believer should act. "What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of YHWH," Romans 3:1.

Take for example the commandment in the Torah found in Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:5-9. It says to “Love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. And these words (the Torah) which you are being ordered this day are to be on your heart...write them on the door frames of your house and on your gates...” You could ignore this verse as being in the “Old Testament” or in the “Jewish Law.” But if you really want to follow the whole of scripture you would try to obey it. But how exactly do you do so?

To literally obey this command to write the words of the Bible on your doorframes and gates is pretty strange. You could come up with your own interpretation and try to do it. Your imagination might lead you to write Bible verses with a permanent marker all over the frames of your house. Or you could accept the traditional Jewish observance of this mitzvah. You could follow an age-old tradition by affixing a mezuzah to your doorpost.

A mezuzah is a small encasing that holds a Torah scroll inside. The custom of the mezuzah helps fulfill the commandment in a special way. Yes, using the mezuzah is not the only way to obey this verse and yes it is the Jewish way to do it, but what is wrong with following their example here?

The Hebrew word for tradition is “masoret.” The Encyclopedia Judaica says, “Masoret is the general name for tradition. It is found in Ezekiel 20:37 and means originally "bond" or "fetter." Tradition is the discipline which establishes the correct practice and interpretation of the Torah and was therefore regarded as a hedge or fetter about the Law. Since this knowledge was handed down by successive generations, it was also associated with the Hebrew word masor, denoting "to give over." In traditional Jewish literature, the term masoret is used to include all forms of tradition, both those which relate to the Bible and those which concern custom, law, historical events, folkways, and other subjects.” Masoret remain virtually unchanged over long periods of time to provide examples, uniformity, and help with belief.

Jewish obedience to the Torah is not just mindless or faithless work. No, their practice of Torah has over time developed into a culture of events that express a lifestyle. It is not just about a religion. “Tradition has given Judaism a continuity with its past and preserved its character as a unique faith with a distinct way of life,” says one source.

Ok, so what does all this talk about masoret and customs have to do with the torah reading called “Vayechi?” Well, this parasha is full of traditions. Just skim over the reading to learn about life then and life now. Some of the traditional actions within these few chapters are of benefit while others are questionable. Here are just a few examples of the masoret found in this parasha:

1. Blessing or “B’racha” in Genesis 48:1-49:33
2. Embalming the dead in Genesis 50:1-3
3. Laying on of hands in Genesis 48:12-20
4. Burial with other Hebrew people in Genesis 49:7-50:13
5. Mourning the dead in Genesis 50:1-13

Other traditions are found in this Parsha, like saying important dying words to those near you. These life events define who you are and attest to your identity and culture. Your traditions show to those around what you believe and whom you worship.

Obedience to the Torah requires a different lifestyle than that of the world. Believers in the Bible must make a decision about the Torah. Either we will dismiss the Torah or we will accept the Torah. Either we will follow the Messiah’s example and keep the commands of Moshe or we will follow the preachers’ example and pig out on pork. Either we will agree to the traditional way of obeying a command or we will make it up as we go. You can dismiss the Torah as being “too Jewish” or you can accept the Torah and strive to obey it, the choice is yours. Yet when you choose to obey the Torah you will soon be confronted with another big problem. This is the problem of “how.”

To find the answer on “how” just look to the Jewish people and the first followers of the Messiah. The Jewish people’s faithful obedience to the Torah over the years serves as an example on how to fulfill the commandments. Sadly, most “New Testament Christians” have both testaments yet know very little about how to practically apply the Old Testament to everyday life. Yet, as a follower of the Bible, how do you know which rituals from Judaism to keep? As a person who wants to keep the Torah, how do you know which customs of the Jews to stay away from? If it is wrong to practice the routines of the pagans, what makes everything Jewish so special? When it comes to the Torah the Jews have already set the “halakhah” or the way to do it.

Yes, the Jewish people have kept the Torah for thousands of years. They have hashed out the difficult verses and set standards on the way to live. Many of the

Jewish observances concerning the Torah are of benefit. By following the traditional adherence to the Torah your actions can model that of the first believers in Messiah. The early Believers were “just like the Torah keeping Jews” and their accepted practices differed in no way, teaches the church historian Eusebius.

Halakhah is the Hebrew word for the “way to walk” or the way “to go” in obeying the commands. It is found throughout the scriptures and is based on a verse from Shemot/Exodus. “And thou shalt show them the way wherein they are to go and the work that they must do,” Shemot (Exodus) 18:20. When a teacher or “rabbi” sets halakhah that teacher is saying, “we’re going to obey this command in this manner.” Torah is the doctrine while halakhah is the way to walk out that doctrine. There is much freedom when it comes to determining halakhah.

Decisions of halakhah are interpretations by a group of teachers or a teacher on how to best fulfill the Torah. Some groups have strict halakhah will others have very liberal teachings.

Throughout the world, Rabbi’s halakhah differ on how to do certain things, say Hebrew words, and obey the various commands. Haven’t you ever struggled with the “correct” way to keep a command? Halakhah conquers that struggle with a scriptural answer. Sometimes halakhah includes several different scriptural answers. This is why two groups can perform a mitzvah differently, yet both are in their own eyes “right.”

Much halakhah is based on scriptural traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. There is nothing wrong with a Biblical tradition that offers, “You can keep the commandment this way.” What is wrong is traditionalism, which says, “YOU HAVE to keep the commandment our way.”

Traditions of the Bible are ok. Traditionalism of man is not ok. Traditions produce heritage, unity, and love. Traditionalism produces legalism, bondage, and rejection. Traditions are a means to an end. Traditionalism is the end in and of itself.

When Y’shua spoke about masoret he was rebuking a group of Torah teachers who were exalting their traditionalism over the Torah. “You have let go of the commands of Elohim and are holding on to the traditions of men. You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of Elohim in order to set up your own traditions!” said Y’shua in Mark 7:8-93. Notice that he did not tell them to get rid of their traditions. What the Messiah did do though is rebuke the teachers who

valued, upheld, and created traditions that replaced obedience to the Torah. If any tradition takes the place of Torah, negates Torah, or hinders your walk of Torah then this is a tradition that needs to be dropped and replaced.

For example many people did not and even do not use the sacred name of YHWH because the Torah says to “not take the name of YHWH in vain.” Traditionalism says “to keep you from taking His name in vain just never use his name. If you never use his name then you can never misuse it.” Sorry folks, but this is just not what the scriptures mean. Tradition will support the Biblical mandate to use his name as found throughout scripture, yet it might teach you to use his name with a “w” sound or a “v” sound.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life,” says Mishlei (Proverbs) 4:23. Traditions can be used to aide and assist your spiritual walk. But they can also become idolized and control your heart.

Good or “tov” traditions will lead you towards intimacy with YHWH. But with so many customs, web sites, articles, books, teachers, and ways to do things how do you know what to do? What should you do about how to exactly obey the various mitzvah? In looking to Judaism for information on Torah, what should you accept and what should you reject?

Finally here’s some help! Here’s a short “Truth Test” to use when deciding what traditions to use and what traditions to stay away from. When your family or ministry is making a decision on how to keep the commandments use this litmus test to assess the situation. The truth will set you free while pagan rituals, false worship days, and legalistic religious actions will bind you up. You have a rich culture and heritage of Biblical customs and traditions awaiting you.

Use this short test to examine your actions and as a tool to help you decide which traditions you should receive with open arms and which customs you should shy away from.

1. Is it Biblical? Does this custom or action go against certain verses or principles found in the Scriptures?
2. Is it pagan? Does this custom or action have pagan roots, pagan affiliation, or have pagan connotations to it?

3. Does it grieve the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit)? Do you have peace with doing this? Does it promote unity, love, and shalom? Do you feel the Spirit's tug when you do or don't do it this way?

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Vayechi." What does this mean?
2. Read 1 Kings 2:1-12. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in 1 Peter 1:1-9. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Why is it important that Jacob is buried in the Holy Land?
Where exactly is Ya'acov buried?
7. Give two reasons why Ya'acov didn't want to be buried in Egypt.
8. How old was Ya'acov when he died?
9. Describe the blessings to Ephraim and Manasseh. What do these mean?
10. Explain how Genesis 48:20 is fulfilled by the Jewish people today. Why would the generations of Jewish men desired to be blessed like Ephraim and Manasseh?
11. Who are Ephraim and Manasseh today?
12. Did Ephraim and Manasseh replace Simeon and Re'uven? Was Ephraim treated as the first born? Why did Ya'acov bow before his grandsons?
13. Ya'acov placed his hands on his grandchildren in the opposite order of their birth. Why?
14. Ya'acov blessed them to be like fish in the midst of the earth. Explain how "fish" are
15. often symbolic in the Scriptures for "people" and how "waters" are often metaphorical for the "nations." Does the words of Y'shua in Matthew 4:19 have anything to do with this?
16. Why was Ephraim blessed as the first born?
17. "His seed shall be the fullness of the gentile nations," Genesis 48:19 is an important verse in relation to the nation of Israel. How does this verse correspond to Romans 11:12 and 11:25? When will this promise occur? Who are the fullness of the gentiles? Are you ready to share this answer with your friends and family?

18. Ya'acov called his sons together to hear a message about the end of days. How is this a prophetic reunion of Israel during the last days? Does this mean we are living in the last days?
19. Romans 8:15 is similar to the words in Genesis 48:5. Explain.
20. Does Ya'acov reveal the end of days to his sons or does he instead speak blessings over his sons?
21. Explain the message of YHWH's appearance at Luz to Ya'acov.
22. Re'uven was blessed with might and strength. However, sin stopped him from being all that he could have been for YHWH. How does sin prevent a person from accomplishing the will of YHWH?
23. Simeon and Lewi did what to be called "instruments of cruelty?"
24. Ya'acov cursed the anger of Simeon and Lewi. Is it wrong to be angry? Can you be angry and sin not?
25. How were Simeon and Lewi divided and scattered within Israel?
26. Judah was promised to be a Lion that would receive the praise of his brothers. Explain how this verse compares to Zechariah 8:23.
27. When would the scepter depart from Judah? Has this happened?
28. Who is Shiloh?
29. Why was Zevulun blessed to be near the sea?
30. Issachar is a donkey? What does this mean?
31. The tribe of Dan is called to judge the people. What is the name of a judge from Israel that would come from this tribe?
32. Ya'acov made a stunning confession in Genesis 48:19 while he was blessing his children. He stated "I have waited for your salvation oh YHWH." In Hebrew he said "I have waited for your Y'shua oh YHWH." How was Ya'acov professing faith in Messiah?
33. How is Yosef double blessed?
34. Yosef is prophesied to be fruitful and then hated by archers. How does the adversary shoot fiery darts as the sons of Yosef today? Is Israel hated in the nations?
35. Which tribe is prophesied as a wolf?
36. Who is the Shepherd and Stone of Israel?
37. Which blessing by Ya'acov was the shortest? Which blessing was the longest?
38. Where does the custom of embalmment originate?
39. Should Israelites desire to be embalmed today?
40. How long did the Egyptians mourn for Ya'acov? How does this verse foreshadow Romans 12:15?
41. Who went to bury Ya'acov in Israel?

42. Torah repeats many themes throughout its pages. When Jacob died, Yosef's brothers were afraid that Yosef might exact revenge. Explain how this is similar to what happened between Esav and Jacob when Isaac passed away.
43. The actions of Yosef's brothers reveal to us about how it is sometimes hard to accept forgiveness. Did his brothers expect revenge or love from Yosef? How do you relate?
44. Yosef exclaimed that the evil that was meant to be against him was made into goodness. Where else in the Bible has this occurred? When in your life has a supposed bad thing turned out to be beneficial?
45. Yosef told his brothers to "fear not." How many times in the Bible does this phrase appear? What does this number mean?
46. Yosef's last words that he absolutely would be carried out of Egypt echoed hope through the ages. When would this phrase be important the Hebrew people? Were his bones ever removed from Egypt and taken to the Promised Land?
47. Study and discuss the blessings found for each of the tribes in Deuteronomy 33 and Genesis 49. How are the words of Moses and Jacob similar? How are they different?
48. The last verse of Gen 50 has a translated word, 'coffin', which is used only once from the Hebrew word, 'aron'. The word Aron was translated 199 times as something else that has life. Do you know what this word could be and what does it mean to you?
49. What did you learn from this week's "Open Bible" teaching?

CHAZAK, CHAZAK, v'NIT'CHAZEK.
Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened!

Parasha Shemot

- Exodus 1:1-6:1
- Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23, and Jeremiah 1:1-2:3
- 1 Corinthians 14:13-25

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The children of Israel multiply in Egypt. Threatened by their growing numbers, Pharaoh enslaves them and orders the Hebrew midwives, Shifrah and Puah, to kill all male babies at birth. When they do not comply, he commands his people to cast the Hebrew babies into the Nile.

A child is born to Yocheved, the daughter of Levi, and her husband, Amram, and placed in a basket on the river, while the baby's sister, Miriam, stands watch from afar. Pharaoh's daughter discovers the boy, raises him as her son, and names him Moses or “Moshe” in Hebrew.

As a young man, Moses leaves the palace and discovers the hardship of his brethren. He sees an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and kills the Egyptian. The next day he sees two Hebrews fighting; when he admonishes them, they reveal his deed of the previous day, and Moses is forced to flee to Midian. There he rescues Jethro's daughters, marries one of them - Zipporah - and becomes a shepherd of his father-in-law's flocks.

YHWH appears to Moses in a burning bush at Mount Sinai and instructs him to go to Pharaoh and demand: "Let my people go, so that they may serve Me." The sacred name “YHWH” is given to Moses as a sign of the Almighty’s power and existence. Moses' brother, Aaron, is appointed to serve as his spokesman. In Egypt, Moses and Aaron assemble the elders of Israel to tell them that the time of their redemption has come. The people believe; but Pharaoh refuses to let them go, and even intensifies the suffering of Israel.

Moses returns to YHWH to protest: "Why have You done evil to this people?" YHWH promises that the redemption is close at hand.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Moses was never the same after YHWH spoke to him through the burning bush. This event changed Moses and altered the course of human history. Let's look a little closer at this account and find the Messiah right in the middle of one of mankind's greatest moments.

First, Moses saw the bush from far off. The brightness of the flame attracted him to go closer. Before we come to Y'shua we are in spiritual darkness. But, there is something about the goodness and mercy of Messiah's light that attracts us to Him. Our journey of faith is not always an easy path but it is one towards light. Moses, as well, had to climb up Mt Sinai to get closer to the Light of YHWH. As he approached, he found a bush that was on fire but was not consumed.

In Hebrew, the word used here for bush in Exodus 3 is "seneh." This word is spelled samekh-nun-hey and literally means "thorn bush." This term describes the burning bush as a bramble. The plant aflame wasn't a beautiful azalea or an evergreen holly. No, YHWH spoke to Moses through a thorn bush. The Bible says that it was actually, "the angle of YHWH" that appeared to reveal the great tetragrammaton of yod-hey-vav-hey YHWH. Acts 7:30 describes the scene by saying that the "angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mt. Sinai in the flame of a burning thorn bush," NASB. It is also interesting to note that later YHWH would tell Moses to build a tabernacle of acacia wood and cover it in gold in Exodus 26:29. Acacia is a small tree whose branches are covered with very long thorns. What could these thorns symbolize?

As Moses heard the sacred name he also looked past the flames of yellow and red to see the spiky thorns. Perhaps Moses thought of the trapped lamb that Abraham once found in a thorny thicket. Or maybe, just maybe, the thorny bush was in a round shape like a crown – like the crown of thorns Messiah Y'shua would wear as He was being crucified? All we know is that it was a thorn bush on a mountain top that YHWH used to call his servant Moses and reveal the true name. YHWH is still using a crown of thorns from the hill of Golgotha to draw people to himself today.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Moshe and Aharon both took deep breaths as they approached the king of Egypt. They had a radical message to take to the ruler. Nevertheless, it had to be done. The Almighty had spoken to Moshe and now Moshe had to speak to Pharaoh. With butterflies in his stomach and a frog in his throat, Moshe began

to speak. His brother also presented the Israelite case before Pharaoh. Their message was simple and their message was heard. “Here is what YHWH the Mighty One, the Elohim of Israel, says “Let my people go so that they can celebrate a festival in the desert to me,” Shemot 5:1.

These powerful words fell on silence and Pharaoh shifted in his huge throne. He was definitely uncomfortable with this message. His eyes seemed to dart wildly from side to side. They seemed to be looking for something or someone. His face moved as he looked at his statues, as he looked at his gods. Perhaps he was searching for an altar to “YHWH” but he could not find it. Then, almost without a sound Pharaoh stood and spoke with a booming voice, “Who is YHWH that I should obey when he says to let Israel go? I don’t know YHWH, and I also won’t let Israel go.”

Pharaoh knows well the gods of Mitzrayim (Egypt). Yet he does not know or recognize the Elohim of Israel. Pharaoh doesn’t know YHWH so Pharaoh doesn’t obey YHWH.

Even today a distorted view of Father YHWH leads man to disobedience to His word and rebellion against his ways. To answer Pharaoh’s question (and maybe yours) let’s look to the events of this week’s parasha. Just who is the Elohim of Israel? The answers might surprise you.

Early on in this portion Pharaoh instructed the midwives of Egypt to kill the children of the Hebrews if a boy was being born. Yet, the Torah states that the midwives disobeyed the ruler of Egypt because they feared Elohim. Fear, or deep respect, for YHWH will lead to obedience to YHWH. And obedience always leads to blessing. Evidently the midwives feared Elohim more than they feared Pharaoh. Their defiance to a ruler of this world brought blessing from the Ruler of the universe.

Fear though is a tricky thing. Fear of Elohim leads to profit but fear of man leads to bondage. If you fear something or someone then this emotion could lead you to act irrationally or be scared of events. For example, Pharaoh was motivated by fear to kill the Hebrews. The Talmud says that astrologers had warned Pharaoh that a savior was to be born to Israel soon. This caused Pharaoh to be afraid of what could happen in the future. So in response to his fear of man, Pharaoh sought to kill off all possible boys who could grow and become the Redeemer that was prophesied. The midwives preserved the lives of the Hebrew boys because they feared or respected YHWH. Fear of man leads to death, while fear of YHWH

leads to life. When the Elohim of Israel is feared, actions of righteousness are performed and blessings come.

“During that long period, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites groaned in their slavery and cried out, and their cry for help because of their slavery went up to Elohim. Elohim heard their groaning and he remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac / Yitz’chak and with Jacob / Ya’acov. So Elohim looked on the Israelites and was concerned about them,” Exodus / Shemot 2:23-25.

The Israelites prayed for many years about their slavery. They groaned about their harsh conditions. YHWH heard their prayer and responded. He listened and He answered. The Elohim of Israel hears prayer and responds.

In this Parasha the burning bush is set aflame atop Mount Horev. This peak is also called Sinai and the “mountain of Elohim” throughout the scriptures. This is the mountain where YHWH reveals himself to Moshe. He tells Moshe that Israel will assemble at this very place to worship as a nation freed from bondage and slavery. Consequently it is here, on the mountain of Elohim that the Torah is given to Moshe. Mount Horev is a place of worship, a place of holiness; it is a place of YHWH. Here the “the glory of YHWH was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel,” Shemot 24:17. Many Bible teachers also agree that it was on Horev that Y’shua’s transfiguration took place, thus revealing the glory of YHWH Y’shua.

You see, mountain peaks are very important to the message of the Bible. Much of the Messiah’s ministry and life took place on mountaintops. The mountain is a place where man can do aliyah or ascension to meet with YHWH. “Many nations will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, to the house of the Elohim of Ya’acov. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.” The Torah will go out from Zion, the word of YHWH from Jerusalem,” says Micah 4:2. The mountain is a place of meeting for instruction from YHWH.

On these high peaks Moshe was instructed to go to Pharaoh, Torah was given to Israel, and Y’shua delivered the “sermon on the Mount.” The mountain of Elohim is where YHWH is revealed as teacher. It is where man goes up and YHWH comes down and life is forever changed. Notice the eternal pattern here – man goes up and YHWH comes down.

“Then he said, “I am the Elohim of your father, the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak, and the Elohim of Ya’acov.” At this, Moshe hid his face, because he was afraid to look at Elohim,” Shemot 3:6. It is here that this eternal

phrase of the patriarchal name is first used. The mighty one of Israel is the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

For Moshe each name must have brought to mind how YHWH had interacted with these patriarchs in times gone by. For us this title should still do the same. YHWH is a personal Elohim. He appeared and related personally to the founding fathers of the faith. He called out to Avraham, He appeared to Yitzchak, and He wrestled with Ya'acov. "Like the patriarchs each person should believe in YHWH on the basis of personal investigation, not merely tradition," says the classic Jewish book "Etz Yosef." As Father YHWH He was with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov He was with Moshe. And is with us today.

This name is also a direct reference to the resurrection power of YHWH. Y'shua quoted the Torah and said, "But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what Elohim said to you, 'I am the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitz'chak, and the Elohim of Ya'acov? He is not the Elohim of the dead but of the living.'" You see Avraham was dead yet YHWH is the Elohim of Avraham. Just as He was, and Is, and Is to come YHWH is the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'acov.

When you meet someone, usually the first thing you do is tell that person your name. Next you hear them tell you theirs. When a name is exchanged a bond is made. Well, the Elohim of Israel has a personal name. This designation is to be remembered forever and used for all eternity. When a person calls on the name of YHWH a bond is made and blessings abound. "Anyone who calls on the name of YHWH will be saved," says the scriptures.

"Elohim also said to Moshe, 'Say to the Israelites, 'YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers—the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak and the Elohim of Ya'acov—has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation,'" Shemot 3:14. What was spoken to him was four Hebrew letters that mirror the verb form of "to be." These four letters are "yod-hey-waw-hey" or "YHWH." This is THE name of the creator. "YHWH" is found over 6800 times throughout the scriptures hidden behind the capitalized term "LORD" in English Bibles. The Jewish Publication Society says, "YHVH was probably pronounced "YHWH," but in Second Temple times, as an expression of reverence Jews began to avoid uttering it, substituting "Adonai" and other surrogates." Why though would the Creator of the Universe reveal His name to Moshe, tell Moshe to use it, and command it to be used for all generations if He wanted to be called something

different? The Elohim of Israel is YHWH. Moshe used His name and so should we.

Much more can be discovered about YHWH in this weekly Torah account. Just a little reading will discover that He is the Elohim of worship, the Elohim of miracles and wonders, and the Elohim of Israel. What also takes place in this Parasha is the defiance of Pharaoh. Remember that it was Pharaoh who declared “Who is YHWH that I should obey when he says to let Israel go? I don’t know YHWH, and I also won’t let Israel go.” This trap of rebellion is easy to fall in if you don’t become acquainted with the truth about the Elohim of Israel.

The events that followed the dramatic conversation between Moshe and Pharaoh occurred to respond to that simple question. The miracles, the plagues, and even the exodus are answers to Pharaoh’s query. In our current portion, a battle began between the “gods” of Egypt/Mitzrayim and the Elohim of Israel. The god of the Nile, the sun, the animals, and the god of Pharaoh will soon be triumphed over. Pharaoh will finally obey YHWH and let Israel go. This will occur when Pharaoh at long last understands that YHWH is THE Elohim of the Universe.

Honestly though, it is hard to obey someone you don’t know. Many people don’t obey the commandments of the Torah because they don’t understand the Elohim of the Torah. So, get to know Father YHWH. Times of deception are now ending with the restoration of all things. This restoration includes a proper understanding and knowledge of YHWH the Almighty. Discover in this Parasha and throughout scripture just Who YHWH is. When you do you’ll be amazed, humbled, and led to obedience.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. Read Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23, and Jeremiah 1:1-2:3. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
2. Consider the words found in 1 Corinthians 14:13-25. What did you learn from studying this passage?
3. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
4. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
5. Why is this portion called “Shemot” in Hebrew? Where does the term “Exodus” come from?
6. Why doesn’t Exodus list the grandchildren of Jacob that came into Egypt?

7. The children of Israel were fruitful and multiplied. Where has this phrase been used before in the Bible?
8. The new Pharaoh did not “know” Joseph. What does this word “know” really mean in the Hebrew?
9. Pharaoh was afraid that Israel would multiply and take over his nation. What other rulers in the past have acted in fear and persecuted the Hebrew people?
10. What cities did the Hebrew people build for Pharaoh? Were the Israelites blessed in their service to Pharaoh?
11. In your opinion, why would the children of Israel grow in the face of persecution?
12. Explain how the Egyptians made the lives of the Hebrews bitter.
13. The midwives feared Elohim more than Pharaoh and did not obey his evil decrees. When is it acceptable to blatantly disregard the authority of the government? Did they sin by being untruthful to Pharaoh about the speed of the babies’ delivery?
14. What river were the male children cast into to die? Explain how this river was a god to the Egyptians.
15. Pharaoh's sole concern was for all the boys to be cast into the river, while the fate of the girls did not seem to interest him. Why did he add, "Every daughter you shall sustain"?
16. Who were Moses’ parents? From what tribe did they descend?
17. Moses was saved by being placed in an ark of wood. Explain how this deliverance was similar to the story of Noah.
18. How were the actions of Pharaoh to kill the sons of Israel similar to those of Herod in the New Testament? What spirit was behind these actions?
19. Why would the daughter of Pharaoh come to the wash herself in a river that was used to drown children? Couldn’t she have had water brought to her? What does Judaism teach about her?
20. What emotion did the daughter of Pharaoh express upon looking at Moses in the basket? Where else in the Bible does this emotion prompt action?
21. Who named the baby “Moses?” What does this name mean? How is this name symbolic of his future as a redeemer of Israel?
22. In your opinion, do you think Moses knew he was a Hebrew and not an Egyptian as he grew up and when he killed the Egyptian?
23. Because of Moses’ sin of manslaughter, he faced capital punishment. Moses was then exiled from the land and allowed to live in Midian. How is this pattern of sin-hiding-exile found in the Creation account?
24. What god did the priests of Midian worship?

25. Are there any parallels between the actions of Moses at the well and the actions of Rebekah at the well in Genesis 24?
26. Who was the wife of Moses? What was the name of their son?
27. Why did it take so long for YHWH to remember his chosen people and redeem them from harsh slavery?
28. Who was Moses' father-in-law?
29. At what mountain did Moses experience the burning bush?
30. Who is "the angel of YHWH" that appeared to Moses at the burning bush?
31. Why was Moses told to remove his shoes? Did the high priests wear shoes as he ministered in the holy of holies?
32. What would later occur on the same mountain where the burning bush was sighted?
33. How does YHWH describe the Promised Land in Genesis 3?
34. What name did the Almighty reveal to Moses? Has this name ever changed or is it "eternal?"
35. Would the Hebrew leaders recognize the name of YHWH or would they be hearing it for the first time?
36. How is YHWH's name "a memorial to all generations?"
37. What is the traditional Jewish view of the name YHWH? What does mainstream Christianity do with YHWH's name? Why is there so much controversy about YHWH's name?
38. For what purpose was YHWH leading the people out of Egypt?
39. Did YHWH promise Moses an easy faith or would he have trials? Would Pharaoh agree to Moses' demands?
40. How did Moses answer YHWH at the burning bush? Was he speaking in faith?
41. Explain the sign of the rod and the serpent? How would the serpent later be lifted up as a symbol in the wilderness? What did Y'shua say about the serpent being lifted up in the wilderness in John 3?
42. Why did YHWH show Moses the miracle of leprosy? What does leprosy represent in the Torah?
43. How many signs did YHWH show Moses on the mountain?
44. Discuss how this verse speaks of Messiah Y'shua - Exodus 4:8, "It shall come to pass that if they do not believe the first sign that they shall believe the second sign."
45. What was the first plague given to the people of Egypt?
46. What does it mean that Moses was of "slow tongue?" Is this similar to Isaiah in Isaiah 1?
47. Was it right for Moses to bargain with YHWH about going to Pharaoh?

48. Compare Exodus 4:15 to Matthew 10:19.
49. How are the antichrist and the false prophet a counterfeit of Moses and Aaron?
50. What does it mean that “YHWH will harden Pharaoh’s heart?”
51. Explain the Exodus 4:22 which says, “Israel is my son, even my first born.” What is the significance of Israel being YHWH’s “firstborn?”
52. Did YHWH give Pharaoh fair warning of the impending tenth plague death of the firstborn? Could Pharaoh have repented and listened to the voice of YHWH and stopped this plague?
53. How did Zipporah act righteously concerning her son’s circumcision?
54. Study Exodus 4:25 which states “thou art a bloody husband to me.” What did Zipporah mean when she said this? Is circumcision important today?
55. How did the leaders/elders of the children of Israel respond?
56. What moed / feast were the Israelites to celebrate to YHWH in the wilderness? How long would it last?
57. How did the Hebrews make bricks without straw?
58. The Hebrew foreman and servants of Pharaoh spoke harshly to Moses and even called down judgment upon him. Were these naysayers focused on leaving the bondage of Egypt? Why or why not?

Parasha Va'era

- Exodus 6:2-9:35
- Ezekiel 28:25-29:21
- Revelation 16:1-21

The Torah Portion at a Glance

YHWH reveals Himself to Moses. Employing the "four expressions of redemption," He promises to take out the Children of Israel from Egypt, deliver them from their enslavement, redeem them and acquire them as His own chosen people at Mount Sinai; He will then bring them to the Land He promised to the Patriarchs as their eternal heritage.

Moses and Aharon repeatedly come before Pharaoh to demand in the name of YHWH, "Let My people go, so that they may serve Me in the wilderness." Pharaoh repeatedly refuses. Aaron's staff turns into a snake and swallows the magic sticks of the Egyptian sorcerers. YHWH then sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians.

The waters of the Nile turn to blood; swarms of frogs overrun the land; lice infest all men and beasts. Hordes of wild animals invade the cities, a pestilence kills the domestic animals, and painful boils afflict the Egyptians. For the seventh plague, fire and ice combine to descend from the skies as a devastating hail. Still, "the heart of Pharaoh was hardened and he would not let the children of Israel go; as YHWH had said to Moses."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

This week's Torah portion begins with the horrible plagues that ravaged the nation of Israel and eventually led to their exodus. This is a story that Bible students and unbelievers are very familiar with, as most have seen the various Hollywood versions of the account. Hopefully our familiarity will not breed contempt and stop us from finding the Messiah in the Parasha.

"Vaera" is a special section of the Bible that is remembered every year during a Passover Seder. A "Seder" is a special commemorative meal that is held in the spring time and remembers the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt. Traditional Seders include bitter herbs, matzah, and four cups of wine. These four glasses of wine are each symbolic of statements made in our

current Torah portion. These cups tell the Passover story and vividly remind us that Y'shua is the Passover lamb.

The first cup consumed during the Passover Seder is the Cup of Sanctification. This cup of holiness originates from Exodus 6:6 when YHWH said, "I will take you out." The first cup is the Kiddush cup, or glass of holiness. With this juice, we remember the promise of YHWH to bring the people out of slavery and establish a holy nation. Similarly, Y'shua sanctifies us, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified," John 17:19.

The cup of deliverance is the second cup. It is with this cup that the Seder recalls the ten plagues of Egypt. Just as YHWH delivered the children of Israel, He still delivers His people from judgment. John 8:32 expresses the deliverance of Y'shua. "I will deliver you," is found in Exodus 6:6.

The third cup of wine during the Seder is the cup of redemption. This cup of blessing shows how YHWH redeems Israel from sin. Galatians 4:4-5, "4But when the time had fully come, Elohim sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Finally, the last cup is the cup of the Kingdom. This is also called the cup of praise or the cup of acceptance. YHWH says in Exodus 6:7, "I will take you as a nation." This is the cup of joy that we will experience fully in the coming kingdom. John 15:11 says, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

The pattern is simply: YHWH will bring, redeem, deliver, and take us as His people. In Luke 22 and Mathew 26 we can read of the Messiah partaking of the traditional Seder. He takes up the cup of redemption and offers it as a symbol of his covenant with believers. We were once in spiritual bondage to sin and Satan. Y'shua gave his life to deliver us from sin and the plague of death. The shed blood of Messiah paid the price to redeem us. And finally we are to live a life worthy of praise. Our actions should reflect the principles and practices of the cup of the Kingdom. Titus 2:1-5 makes this point, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance. Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and

pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of Elohim.”

Applying the Portion to Life Today

What do you do when you have a sudden toothache? Many people simply take a few Tylenol and suffer through the pain for a few minutes while continuing life as normal. Small sudden toothaches don't command that much attention. They seem to be more of a nuisance than anything. When your molar sings with a sudden sharp sting as you bite down on a cob of corn do you rush right out to the dentist? For most people a slight pain in the mouth is just that – a slight pain in the mouth.

A dentist though, has a different view on tooth pains. Dentists and doctors will tell you that your mouth is communicating to you when you experience a pain. “Something is wrong,” the pain-filled and painful tooth, screams with a jolt on a nerve. If the problem is soon treated it can usually be repaired without much trouble. But if the pain is ignored, if the warning signs are looked over, the tooth can decay and grow an infection. Even worse, the tooth can abscess and become a big problem. (And if you've never experienced the agony of an abscessed tooth then count yourself blessed because they are about as painful as a soaking wet person sitting in the electric chair. Ouch!)

It doesn't take long for a cavity left without proper treatment to soon become a major mouth problem. Just a little toothache won't bring someone to their knees but an abscessed tooth can lead to stomach pains, missed work, and an expensive dentist bill. All of this could be avoided though if the warning signs were heeded and the source of the pain is dealt with before it grows worse. A lot of pain could have also been avoided if Pharaoh would have obeyed and let Israel go.

Like an ongoing toothache that grows and grows in the level of pain are the plagues upon Egypt. To stop the pain all Pharaoh had to do was release the Israelites. All you have to do is go to the dentist when the pain starts, but who does? Who rushes out to the dental office at the first sign of pain? It is a sad fact that everyone has a little pharaoh “inside” themselves. To this the Scriptures say not to act like Pharaoh and “harden not your heart,” in Tehillim (Psalm) 95:8.

Pharaohs continue on with life even though they can see it causing anguish to those around them. We, little Pharaohs, ignore words of caution because of self-interest. We curse those people who play the part of Moshe and warn us of

danger. We tell ourselves that “they’re just meddling” as the plagues continue and as the pains continue. When there is distance between man and YHWH it is not hard to figure out who moved away – it is always man. Again we are like pharaoh, doing our own will. How different though would the Biblical account read if Pharaoh had allowed Egypt to journey into the dessert the first time he was asked? How different would your life be if you would heed the good advice of the prophets around you who point you in the direction of the Word?

For many years Bible commentators have somehow blamed Father YHWH for Pharaoh’s obstinate heart and actions. They teach that YHWH had violated Pharaoh’s free will and made him treat Israel and Moshe with contempt. This is simply not the case. What happens to Pharaoh and Egypt is Pharaoh’s fault. Don’t blame YHWH. And don’t blame YHWH for what happens in your Pharaoh-like life. If a person sets himself or herself against the Mighty One of Israel there will be consequences. This week’s story is simply reflective upon the principle of cause and effect. “Do not be deceived: Elohim cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows,” Galatians 6:7.

Any action performed sets off an undeniable chain of events that will result in that action being responded to. Scientists will tell you that for “every action there is an equal and opposite reaction.” In this Parasha reading it is easy to see that the action of slavery brought about freedom, disobedience led to the plagues, and Pharaoh hardening his own heart resulted in YHWH confirming this attitude and allowing it to continue. It seems that for His own purposes YHWH allows people to wallow in their sins for a season. “The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life,” Galatians 6:8.

You can read in the portion and find that during the first five plagues Pharaoh’s “heart remained steadfast.” His heart simply would not yield to YHWH. It did not take a divine action on behalf of YHWH to cause Pharaoh to be disobedient to the words “let my people go.” Pharaoh had nothing and no one to blame for his cruel attitude and behavior but himself. Five times his heart was set on setting itself against the will of YHWH. As a direct result Pharaoh’s heart will continue to grow cold five times more. Five times Pharaoh sowed a “steadfast” heart and five times he received a “hardened” heart. Five plus five equals ten right? There were ten plagues right? It seems to all add up.

A warning sign was given each time Moshe went to Pharaoh and a plague followed. They proclaimed, “you reap what you sow, if you obey the Elohim of the

Hebrews you will be blessed but if you disobey you will be cursed.” The plagues were proving B’reisheet 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse.” Pharaoh had at least ten opportunities to heed YHWH’s commands but did not. During each act of rebellion his heart moved farther away from YHWH’s will and grew colder in the process. Each of the plagues occurred to teach Pharaoh, the entire world, and even Israel about YHWH. “Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am YHWH when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it,” Shemot/Exodus 7:4-5.

Here are a few of the lessons that are taught in this Parasha:

YHWH is Elohim. “This is what YHWH says: By this you will know that I am YHWH: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water,” Shemot 7:17-18. “Then YHWH said to Moshe, “Get up early in the morning, confront Pharaoh and say to him, ‘This is what YHWH, the Mighty One of the Hebrews, says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me, or this time I will send the full force of my plagues against you and against your officials and your people, so you may know that there is no one like me in all the earth. For by now I could have stretched out my hand and struck you and your people with a plague that would have wiped you off the earth. But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth,” Shemot 9:13-16.

YHWH is all-powerful. “But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of Elohim.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as YHWH had said,” Shemot 8:18-19.

YHWH is righteous. “And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moshe and Aharon, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: YHWH is righteous, and I and my people are wicked,” Shemot 9:27.

YHWH distinguishes between Israel and the pagans. “But YHWH will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die,’ Exodus/Shemot 9:4.

These plagues occurred to teach the world that His name is YHWH and His might is unequal. “Therefore I will teach them—this time I will teach them my power and might. Then they will know that my name is YHWH,” Jeremiah 16:21. Unfortunately, the warning signs continued to go unheeded and build in severity until Pharaoh’s own magicians could not reproduce them (as with the lice). The magicians even soon became subject to them (as with the boils.) The seventh plague, hail, was the first to claim human life, foreshadowing the death that would rain down during the last and final plague. All of this happened as a message, “I have cut off nations; their strongholds are demolished. I have left their streets deserted, with no one passing through. Their cities are destroyed; no one will be left—no one at all. I said to the city, ‘Surely you will fear me and accept correction!’ Then her dwelling would not be cut off, nor all my punishments come upon her. But they were still eager to act corruptly in all they did,” Zephani’yah 3:6-7.

The events in this week’s Torah Parasha are set in place to soften Pharaoh’s heart not harden it. It was Pharaoh’s own disobedience, his own pride that caused his punishment and ironically brought glory to YHWH. Like a toothache that grows in intensity of pain, the plagues were admonitions of trouble. “Happy is the man that feareth his ways: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief,” Mishlei (Proverbs) 28:14.

Do you feel a slight pain when you read this teaching? It could be that your heart is hardened to the voice of YHWH. Have you recently told YHWH “no?” Maybe through the years you have been hurt by religious systems or religious people. Perhaps your actions or attitudes have built walls of separation between yourself and YHWH. The throbbing pain you might be feeling is that of distance. You see when a person disobeys YHWH that person distances themselves from YHWH. Each step in disobedience leads farther and farther away from the Truth. And with each step away from the Almighty it is harder to hear his voice. The heart, the mind, the will, and the soul hardens as a result of separation from the Creator. Will it take ten plagues for you to obey? Will your small cavity of distance abscess into a painful infection? Messiah Y’shua asks, “Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?” (Mark 8: 17)

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Va’era.” What does this mean?

2. Read Ezekiel 28:25-29:21. How does this relate to the story of Genesis this week?
3. Consider the words found in Revelation 16:1-21. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
7. The four cups of the Passover Seder are: the Cups of Sanctification, Deliverance, Redemption and Praise. These cups derive from the four "I will" promises of Exodus 6:6-7. Discuss these steps of redemption/salvation and how Y'shua is at the center of it all.
8. What does it mean that Elohim placed Moses in the role of god to Pharaoh? What is the difference between God (upper case G) and a god (lower case g)? How can anyone be "a god" to someone? Is there anyone in your life who is "a god" to you?
9. How is Aaron a prophet? What is a prophet? Is there a difference between Moses as a prophet and Aaron as a prophet? If so, what?
10. How long did Levi live?
11. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
12. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
13. How long did the plague of blood last?
14. Did Abraham know the name of yod-hey-waw-hey YHWH?
15. Could Exodus 6:3 be better translated as a rhetorical question and read, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as El Shaddai, and my name YHWH, did I not make myself known to them?"
16. What was the covenant given to Abraham that YHWH remembered in Exodus 6:5?
17. How did the depression of the people stop them from believing the word of YHWH in Exodus 6:9?
18. Moses' parents were Amram and Yocheved. Exodus 6:20 states that Yocheved was Amram's aunt. How does Leviticus 18:12-13 speak against such a relationship? How does the birth of Moses to parents in sin show us that YHWH can use anyone, regardless of their upbringing?
19. The phrase "troop by troop" in Exodus 6:26 is an interesting word usage. How does this passage describe the Exodus as a military formation?
20. Pharaoh did not listen to the will of YHWH and his heart was hardened. Compare this to Matthew 24:12.
21. How old were Moses and Aharon when they went before Pharaoh? Who was the first born? Did YHWH choose the firstborn as the redeemer?

22. Exodus 7:3-5 explains that signs and wonders helped the Egyptians know that YHWH is supreme. How did Y'shua use miracles to draw people to Himself in the Gospels?
23. Why specifically did YHWH want Pharaoh to let His people go? What would the people be doing in the wilderness?
24. How were the plagues a type of warfare against the gods/elohim of Egypt? Explain how the Egyptians worshipped the Nile River.
25. How long was the plague of blood water against Egyptians? What is this number symbolic of?
26. Did YHWH reveal the first 3 plagues and warn Pharaoh before the judgment? How does YHWH give people time to repent?
27. According to Exodus 8:7, what was the purpose of the plagues?
28. The magicians were able to easily duplicate the plagues of blood and frogs. Were they able to use their magic to stop the plagues? Who does Pharaoh plead with to end these judgments?
29. The third plague is usually translated as "lice" or "vermin." What exactly was this plague?
30. Who did the magicians profess was behind the plagues?
31. The fourth judgment against Egypt is a little confusing. The Hebrew word used is "arov." This word is usually translated as "swarms as insects" or as "wild beasts." In your opinion, what is the correct meaning? What was the fourth plague?
32. How does YHWH place a distinction between the Egyptians and the Israelites during some of the plagues? Did the Israelites have to suffer the first three plagues? Will believers have to suffer some during the Great Tribulation? Reference Exodus 8:18 & 19.
33. Why was the worship of the Hebrews unacceptable to the Egyptians? Compare Genesis 42:32 to Exodus 8:22.
34. What was the fifth plague?
35. The plague of boils affected even the Egyptian magicians. Why did their skin problems stop them from confronting Moses?
36. Exodus 9:16 states the purpose of the plagues was to spread the knowledge of YHWH throughout the entire earth. According to 9:20, such actions worked and even some Egyptians began to fear YHWH. How does the fear of YHWH inspire the fear of YHWH?
37. Did the plague of hail affect the Hebrews in Goshen?
38. Was Pharaoh's repentance in Exodus 9:27-28 a sincere act?

39. With the horrible hail, the flax and barley crops were damaged. Where in Scripture is the Aviv barley crop once again mentioned? Why is it important?
40. Our portion ends with Pharaoh's heart stiffening even more. How does continued rebellion harden a person's heart more towards YHWH?
41. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
42. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
43. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?
44. As Moses and Aaron took on Pharaoh, the world leader of their day, so will the two witnesses of Revelation 11. What other similarities can you see between the workings of Moses and Aaron and the two witnesses?
45. What did you learn from this week's "Open Bible" teaching?

Parasha Bo

- Exodus 10:1-13:16
- Jeremiah 46:13-28
- Romans 9:14-29

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The last three of the Ten Plagues are visited on Egypt: a swarm of locusts devours all the crops and greenery; a thick, palpable darkness envelops the land; and all the firstborn of Egypt are killed at the stroke of midnight of the 15th of the month of Nissan.

YHWH commands the first mitzvah/commandment to be given to the people of Israel: to establish a calendar based on the monthly rebirth of the moon. The Israelites are also instructed to bring a "Passover offering" to YHWH: a lamb or kid is to be slaughtered and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts and lintel of every Israelite home, so that YHWH should pass over these homes when He comes to kill the Egyptian firstborn. The roasted meat of the offering is to be eaten that night together with matzah (unleavened bread) and bitter herbs.

The death of the firstborn finally breaks Pharaoh's resistance and he literally drives the Children of Israel from his land. So hastily do they depart, there is no time for their dough to rise, and the only provisions they take along are unleavened. Before they go, they ask their Egyptian neighbors for gold, silver and garments, draining Egypt of its wealth.

The Children of Israel are commanded to consecrate all firstborn and to observe the anniversary of the Exodus each year by removing all leaven from their possession for seven days, eating matzah, and telling the story of their redemption to their children. They are also commanded to remember the Exodus and their resultant commitment to YHWH.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Pharaoh could have stopped the path of death and destruction in this week's Torah portion by simply submitting to YHWH and obeying His voice. All Pharaoh had to do was heed the sign of the blood. Egypt could have been spared if Pharaoh would have paid attention to the first plague. The firstborn of each

family could have lived if Pharaoh would have understood the message behind the Nile River turning to blood.

In ancient times, the Egyptian society depended upon the Nile River for its existence. Thus, the Nile was considered the life-force of Egypt. The people considered the Nile the embodiment of their many gods. Each morning Pharaoh would rise and bathe in the beautiful water. When the Nile flooded or dried up, the Egyptians considered their god to be unhappy. To appease the Nile and calm the waters, they would even offer human sacrifices. 80 years before the Exodus, Pharaoh had commanded that every son born from the Hebrew slaves was to be cast into the river and drowned. Later, when Pharaoh ignored the prophet's command, the water turned to blood again. Through this blood YHWH was calling out to Pharaoh to repent of his sins and release the Israelites. Sadly, Pharaoh's response is repeated by millions each day. We read in Exodus that after watching the Nile turn to dahm / blood, Pharaoh simply turned away. He saw the blood and turned His back upon salvation.

"And the magicians of Egypt/Mitzrayim did so with their enchantments: and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither did he listen to them; as YHWH had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house neither did he set his lev (heart) to this also. And all the Egyptians dug all around the river for water to drink; for they could not drink of the water of the river. And seven days were fulfilled, after YHWH had smitten the river," Exodus / Shemot 7:22-25.

The Scriptures declare that "YHWH declares the end from the beginning" in Isaiah 46:10. When the Nile River was first turned to blood, YHWH was warning Pharaoh of a coming disaster. YHWH was offering Pharaoh an escape. "Life is in the blood," Leviticus 17:11. Pharaoh ignored the blood and brought death upon his entire family and people. The wages of sin is death but the blood offers life!

The blood remained for 7 days giving the leader and his people plenty of time to repent. YHWH is so gracious that he always gives us time to turn to Him. During the time YHWH gives, man will either grow sorry for what he has done or he will allow his heart to harden. Pharaoh chose the latter. Notice too that Pharaoh turned to his magician's to see if they could duplicate the blood. Through the power of demons, the enchanters were able to seemingly copy the miracle of YHWH. However, they were not able to make the blood leave and allow the Nile to return to normal. The occult and the world have many false promises and false manifestations that seem to mirror moves of YHWH. The evil powers may be able

to duplicate some of YHWH's miracles BUT the dark side can not stop YHWH's judgment. Life is not found in false fabrications but in the blood of the lamb of YHWH. Today, millions know the message of the gospel but turn to mediums, horoscopes, and witchcraft. Even Messianic believers have to battle the demonic powers behind the teachings of reincarnation and "practical" Gnostic kabbalah. The Messiah's message is pretty simple - life is in the blood!

When Y'shua celebrated Passover he lifted the cup and said "this is the blood of the brit/covenant, unless you drink my blood and taste my flesh you can not enter the kingdom of YHWH." Again, He was proclaiming that life is in the blood.

His blood was the fulfillment of the prophetic blood of the Nile and the lamb's blood on the doorposts. We read in the book of Matthew that the disciple that betrayed Y'shua dipped his hand in the dish before the cup was offered. Even in the face of death, Y'shua offered eternal life to those at his table, including the one who would trade his life for silver. The blood covers all sin and all reproach, no matter what you have done, said, or thought. "And the dahm/blood of Y'shua ha Moshiach His Son cleanses us from all sin," 1 John 1:7. Forgiveness is found in the blood.

The story is told of a man who has built up a huge debt and can't pay it. The man's wealthy boss comes along and pays the bill without telling his employee -- then calls him in to give him the good news. The man sits down, is handed the dossier of debts, and flips through the pages to see the list of bills he has accumulated. He thinks, "I'll never be able to pay all this. They're going to throw me in jail!" When the CEO sees the man's fearful countenance, he is perplexed. He says, "Excuse me -- did you look at page one?" The man flips back to the first page, which reads: "Paid in full." Our sins have been covered the debt of sin has been paid in full.

Pharaoh could have been forgiven but he ignored the first and then the last sign of the blood. For our generation the first sign of blood is the dahm/blood of Y'shua shed for the forgiveness of sin. The second sign of blood will be seen by all when the "sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood, before that great and glorious day," Acts 2:20.

When Y'shua returns the world will once again see a sign of blood and be given another chance to repent. On that day millions will look upon the one whom was pierced and call upon Y'shua for salvation. As we await His return let us

continually keep the dahm/blood of Y'shua in our minds. It is through His blood that we have been redeemed, forgiven, and given the victorious life. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives even to the end," Revelation 12:11.

We have the right to draw a faith blood line that the enemy can not cross. By remembering the blood of Y'shua and applying it to the door posts of our lives, no evil can triumph over us.

"Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver, or gold, from your futile spiritual conduct received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious dahm/blood of Moshiach, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you who through Him believe in YHWH, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your emunah (faith) and tikvah (hope) are in YHWH. Since you have cleansed your beings in obeying the emet/truth through the Ruach in sincere ahava/love of the Yisraelite brothers, love one another fervently with a clean lev, Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of YHWH which lives and abides forever, because all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, But the word of YHWH endures forever. Now this is the word that by the good news was proclaimed to you," 1 Peter / Kepha Alef 1:18-25.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

"Egypt rejoiced when they went," says Psalms 105:38. "This is comparable to a fat man who is riding on a donkey. The donkey longs: "O when will he get off me"; and the man longs: "O when will I get off the donkey." As soon as he gets off, the man is happy and the donkey is happy. Still I do not know: who is the happier? So, too, when the Hebrews were in Egypt, and the plagues were befalling the Egyptians, the Egyptian were longing: "O when will the Israelites get out!" And the Israelites were longing: "O when will YHWH redeem us!" As soon as they went out, both were happy. Still, I did not know: which was the happier? Until King David came and said: "Egypt rejoiced when they went," says one Rabbi in Midrash Tehillim.

Perhaps the Egyptians wanted the Israelites to leave because Pharaoh had finally conceded defeat. The Egyptian gods had failed. The cataclysmic spiritual battle was finally over. The white flag of surrender was being raised as Pharaoh himself

was finally permitting the exodus to occur. The Hebrews and their Elohim had prevailed.

The plagues against Egypt had culminated with the tragic killing of the firstborn. The darkness of death had swept the land and mourning was just beginning. “At midnight YHWH struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Mitzrayim (Egypt), for there was not a house without someone dead. During the night Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship YHWH as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me,” Shemot/Exodus 12:29-32.

This devastation of death had shattered Pharaoh’s hardened heart to pieces. Yet this plague did more than just break Pharaoh’s will. A great deal more had occurred than just the killing of the firstborn. The tenth and final plague sent a resounding message to every home in the land. The message of redemption was sounded where every firstborn Egyptian was slain and where every firstborn Hebrew was saved. What was the message? YHWH is the only Elohim worthy to be worshipped. It is a message that is to be remembered to this day. “Bring to mind the former things, those of long ago; I am Elohim, and there is no other; I am Elohim, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please,” Isaiah 46:9.

Forget for a moment the war between America and Al Queda. Stop to consider the battle between YHWH and the gods of Mitzrayim (Egypt). Their fight is over who controls Yisrael. Their battle is over who exactly Yisrael acknowledge as Supreme. In this week’s Parasha, a worship war is being waged between tov (good) and ra (evil.) Pharaoh wants to keep the Israelites in bondage to slavery, subjective to the false gods of Egypt. YHWH wants His people to be free to worship Him and Him alone in Spirit and in truth. Just who is Elohim of Yisrael? What took place between Egypt and Yisrael in the natural was reflective of what was actually taking place in the supernatural. YHWH was defeating the gods of Mitzrayim (Egypt). Here are a few points of this battle to consider:

- YHWH first wants His people to journey for three days to worship. Pharaoh does not allow this, and calls the people lazy.

- YHWH desires an offering of sacrifice from Yisrael in a specific manner.
- Pharaoh tells Yisrael to do it his way and just sacrifice while still in Mitzrayim.
- YHWH seeks total obedience to His will.
- Pharaoh releases the Hebrews but not their herds or flocks, so they cannot sacrifice in accordance to YHWH's will.

The war for Yisrael continues up until the tenth plague and finally a winner is declared. A knockout punch is made to the gods of Mitzrayim by the mighty hand of YHWH! The winner is YHWH Eloheynu. "I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am YHWH," said the Creator in Shemot 12:12. Through the ten epidemics YHWH Elohim brings judgment upon the elohim or gods of Egypt. Does all this talk of "elohims" sound confusing?

"In any language other than Hebrew, the term "God" comes down to us through numerous pagan cultures and does not accurately represent the Eternal One of the Hebrew Scriptures. Although perhaps you have probably come to know Him by the term "God," for the sake of truth and clarity, you need to know that "god" is actually a word etymologically connected to pagan deities...the term you need to learn is Elohim," wrote Avi Ben Mordechai in his book Messiah Volume Three.

"Elohim" is the plural Hebrew term found throughout the Bible for "gods." Most English Bibles translate this same Hebrew statement as "God," or "god," or "gods." While the Hebrew word Elohim is unchanged, the only difference in the English is the capitalization by the publisher. This is because the Hebrew word "Elohim" is a general term used throughout the Scriptures to describe spiritual beings or "mighty ones." The Egyptians, for example, had many elohim or "gods." According to Strong's Exhaustive Dictionary the word "elohim" carries with it the connotation of judgment and literally means "gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used of the supreme God; occasionally magistrates." Elohim comes from the root word prefix "El" meaning "strength; as an adjective mighty; especially the Almighty (but used also of any deity):—God or god, goodly, great, idol, might (-y one), power, strong." The term Elohim appears over 1,100 times in the Bible as a "title" describing YHWH.

The problem is that the Egyptians worshipped many elohim, or spiritual beings, including Pharaoh himself. The majority of the Egyptians did not acknowledge nor worship YHWH THE Elohim. Remember the words Pharaoh spoke when

Moshe first told him to let the Hebrews go... “Who is YHWH that I should obey when he says to let Israel go? I don’t know YHWH, and I also won’t let Israel go.” Well, Pharaoh and all of Egypt would soon find out exactly who YHWH is.

The events of Exodus occur to share the fact that YHWH is the Almighty El. Mitzrayim and the world have many Elohim while Israel has the One true Elohim. The elohim/gods of Mitzrayim/Egypt were defeated and YHWH was proved the true Elohim in plain view of the world through the ten plagues. “Who among the elohim is like you, O YHWH? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?” Shemot/Exodus 15:11.

Here is a short list of some of the false elohim/gods that were judged by YHWH. This is just more proof that, “Elohim presides in the great assembly; he gives judgment among the “gods,” Psalms 82:1.

Plague	False elohim/gods judged
Nile	Osiris, Nile, Hathor,
Frogs	Heka, pride
Lice	Egyptian priests, Ra
Insects	Scared beetle, Ba'alzebul
Animals death	Osiris, Hathor, Ptah
Boils	Imotep, ritual of casting ashes
Hail	Pharaoh, Osiris
Locusts	Seth, Isis, Anubus
Darkness	Egyptian priests, Hathor, Ra, Suber, Amon-Re
Death of Firstborn	Pharaoh, Isis, Osiris, Horus

In the above chart you will find the name of Pharaoh many times. Pharaoh was defeated when his own son was killed. The ruler’s firstborn, literally considered to be “god incarnate,” was just one of the various gods that were defeated. “For YHWH Eloheynu is Elohim of elohim and Adon of adons, the great EL, mighty and awesome,” says Deuteronomy 10:17.

Through the building up of the plagues and the culmination of the final affliction Yisrael is finally released to worship YHWH. Pharaoh no longer exhorts his supposed “control” over the Hebrews. They are no longer subject to false Elohim of Mitzrayim. They are free to worship YHWH Elohim. No wonder Yisrael was happy to leave. Yet it wasn’t just the Hebrews who left the land of idolatry and paganism. “A mixed multitude went up with them also,” says Exodus 12:38. Many left Egypt and the elohim of Egypt behind.

The Egyptians were humiliated because their gods had been defeated. They were also frightened that another plague would hit them if they held the Hebrews back. They were happy to see the Israelites come and they were happy to see them go. The Israelites were happy to go and the people of Mitzrayim were happy to let them go. Who was happier? Probably YHWH was the happiest of all.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Bo.” What does this mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 46:13-28. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 9:14-29. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
6. What was the eighth plague?
7. Explain how a person can fulfill Exodus 11 and explain the Passover story to their son’s and their son’s sons?
8. What kind of insect is a locust? According to Leviticus 11:20-23 is this animal kosher for man to eat?
9. Who recognized the need to let Israel go first – Pharaoh or his servants? Explain how leaders sometimes are blind to what is best for the people.
10. Moshe said the families of Israel were going to worship YHWH together. Why did Pharaoh have a problem with the family unit leaving Egypt? Explain how Satan tries to stop families from worshipping together today.
11. What did the locusts eat?
12. What type of wind brought the plague of locust into the land of Egypt? What is the meaning of this direction of wind?
13. Pharaoh stated that he sinned against YHWH and then asked Moses to pray for Him. Was this true repentance?
14. Pharaoh didn’t pray to YHWH for forgiveness but asked Moses to do so for him. How is this type of false repentance prevalent in churches today? Compare to 2 Corinthians 7:10.
15. What type of wind took away the locusts? What is the meaning of this direction?
16. What does it mean that “YHWH hardened Pharaoh’s heart?”

17. The thick darkness lasted for three days. Describe the significance of the three days in relation to Hosea 6:2.
18. Were the children of Israel protected from the thick darkness? How?
19. Moses and the nation of Israel could have left Egypt with their families after the plague of darkness but didn't. Why not? Didn't YHWH just want His people to be free from slavery or did their mode of worship matter?
20. Why would the Egyptians willingly give up their riches to their Hebrew slaves? How does the favor of YHWH cause your enemies to live at peace with you?
21. At what time would the first born be killed?
22. What protected the children of Israel from the death of the first born?
23. Pharaoh saw the multiple signs of miracles against the pagan nation. The New Testament states that a "wicked and perverse generation looks for a sign" but still does not believe. How was the stubbornness of Pharaoh like the obstinacy shown by people today?
24. When is the Biblical New Year, as explained in Exodus 12:1?
25. Why do Jewish people celebrate the New Year in September with the month of Tishrei?
26. The Hebrew Bible names the first month "Aviv." Why do people call this month "Nisan?"
27. On the tenth day of the first month a lamb was to be taken as a future offering. How is the number 10 full of meaning?
28. Was one lamb enough for an entire household? What if the family was too small? How does this compare to Acts 16:31 that states, "you will be saved, you and your entire household."
29. How old was the Passover lamb sacrifice? How long was it to stay at the home of the Israelites?
30. Exodus 12 states that the sacrifice was to be eaten "between the evenings." Was the Passover meal on the night of the 14th of Aviv or on the 15th of Aviv? Why do you believe this?
31. How was the lamb to be cooked and then eaten? Could there be leftovers the next day?
32. According to Exodus 12, what three foods must be part of any Passover remembrance meal?
33. Is communion a Passover meal? Where does the Eucharist originate?
34. What is the meaning behind the unleavened bread called "matzah?" What can be learned from eating bitter herbs or lamb?

35. How were the Israelites to eat the Passover meal – reclined or in a hurry?
36. According to Exodus 12:27, is this the “Jewish Passover” or the Passover of YHWH?
37. Who passed through the land of Egypt and executed judgment? Was it YHWH or the death angel?
38. The blood was a sign to whom on the night of Passover?
39. How is Passover night a memorial to Bible believers today? Explain how Christians keep the Passover? What about the Jewish people? How do you celebrate Passover?
40. How many days were the Israelites to eat unleavened bread? What is the Hebrew word for unleavened bread?
41. Why would YHWH command “leaven” to be removed from the homes of the Israelites?
42. What is the Hebrew word for “leaven” or “yeast” as found in Exodus 12:20? What types of food include this ingredient?
43. How many days is the Passover festival? Is the “Festival of Unleavened Bread” a separate holy day?
44. How many days were the people of Israel to eat matzah?
45. What actions are allowed to take place on the first and last days of the “Festival of Unleavened Bread?” Why is some type of work permitted but others prohibited?
46. On what day of the first month does the Festival of Unleavened Bread begin? When does it end? Why would YHWH command this time of worship?
47. Exodus 12:19 states that for “seven days shall no leaven be found in your homes.” What should you do with your leavened items if they can not be on your property?
48. What type of tree branch was used to spread the lamb’s blood on the door posts? How does this verse correlate with Psalm 51:7 and Exodus 14? Study these passages and explain.
49. How were the Hebrew people to explain the Passover to future generations? How are you sharing your faith with those younger?
50. What happened to the firstborn on the night of Passover? What happened to them after that Passover night?
51. How did the death of the firstborn recall the evil actions of Pharaoh when he ordered the murder of all Hebrew boys?
52. Pharaoh finally releases Moses and the nation of Israel to leave in Exodus 12:32. When he does this, Pharaoh also asks for a blessing.

- Why the change of heart? How does tragedy soften people's stubborn attitudes towards YHWH?
53. How did the Hebrew people plunder Egypt? What would the gold, jewels, and cloth later be used for? Why is this offering from the Egyptians important for the future worship of YHWH?
 54. How many men left Ramses in Egypt? Where did they go?
 55. Was it only "Jewish" people that left Egypt? What about the "mixed multitude" in Exodus 12:38? Why is it important to recognize the great rabble of people that left Egypt and later received the Torah?
 56. How long was Israel in Egypt as slaves?
 57. According to Exodus 12:44, could uncircumcised people keep the Passover? Should uncircumcised people celebrate Passover today? Does circumcision still matter?
 58. Where any bones of the Passover lamb broken? How is this symbolic of the Lamb Y'shua whose bones were not broken according to John 19:36 and Psalm 34:20?
 59. How were the living firstborn consecrated to YHWH?
 60. How is the Exodus a sign on the hand and a reminder on the forehead of the believer today? How do Jewish people apply Exodus 13:9?
 61. Does it matter what day we celebrate the Passover?
 62. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha B'Shelach

- Exodus 13:17-17:16
- Judges 4:4-5:31
- Revelation 19:1-20:6

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Soon after allowing the Children of Israel to depart from Egypt, Pharaoh chases after them to force their return, and the Israelites find themselves trapped between Pharaoh's armies and the sea. YHWH tells Moses to raise his staff over the water; the red sea splits to allow the Israelites to pass through, and then closes over the pursuing Egyptians. Moses and the Children of Israel sing a song of praise and gratitude to YHWH.

In the desert, the people suffer thirst and hunger and repeatedly complain to Moses and Aaron. YHWH miraculously sweetens the bitter waters of Marah, and later has Moses bring forth water from a rock by striking it with his staff; He causes manna to rain down from the heavens before dawn each morning, and quails to appear in the Israelite camp each evening.

The Children of Israel are instructed to gather a double portion of manna on Friday, as none will descend on Shabbat, the divinely decreed day of rest. Some disobey and go to gather manna on the seventh day, but find nothing. Aaron preserves a small quantity of manna in a jar, as a testimony for future generations.

In Rephidim, the people are attacked by the Amalekites, who are defeated by Moses' prayers and an army raised by Joshua.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Our current Torah portion is full of direct and indirect references to Messiah Y'shua. The Moshiach is referenced so many times this week that it's hard to believe that anyone could read this portion and not believe in Him. Re-read the weekly portion and consider Him in the words of the Torah:

- Y'shua is the breath of YHWH that held back the waters of the Red Sea.
- Y'shua is the dance of Miriam as they crossed the Red Sea.

- Y'shua is the manna from heaven that fed the Israelites.
- Y'shua is the Shabbat day of rest that gives man joy from labor.
- Y'shua is the stone that Moses and the elders struck once for water.
- Y'shua is like Joshua who defeated the Amelekites through the steady hands of the Lawgiver.
- Y'shua is the cloud by day and fire by night presence of YHWH that never leaves us.
- Y'shua is the tree that turned the bitter waters sweet.
- Y'shua is the double portion of manna that came as a suffering servant and will return as a conquering king.
- Y'shua is the manna preserved in a jar as a future testimony as His divinity was placed in a jar of clay.
- Y'shua is the word made flesh.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

"I urge you, brothers, in view of Elohim's mercy, to offer your lives as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to YHWH—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to know and approve what Elohim's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will," Romans 12:1-2.

Be prepared to let go of some false teachings and accept the truth found in this week's Torah Parasha. Let your mind be renewed with this portion that recounts the newly-freed Hebrew people's journey towards the Promised Land. Be transformed by the emet, the truth, about the encounter between the army of an angry Pharaoh and his former slaves.

What does transpire between the Egyptian army and the Israelites is no secret. By YHWH's power Moshe leads his group to safety across the dry ground of the Red Sea. When Pharaoh follows his army and their chariots are swept away. "Then Moshe and the Israelites sang this song to YHWH," Shemot/Exodus 15:1.

The song of Moshe is the first mention of singing in the scriptures. All Yisrael sung this as they realized their freedom. The Israelites were rejoicing because they were finally totally liberated. They had watched with their own eyes the destruction of Egypt by the ten plagues and now they had witnessed the death of the evil army through the waters of the sea. Their response to YHWH is jubilant worship with singing and dancing. The song at the sea is a beautiful poem describing YHWH and His works. Hidden in the text of this serenade is the first

mention by the Israelites of a very important Hebrew concept. Found in this song is the notion of grace. Grace? Grace is in the Old Testament? Yes, contrary to popular belief the idea of grace was not invented by New Testament writers. Grace is found throughout the Bible, starting with creation and finding no end. Lay aside the false teachings of an “age” or “dispensation” of grace and accept the truth about “chesed.”

“Chesed” is the Hebrew term often translated as “grace” or “mercy” in English Bibles. Chesed or grace is usually understood to mean unmerited favor, yet its real definition is much greater. This is because chesed is one of the sefirot (attributes) of YHWH. YHWH is gracious and imparts grace because chesed is part of who YHWH is. To receive chesed is to receive YHWH. To better understand chesed is to better know YHWH. But, how can you comprehend the incomprehensible? How can you understand the unfathomable? How can the “amazing grace” of YHWH be realized? This is done through YHWH’s word, His Torah.

You may be confused because you will not find the word “grace” in this week’s reading. That’s because chesed is found in this week’s portion in the Hebrew but not in the English. YHWH’s chesed is so great that translators have to use various words to describe it. It is hidden in this verse...“In your unfailing love (chesed) you lead the people you have redeemed,” Shemot/Exodus 15:13. According to this verse through chesed, redemption or salvation comes. Sound familiar? “You are redeemed/saved by chesed through trusting belief—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of YHWH,” Ephesians 2:18. Chesed is sometimes translated as grace and at other places mercy. Though the words may change the definition remains the same. Chesed is YHWH doing for man what man can not do for himself. To help you better understand the vast scope of chesed here are a few other potentials:

Loving-kindness, favor, faithfulness, unconditional giving, deep love, bliss, tenderness, abundance, achievement, preservation, respect, enthusiasm, leadership, optimism, caring, safety, protection, trust, success, rewards, generosity, gratitude, love, union, insight, knowledge, understanding, and learning, loyalty, kindness, benevolence, and commitment.

Chesed is all of the above and more. Friend, much can be learned about chesed from numerous verses in the Tanakh. For example Psalms 89:3 teaches that, “the world is built through chesed.” The act of creation and every act of the Almighty that has followed has happened through grace/chesed. YHWH created

because of and through His chesed. He did not have to create, yet through His love he chose to. Through His own sefirot or attributes YHWH brought forth creation, redemption, and restoration. This is because through grace flows the merciful qualities of the Divine. Man deserves absolutely nothing yet because of chesed man receives everything.

Chesed is not only given from YHWH to humankind, but also from man to fellow man as this Parasha reading shows. We receive chesed from El Shaddai and we should reflect that chesed to those around us. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering YHWH's chesed in its various forms," 1 Peter 4:10.

Even today, in Judaism, chesed is any act of mercy or kindness that is given towards those less fortunate or those who cannot reciprocate it. For example the Rabbis consider this a great mitzvah, indeed the greatest act of chesed to be the "chesed shel emet." This Hebrew term of "chesed shel emet" literally means "true chesed." According to the Sages, true chesed is only performed to those who can not pay it back. "Chesed shel emet" is in direct reference to acts of kindness towards the dead. Because they have passed away, the dead can never repay the act of chesed. This is true chesed. Even this week's Torah Parasha shows the power of "chesed shel emet" with the action of Moshe taking the bones of Yosef out of Mitzrayim and to the Promised Land. Moshe shows "chesed shel emet" as an example for us today. "Moshe took the bones of Yosef with him because Yosef had made the sons of Yisrael swear an oath. He had said, "Elohim will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place," Shemot/Exodus 13:19.

Grace did NOT start with the death of the Savior. Chesed has always been. "Give thanks to YHWH for He is tov / good, His chesed endures forever," Tehillim/Psalms 136. YHWH's chesed is FOREVER!

Sorry folks, but the preacher is wrong. The "age of grace" did not begin with the crucifixion of the Savior. Nor is the seminary teaching of a "dispensation of grace" correct either. The gracious and forgiving Son of the New Testament has not – REPEAT - has not, pitted Himself against the vicious picky Father of the Old Testament. Such teachings are like dense fog that blinds people to the truth that is clearly before them. If you've ever driven in heavy fog, then you understand how dangerous misunderstanding grace can be. You've got your low beam lights on and you are creeping along the road with caution, but you can't see ten feet in front of you. You think the road is clear so you speed up. Suddenly your car

impacts another! You crash because the fog hinders your judgment, actions, and future. A false understanding of grace can do the same.

To better grasp the Hebraic concept of chesed you should meet chesed's twin concept named gevurah. "Gevurah" is the Hebrew term for "might" or "judgment." To have chesed without gevurah would be like having a car without tires. To really get somewhere you need both. The two simply must go together. Gevurah brings about the fear of Elohim in man. Yet gevurah is balanced by chesed. For simplicities sake just consider chesed to be the "motherly" side of YHWH – merciful, forgiving, and bliss. Also, consider gevurah to be the "fatherly" side of YHWH – stern, strong, and disciplinary. If you have one without the other you only have part of the family; and everyone knows that children need a mother and a father. In the same sense, man needs chesed and gevurah. Just consider only showing your children chesed - imagine that you never discipline them or stop them from doing what they want. Now imagine that all you do is discipline your children – imagine that they are restrained by your might from disobeying. Either way there will be problems. Chesed needs gevurah and gevurah needs chesed. These two attributes of YHWH are balanced through Messiah Y'shua. "For the Torah was given through Moshe; chesed and gevurah are realized through Y'shua Ha Moshiach," John 1:17.

YHWH desires observance to His Word from all mankind. He has not given grace as an excuse to disobey His commands, see Romans 7:7. YHWH Y'shua in His wisdom and power balances chesed and gevurah.

To accept one side of YHWH without the other will lead to false teachings and false understanding about the Almighty and His word. It is easy to rejoice with Yisrael when the waters of the Red Sea kill the Egyptians, but should we? Should we celebrate when the wicked are punished? "Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when he stumbles, do not let your heart rejoice, or YHWH will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from him," Proverbs 24:17.

Maybe the Israelites were not singing because the evil Egyptians were dead. Maybe they were celebrating the greatness of YHWH! "At the overthrow of the Egyptians by the Red Sea, the ministering angels wished to offer a song of triumph to YHWH; but He stopped them, saying, "The work of my hands is drowned in the sea, and you would offer me a song," says the Talmud. YHWH does not want any to perish says 2 Peter 3:98.

You must see what really happened at the moment in time that the waters overtook the Egyptian army. At that very moment, at that second in history's clock, one nation experienced the chesed of YHWH and one experienced the gevurah of YHWH. Grace and judgment were supremely balanced when the waters were released. Friend, it was the view of these opposing forces that led to the song of Moshe. Am Yisrael was astounded with YHWH's chesed and gevurah and offered to YHWH an amazing song found in Exodus 15. When mercy and grace are balanced how can we help but respond like the Israelites in Shemot/Exodus 15:11 and say, "who is like you YHWH among the elohim?"

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "B'shelach." What does this mean?
2. Read Judges 4:4-5:31. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Revelation 19:1-20:6. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Why didn't YHWH lead the Israelites through the quickest path out of Egypt?
7. Why did they take the bones of Yosef/Joseph with them?
8. What visible signs did YHWH use to lead the nation of Israel? Why was a sign to the entire nation important?
9. How did crossing over the red sea spread the knowledge and fear of YHWH through the entire world?
10. Where in the New Testament is the Red Sea crossing spoken of?
11. How many chariots did Pharaoh use to chase his ex-slaves?
12. The children of Israel saw Pharaoh and then complained. How is grumbling and complaining often a sign of fear?
13. What Hebrew word is used for "salvation" in Exodus 14:13?
14. What did YHWH mean when He said to Moshe, "why do you cry to Me?" Are there times that obedience and not simply prayer are needed? Have you ever prayed about something even though you knew it was something you were supposed to do?
15. Describe how the pillar of fire moved to lead Israel through the Red Sea?
16. What direction of wind made the waters move?

17. The waters of the Red Sea were a type of salvation for Israel and judgment for Egypt. How is the red blood of Y'shua salvation for those who believe and at the same time judgment for those who do not believe?
18. What happened to Pharaoh, his horses, and his riders?
19. Chapter 15 begins with a song by Moses about the Exodus from Egypt. How is this song spoken of again the book of Revelation?
20. Besides this week's Torah portion, where else in the Bible does the phrase "YHWH is a man of war" appear?
21. Explain how this week's portion compares YHWH to a man.
22. What and where is the mountain of YHWH's inheritance as spoken of in Exodus 15:17?
23. How did Miriam, the sister of Moses, and the women of Israel respond to YHWH's miraculous deliverance?
24. Is it acceptable to dance during worship today?
25. How many days did Israel journey without water? Why is this number important?
26. What is the Hebrew word for bitterness? Where is bitterness described in this Torah portion? How does this compare to Ruth 1:20?
27. The bitter waters were made sweet by a tree. What is the prophetic meaning of such a miracle?
28. According to Exodus 15:26, how could Israel avoid the plagues, disease, and judgments that Egypt faced?
29. The Torah states that in Elim there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees. Research the significance of the numbers 12 and 70. What do they mean? Why does the Torah make the distinction that these were "palm" trees?
30. Where did Israel go after Elim? On what day to they reach their destination? Who murmured against Moses and Aharon?
31. Where is the Wilderness of Sin in the Middle East?
32. Were the Israelites justified to expect their journey to be easy?
33. Exodus 16:4 states that one purpose of the manna from heaven was to test the Hebrew people to see if they would obey the voice of YHWH. Does YHWH test people today? Describe a spiritual test you have recently faced.
34. On what day of the week should the Israelites gather twice the manna? Are we to worry about cooking and preparing food on the Sabbath?
35. Why did YHWH bring quail into the Israelite camp and not chicken or turkey?
36. Explain the miracle food "manna." What do you think it tasted like? Was it leavened with yeast or was it flat?

37. How does bread play a central role in the Exodus?
38. What type of measurement was used for counting the amount of manna each day?
39. When is the “omer” again used as a measurement in relation to the festivals of YHWH?
40. “Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil for tomorrow is the Sabbath of YHWH,” is a quote from Exodus 16:23. Does this mean that we should not cook or bake food on the Sabbath? Why or why not?
41. Did some people disobey the words of Moses by going to gather food/manna on Shabbat? What did they find?
42. Exodus 16:29 says, “Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” Does this mean that we should not leave our homes on the Sabbath? Or does this mean that you shouldn’t leave your home on Shabbat to specifically gather food?
43. Why would manna be kept in a jar for future generations? Would it rot or would it last for generations?
44. What happened at the camp at Rephidim?
45. In your opinion, does the striking of the Rock for water by Moses and the elders symbolize Y’shua? How?
46. Why was Joshua chosen by Moshe to enlist people to fight against Amelek?
47. Moses used the rod of YHWH to help the nation of Israel defeat the Amelekites. Who helped Moses hold up his hands? From what tribes were these two men descendant from?
48. Who did Israel win the war against Amelek?
49. Why does Moses sit on a stone or a chair?
50. Where are the descendants of the Amelekites today?
51. What did Moses call the place where YHWH gave Israel victory over the Amelekites?
52. Why would Israel always be at war with Amelek?
53. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Yitro

- Exodus 18:1-20:23
- Isaiah 6:1-7:6, 9:5-8
- Matthew 5:8-20

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro or "Yitro" in Hebrew, hears of the great miracles which YHWH performed for the people of Israel. Yitro comes from Midian to the Israelite camp, bringing with him Moses' wife and two sons. Yitro advises Moses to appoint a hierarchy of magistrates and judges to assist him in the task of governing and administering justice to the people.

The Children of Israel camp opposite Mount Sinai, where they are told that YHWH has chosen them to be His "kingdom of priests" and "holy nation." The people respond by proclaiming, "All that YHWH has spoken, we shall do."

On the sixth day of the third month (Sivan), seven weeks after the Exodus, the entire nation of Israel assembles at the foot of Mount Sinai. YHWH descends on the mountain amidst thunder, lightning, billows of smoke and the blast of the shofar, and summons Moses to ascend.

YHWH proclaims the Ten Commandments, commanding the people of Israel to believe in YHWH, not to worship idols or take YHWH's name in vain, to keep the Shabbat, honor their parents, and not to murder, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness or covet another's property. The people cry out to Moses that the revelation is too intense for them to bear, begging him to receive the Torah from YHWH and convey it to them.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The expression "third day" is found all throughout the Bible as a special code of significance. Some of the most important events in the history of Israel occurred on the third day. For example, we can read in the Torah portion, Yitro, that after three days of preparation the Law/Torah was given to Moses. This pattern is a spiritual truth that is repeated throughout the Scriptures. For example, the Torah was given after three days of preparation and Y'shua rose from the dead on

the third day after his death. The Messiah said, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, Matthew 12:40. The giving of Torah on the third day is a prophetic picture of the resurrection of Y’shua on the third day.

Here are some more instances of the third day to consider:

- “The earth brought forth vegetation: seed-bearing plants of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit.” (Genesis 1:12)
- “Abraham looked up and saw the place [Mount Moriah] from afar.” There he intends to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering to YHWH. Yet he assures his companions, “We will worship and return.” (Genesis 22:4-5)
- Pharaoh releases his chief cupbearer from death-row. (Genesis 40:20-21)
- Joseph releases his brothers from prison in Egypt. (Genesis 42:17-18)
- The Israelites request Pharaoh’s permission to make a three-day journey to offer sacrifice in the desert to YHWH. (Exodus 3:18)
- Plague Nine, the Plague of Darkness, in Egypt ends, “though the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings.” (Exodus 10:22)
- YHWH descends to Mount Sinai in fire with the sound of a shofar. He then reveals The Ten Words, Israel’s constitution of new life as a nation after their resurrection from the death of slavery in Egypt. (Exodus 19:16-19)
- Israelites are to purify themselves with water after being in contact with the dead. (Numbers 19:12)
- After coming to the river and preparing themselves, the Israelites cross the Jordan “to enter and possess the land that YHWH [their] YHWH is giving to [them] as a possession.” (Joshua 1:11; 3:2)
- Joshua’s spies emerge from hiding from the Jerichoites, then return to their commander. (Joshua 2:16, 22)
- A famine during David’s reign ends. (2 Samuel 21:1).
- A famine called for by Elijah the prophet ends. (1 Kings 18:1)
- After asking YHWH for release, King Hezekiah is healed of his fatal disease and offers thanks in the temple. (2 Kings 20:5)
- Jonah is expelled from the fish belly. (Jonah 1:17/2:1 Heb) (Matthew 12:40; Matthew 16:21; 17:23)
- After fasting, Esther puts on royal apparel and enters the palace of the Persian king in order to thwart a death-plot against her people, the Jews. (Esther 4:16; 5:1)

Within the pages of an open Bible lay many references to the third day. Each of these verses and occurrences can be tied directly to the Messiah Y'shua. Truly, a study of the Torah is a study of Y'shua!

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Moses is considered by many to be a great man. Some have called him a prophet. The Bible says he was the “most humble in the entire earth.” Did you know that Moses was also an evangelist? Part of Moses’ ministry (and ours) was to tell others of the wonders of YHWH. He described YHWH’s power to Pharaoh and spoke of His wonders to the people of Israel. Moses also shared with his father-in-law about how YHWH led the people of Israel out of bondage. There is much we can learn about evangelism and sharing our faith from this week’s Torah portion and the prophet Moshe.

Psalm 19:7 explains that the Torah of YHWH has the power to convert souls from darkness to light. This means that through properly using the Torah we can witness to the lost and show them the true plan of salvation. The Torah converts us FIRST at salvation. THEN it converts and sanctifies us as we walk with YHWH! The Torah transforms us! As we follow Torah we move from an existence based on momentary happiness to a life of meaning and purpose. It corrects our soul and converts our fleshly natures to holy desires. Psalm 19:7, “The Torah of YHWH is perfect, converting the soul.” In this verse the word for “converting” is the Hebrew phrase “shuv” which means to “turn, return, refresh, restore, and reverse.”

When YHWH revealed the Ten Commandments He was in essence establishing the basic requirements of mankind that can either redeem a person or condemn them as guilty before YHWH. The Torah was given to set the standard for righteous living. “I had not known sin but by the law,” Romans 7:7. The Torah itself is not sinful but acts as an agent to reveal a person's sin. A person sins when they disobey the words of the Bible. “Sin is transgression of the law / Torah,” 1 John 3:4. The Torah shows us our sin and our need for a Savior. As a mirror, the Torah stops sinners from rationalizing their goodness. There is none righteous no not one! Romans 3:19, “Now we know that whatsoever things the Torah says, it says to them who are under the Torah that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before YHWH.”

The Ten Commandments, given in our weekly Torah portion, are known by children worldwide and people of various faiths. These commands are a type of

mirror that each person should see their reflection within. The mirror is broken when a person violates just one precept. "Wherefore the Torah was our schoolmaster to bring us to Y'shua that we might be justified by faith," Galatians 3:24 KJV. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death. When a person violates just one of these commands he is then guilty of breaking them all. By reminding people of the 10 Commandment we can help them come face to face with their sinful ways.

Too many times, the Gospel is presented simply as "Jesus loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." This is not the Good News according to the Bible. The Scriptures state that "godly sorrow worketh repentance" in 2 Corinthians 7:10. What this means is that for a person to experience the conversion of their soul then they must first show sorrow for their sins. When you begin to use the Torah for its rightful purpose, as a mirror that reflects obedience or disobedience, then people can have true conversion in their faith. How should you do this? Well, if you can remember the word TORAH then you can share the plan of salvation with others.

The "T" in Torah stands for "Times are hard." When you are talking with someone, simply talk about the bad economy, wars, natural disasters, or whatever. People love to talk about bad times and current events. The pain that the world experiences help soften the lost to the Gospel message.

The "O" in Torah stands for "On a scale of one to ten, do you consider yourself to be a good person?" Ask this question! This is a simple way to shift any conversation to spiritual subjects. Most people will rate themselves a 4 or 5 as they don't think they are too sinful or too holy. Your question at this point starts their mind on the journey to repentance.

The "R" in Torah stands for "Remember the Ten Commandments?" The Ten Commandments are well known by most people and establish an easily recognizable map of righteousness. Ask them if they have kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. Then remind your friend that violation of one command makes them guilty of breaking them all. Showing a person the mirror of the Torah allows the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin and wrong doing.

Say something like, "Remember the 10 Commandments? This is the Almighty's standard for goodness. Have you kept them all perfectly? Probably not. This means you are guilty of sin before the Almighty." At this point in the conversation you can begin using the Torah to show a person their sinfulness.

Most people are familiar with a few of the 10 Commandments. By bringing these commandments to “light” the person’s sinfulness is exposed and their conscience is pricked. “The commandment is a lamp and the law is light,” Proverbs 6:23. The Torah burns in their soul as man’s inadequacy is magnified. Remember, the standard of Torah acts as a mirror for people to compare themselves to.

Ask that person, “Have you ever stolen something, even something small? What does that make you? A THIEF!” Then remind them that the Bible says that having hatred in your heart is equal to committing murder. “Whoever is angry with his neighbor without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment,” Matthew 5:22. The Scriptures also state that “no thief will inherit the kingdom of Heaven,” 1 Corinthians 6:10. And, the Savior said that whoever looks upon a woman with lust in His heart has already committed adultery. Ask the person, “Have you ever done these things? If so, what does that make you? An adulterer, liar, or thief.”

The "A" in Torah stands for "Are you concerned about this?" and "Are you going to heaven when you die?" Remind the person that “by your own admission you are a lying, stealing, adulterer at heart and will face the Almighty on judgment day. As you face judgment day, will you be guilty or innocent?”

The Torah will provoke the conscience of the person “which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness” Romans 2:15. Ask them, “Are you keeping the commandments of Torah?”

The “H” in Torah stands for “Have you heard of the name of YHWH Y’SHUA?” This is the name of salvation. Explain that “Anyone who calls upon the name of YHWH shall be saved,” Acts 2:21. “For YHWH so loved the world, that He gave His only brought forth Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” John 3:16. YHWH Y’SHUA is the name of salvation! At the burning bush, the Almighty said, “I AM that which I AM YHWH, YHWH is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.” YHWH is found hidden behind the capitalized terms “LORD” or “YHWH” in most English Bibles. However, YHWH's name was not intended to be hidden by translators. YHWH Himself gave us His name a sign of His existence and as a means of personal relationship.

Say, “By repenting of your sins and calling upon the name of YHWH Y’SHUA, you can receive the gift of eternal life. “YHWH showed His great love for us in this manner – while we were still sinners Y’shua died for us,” Romans 5:8.”

By following this simple outline of TORAH you can effectively share the Good News with your friends and family. Take this knowledge and pray for an opportunity to explain the faith. Then, as you meet someone this week simply explain TORAH to them and allow them to make a decision. As you do this, you will find the immense power of the blood of Y'shua and our Torah portion. Plus, you will be acting just like Moshe who evangelized his father-in-law through the wonders of YHWH's Torah.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Yitro." What does this mean?
2. Read Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:6-7. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Matthew 5:8-20. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Who did Yitro worship?
7. Why was Tzipora with her father, Yitro, and not with Moshe when
8. Bnei Yisrael left Egypt?
9. Why did Moshe tell Yitro all that YHWH had done for the Jewish People? Why is it important to tell others of what YHWH has done for you?
10. Who were the Midians? Were they friends of Israel?
11. What were the names of Moses' two children?
12. Explain the Hebraic custom of greeting someone with a kiss and even a bow. Who in the Torah used this type of greeting? Compare this to Romans 16:16. Should believers do this today?
13. In Exodus 18:10, Yitro says a blessing to YHWH. Is Yitro confessing faith in YHWH for the first time?
14. Explain how often times wisdom and counsel from others helps accomplish the will of YHWH.
15. The requirements of Israel's leadership are listed in Exodus 18:21&22. What type of judgment were these people to pass? What were attributes each judge was to have?
16. Did Moses establish a spiritual hierarchy with the levels of judges? What religions today have a hierarchy today that must be used to access the Almighty?
17. What was so special about Jethro's advice to Moses that earned it a place of merit in the Torah - and indeed why does the Torah give him great credit

for his suggestion: 'Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all he said' (18:24)?

18. Why did Yitro return to his own land?
19. On what month did the Israelites enter the Wilderness of Sinai? Why is this important? What commanded holy day of Leviticus 23 occurs each year during the third month?
20. How do the Scriptures describe the beginning of a month? How did Israel know it was the first of the third month?
21. In Exodus 19:4, YHWH tells Moses that He brought the people to Him "on the wings of eagles." How is this similar to the expression used in Revelation 12:14, where Israel is protected by YHWH from her enemies?
22. In Exodus 19:5-6 a special blessing is spoken over the nation of Israel. That very same passage is quoted in the Newer Testament in 1 Peter 2:9-10. How could the exact words be used to describe the nation of Israel in the Older Testament AND the body of believers in the Newer Testament IF these are two separate groups? Or are these groups the same?
23. Why did YHWH choose Israel to be His covenant people?
24. Did Israel agree to obey all of the Torah before they heard the commands? Did this work for them?
25. Why were the people told to wash their clothes and remain pure for three days? In what ways was this similar to a type or baptism or mikvah?
26. The people who approached the mountain before the appointed time were to be killed. How is this similar to unauthorized people who came into YHWH's sanctuary in the book of Numbers?
27. Why would "going near a woman" make someone unclean? Reference Exodus 19:15, Leviticus 15:19-24 and Leviticus 20:18.
28. What signs appeared at the mountain of YHWH when the Torah was given through Moses?
29. In Exodus 19:18 the Torah says that the "smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently." What does it tell us that the smoke ascended up from the mountains to the heavens and not from the heavens down?
30. YHWH continued to give instructions to the people regarding the mountain as holy. He did this several times in our Torah portion to keep people from dying. Is YHWH merciful?
31. Why did YHWH give access to the mountain in stages – first the people at the bottom, then the elders and leaders at the middle, and then Moses at the top? How is this similar to the construction of the Temple and Tabernacle's three parts?

32. Describe how the Ten Commandments have affected all major religions and cultures of the world?
33. Are the Ten Commandments still valid for today?
34. How does Christianity list the Ten Commandments? How does Judaism list the Ten Commandments? Explain why and how these two lists differ.
35. Did everyone alive in the world hear the Ten Commandments or only Moses and Israel?
36. In Judaism, the Ten Commandments are often referred to as the "Ten Words." How were the Ten Words divided into two groups of instructions?
37. Compare the giving of the Ten Words in Exodus 20 to Deuteronomy 5:6-17. What is different?
38. What is the first of the Ten Commandments?
39. Is the command "do not murder" or "do not kill?" When would killing be allowed?
40. How is it derived that "do not steal" refers to kidnapping?
41. How do you keep the command to "honor the Sabbath day by setting it apart?" Do you work on the Sabbath? How do you define "work?" Why would YHWH care what day we worship? Can any day be the Sabbath?
42. The commandment regarding the Sabbath is expressed here as "remember" the Sabbath. Later, in Deuteronomy 5:12, the command is to "observe" the Sabbath. What is the difference? Are these two separate commands?
43. How does Matthew 5:22 explain that murder occurs simply through anger?
44. What does 1 Corinthians 6:10 say will happen to all thieves?
45. In Matthew 5:28 Y'shua said that whoever simply looks upon a woman with lust has already committed adultery. How does this and other passages reflect that the 10 Commandments are more than just outward actions?
46. Why do the Ten Commandments so strongly emphasize the nature of the actual relationship between Man and YHWH and between Man and Man, but have relatively little focus on ritual observance?
47. Does the order of the Ten Commandments have any significance?
48. How are each of the Ten Commandments discussed or commented on in the Brit Chadasha?
49. How did the people respond to the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20:15-18?
50. Do you think it is valid to look at this passage as a wedding between YHWH and Israel? Why or why not?

51. How does YHWH test His people with His presence Exodus 20:17?
52. What were the Israelites to make for YHWH in accordance to His commands for worship? Could they build this item just any way they wanted or was it to be specifically constructed?
53. Exodus 20:24 seems to permit numerous places of sacrifice. Is such allowed?
54. Could the prohibition to cut the stones used for the altar be to preclude the temptation to carve images into them?
55. Why does the use of iron tools profane the altar?
56. Why would YHWH care about stopping the nakedness of His priests as seen in Exodus 20:26 if YHWH would later command the priests to wear undergarments?
57. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Mishpatim

- Exodus 21:1-24:18
- Jeremiah 34:8-22, 33:25-26
- Matthew 17:1-11

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Following the revelation at Sinai, YHWH legislates a series of laws for the people of Israel. These include the laws of the indentured servant; the penalties for murder, kidnapping, assault, and theft; civil laws pertaining to redress of damages, the granting of loans, and the responsibilities of the "Four Guardians"; and the rules governing the conduct of justice by courts of law.

Also included are laws warning against mistreatment of foreigners; the observance of the seasonal festivals, and the agricultural gifts that are to be brought to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem; the prohibition against cooking a baby goat in its mother's milk; and the mitzvah of prayer. Altogether, the Parasha of Mishpatim contains fifty-three mitzvot/commandments -- 23 imperative commandments and 30 prohibitions.

YHWH promises to bring the people of Israel to the Holy Land, and warns them against assuming the pagan ways of its current inhabitants. The people of Israel proclaim, "We will do and we will hear all that YHWH commands us." Leaving Aaron and Hur in charge in the Israelite camp, Moses ascends Mount Sinai and remains there for forty days and forty nights to receive the Torah from YHWH.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

John 1:14 states that the "word became flesh and dwelt among us." This means that the Messiah was the living, breathing, eating, hurting, sleeping, actual, Word of YHWH in human form. This "Word" was not the New Testament made flesh but the walking and talking embodiment of the Torah. Y'shua never broke the commandments of Torah nor spoke against them. His life was a powerful example of righteous living. Every day that Y'shua lived he constantly stayed in the Spirit and crucified His flesh. He didn't wait for His death to be obedient!

Y'shua never told a single lie or stretched the truth just a little. He always showed proper respect to others and acted in love every second of every minute of His life. He attended all festivals, perfectly kept the Shabbat without working,

and gave the proper tithes and offerings as proclaimed in the Torah. Y'shua never looked upon a woman with lust, nor did he ever mention the names of the false gods. He treated everyone fairly, gave to others, and always helped the needy. Y'shua said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you," John.13:15

When we read in the Torah of the various laws that YHWH gave mankind we are actually reading about the personality and the character of the "Word made flesh" Y'shua. The Messiah is found in every commandment and in every verse of the Torah. This presents another reason why the Torah is applicable today – the more of the Torah we keep, the more we can be like our Master Y'shua. "To this you were called, because Messiah suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps," 1 Peter 2:21.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Why did YHWH give mankind hundreds of rules to obey and follow?

The answer of course is simple – He did it because He loves us! Loving parents build boundaries for the behavior of their kids. Love motivates moms and dads to say "no" when something is not safe or of benefit. Love stops kids from getting their way all of the time. Love yells "no!" when a toddler tries to drink Drano or pull the dog's tale. The everlasting love of a mother or father is powerful enough to spank even though it really hurts the parents much more than it hurts the child. Simply put, love sets rules.

Unfortunately, most people don't equate the concepts of "love" and "rules." Do you think a child feels love when they are not allowed to play in the road? Do you feel loved when you are in a hurry and want to break the speeding limit? Parents' decisions and driving rules seemingly stop fulfillment and satisfaction. Yet both are motivated by protection, by love. Rules, laws, judgments, or commandments are given to prevent the danger and bless the obedient. Loving laws aren't given to restrict. The Western mind seems to think that laws punish, while the Torah teaches that rules protect. Such is the case with the everlasting love of YHWH and the giving of His Torah. Out of His great love YHWH has given man instructions on living. To remember this idea, the Sages of Yisrael have composed a prayer called "Ahavat Olam."

"Ahavat Olam" is a short blessing that is usually sung in the morning and at night right before the "Shema" is recited. "Ahavat Olam" is the Hebrew phrase for

“everlasting love,” from which YHWH gave us His Torah. Ahavat Olam shows YHWH’s love for Yisrael while the Shema shows our love for YHWH.

This prayer has been passed down from generation to generation as a remembrance of Elohim’s ahava (love.) True love leads to actions and YHWH’s love for Yisrael led Him to give the words found in the first five books of the Bible. This blessing is an expression of gratitude to YHWH for His gift of Torah. YHWH loves us and the fact that He has given us the Torah proves this. Just read the prayer for yourself and perhaps you can understand this better:

“You have loved the family of Yisrael with an ever-lasting love. Torah and Mitzvot, laws and precepts have You given us. Therefore, O Elohim, when we lie down and when we rise up, we will meditate on Your laws and rejoice in Your Torah and Mitzvot for ever. Day and night we will reflect on them, for they are our life and the length of our days. Then Your love shall never depart from our hearts! Blessed are You, YHWH, who love the people Yisrael.”

Ahavat Olam beit yisraeil amcha ahavta, Torah umitzvot chukim umishpatim otanu limad'ta. Al kein Adonai Eloheinu b'shochbeinu uv'kumeinu nasi-ach b-chukecha, v' nis mach b'divrei torat'cha uv'mitzvotcha le-olam va-ed. Ki heim cha-yeinu v-orach yameinu uva-heim nehgeh yomam valaila. V-ahavatcha al tasir mimenu le-olamim, Baruch ata YHWH, ohev amo yisraeil.

Ahavat Olam is the everlasting, eternal love of YHWH expressed in his “torah and Mitzvot, laws and precepts.” You might notice in this Hebrew prayer the term “umishpatim.” This is the same word used to title this week’s Torah portion. “Mishpatim” or “judgments” in English is the subject of Shemot/Exodus 21:1-24:18. This Parasha highlights the civil rules being given to the bnai (children) of Yisrael. These laws are called “mishpatim.” According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance and Dictionary this Hebrew term means, “law, rules, justice, including a particular right, or privilege, determination, discretion, disposing, form, to be judged, judgment, manner, measure, order, ordinance.” Mishpatim is from the base Hebrew word "shaphat", which means, "to establish, set on, reduce, bring, ordain, to contend and defend." Through the mishpatim, YHWH’s love is trying to stop us from playing in a busy road.

Isn’t it wonderful that YHWH through divine love gave His people mishpatim or rules on how to get along with each other? These rules remain as reminders on how Yisrael should live. Many issues are discussed in this portion, from how to handle the restitution of an incident to how Eretz Yisrael experiences the Sabbath

rest. Each section of these chapters has valuable information for the believer. Time could be taken to study every single verse and every single word of this Parasha. For that matter you could even break the words down and examine and research the Hebrew letters that make up the words. We could do all of this. But, please, let's not rationalize, spiritualize, or analyze this Torah portion. Let's just receive these instructions as what they are – LOVING MISHPATIM from YHWH. Then we should seek to obey them.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Mishpatim." What does this mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 34:8-22, 33:25-26. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Matthew 17:1-11. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Why do you think the specific day-by-day rules for life in Exodus begin with a discussion about slavery, right after the Ten Commandments?
7. Why do you think YHWH presented us with commandments in the first place?
8. Where was Moses' specific location at the time these rules were handed down?
9. What kind of rules are these? Are they rules related to justice, like the U.S. Constitution or are they rules related to ethical behavior or both?
10. The Torah states: "If a person steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay five oxen for an ox and four sheep for the sheep" (Exodus 21:37). Why is the fine for stealing a sheep less than the fine for stealing an ox? What lesson can we learn from this for our lives?
11. Today the death penalty is under scrutiny. Do you think it's fair to take a man's life after he kills someone? Are other punishments more appropriate?
12. Why does YHWH give so many rules governing the "stranger"?
13. Exodus 23:20-21 says, "Behold, I send a Messenger before you to keep you in the way." Who is this Messenger [Hebrew Malak] from YHWH Elohim? Read and compare this with 1 Corinthians 10:4.
14. Why does the Torah have to make such a horrible threat ("Your wives will be widows and your children will be orphans" – 22:23) in order to convince Bnei Yisrael not to oppress widows and orphans?

15. The Hebrew word for torn flesh is "terefa" or "traif." What does that word mean to you?
16. There is the command for the Sabbath of years. Why does the land need to rest? Isn't it enough that man should rest?
17. The Torah includes the same verse twice in Exodus/Shemot – 23:19 and 34:26. Each includes the commandment of not cooking a goat in its mother's milk. What does this commandment have in common with its context, and, assuming it is correct in context, why must it be repeated?
18. Is it a sin for a man to have relations with a virgin if he later pays the dowry bride price? What if her father refuses the price?
19. What is the penalty in this Torah portion for Idolatry?
20. Who is allowed to borrow money without being charged interest?
21. How do people curse leadership today? Is this allowed by YHWH?
22. Does the commandment to set aside the first born still apply today?
23. Explain what Exodus 23:1 means to you.
24. How have you in the past followed a crowd to do evil? Have you repented of this?
25. How does bribery blind the wise? Give an example.
26. To whom does the sabbatical year of farming apply today?
27. Explain how YHWH uses the Sabbath of the Land to feed the poor. If farmers did this and planted on different years, would there always be food for the needy?
28. Why should animals and foreigners rest on the Sabbath?
29. What type of work is prohibited on the Shabbat?
30. Does the commandment to "make no mention of other gods" apply in all conversation or just worship?
31. What three feasts are special pilgrimage journeys to Jerusalem?
32. When is the month of Aviv?
33. Why do many of the feast days line up with harvest times?
34. Does Exodus 23:19 really mean that you shouldn't eat meat and dairy together? What about chicken and cheese? Does the stomach process meat and dairy differently? Do you think the Messiah mixed the two?
35. What is the penalty for wounding one's father or mother?
36. From where in this week's Parasha can the importance of work be demonstrated?
37. Which verse forbids listening to slander?
38. What compels the two enemies to get together? Read Exodus 23:5 for this answer.

39. "A" intentionally hits "B." As a result, B is close to death. Besides any monetary payments, what happens to A?
40. An ox gores another ox. What is the maximum the owner of the damaging ox must pay, provided his animal had gored no more than twice previously?
41. A person borrows his employee's car. The car is struck by lightning. How much must he pay?
42. What blessing would Israel inherit if they listened to YHWH according to Exodus 23:25?
43. How is making a covenant with foreigners also making a covenant with their gods?
44. How many commands are given in this week's Torah portion?
45. What leaders were called to go up the mountain of YHWH?
46. What was the sacrifice of a bull symbolic of? Was this made for a sin offering?
47. In this week's Torah portion, the nation of Israel once again said, "All that YHWH has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" Did they keep their words? Why or why not?
48. Does a covenant always require blood?
49. How could the leaders "see" YHWH on the mountain when Exodus 33:20 states that "no man can see YHWH and live?"
50. Was it good to leave Aharon and Hur in charge when Moses was on the mount?
51. On what day did YHWH call to Moses to come into the cloud?
52. How long was Moshe on the mountain? Did he eat or drink during this time?
53. What do you think it would be like to see YHWH as this group of elders did? What did the elders do as they fellowshiped with YHWH? Was there a church service or fellowship with food?
54. Imagine yourself as an Israelite. What would it be like to behold the consuming fire of YHWH on the mountain top?
55. Why weren't Aaron and the elders of Israel eligible to accompany Moses up the mountain?
56. YHWH commands Moses to come up Mount Sinai and write down The Ten Commandments on stone tablets so they can be taught. Why is it important to teach the Ten Commandments? Are the Ten Commandments strictly for Jews or for all people?
57. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Terumah

- Exodus 25:1-27:19
- 1 Kings 5:12-6:13
- 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The people of Israel are called upon to contribute fifteen materials -- gold, silver and brass; blue, purple and red-dyed wool; flax, goat hair, animal skins, wood, olive oil, spices and gems -- out of which, YHWH says to Moses, "They shall make for Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell amidst them."

On the summit of Mount Sinai, Moses is given detailed instructions on how to construct this dwelling for YHWH so that it could be readily dismantled, transported and reassembled as the people journeyed in the desert.

In the Sanctuary's inner chamber, behind an artistically woven curtain, was the Ark containing the Tablets of Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; on the Ark's cover stood two winged cherubim hammered out of pure gold. In the outer chamber stood the seven-branched Menorah and the Table upon which the "showbread" was arranged.

The Sanctuary's three walls were fitted together from 48 upright wooden boards, each of which was overlaid with gold and held up by a pair of silver foundation sockets. The roof was formed of three layers of coverings: (a) tapestries of multi-colored wool and linen; (b) a covering made of goat-hair; (c) a covering of ram and tachash skins. Across the front of the Sanctuary was an embroidered screen held up by five posts.

Surrounding the Sanctuary and the brass-plated Altar which fronted it was an enclosure of linen hangings, supported by 60 wooden posts with silver hooks and trimmings and reinforced by brass stakes.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The name of this week's Torah portion is "Terumah." This Hebrew phrase describes a special type of offering that can be given to any work of YHWH. The Israelite people gave a "terumah" offering to help build the tabernacle. The Bible does not prescribe a given quantity of terumah. This type of offering is a type of

"free will" offering, though no term in the English language accurately describes this Hebrew term. It is often called a "heave offering" as these types of gifts were lifted or heaved on to the altar. Terumah offerings were often times voluntary gifts that brought about closeness with the Creator. The sacrifice of the first born and gift of the first fruits is considered in the Bible as a Terumah. Plus, general tithes were often called terumah as well. The challah, slaughter offerings, and Levite tithes were all spoken of as terumah. (The Hebrew word usually used for tithes is "ma'aser.") Other types of terumah include the materials for the building of the Tabernacle, the census silver, the dedicated spoils of the Midianite War, as well as any other gift set apart as sanctified to the Temple.

The Terumah offering is a type and picture of Messiah Y'shua. The Savior willingly gave his existence as an offering to YHWH for all mankind. The Romans didn't take his life. The Jewish leaders didn't really kill him. Sadly, for many years anti-Semitism has been taught in the church by suggesting that the Jewish people killed the savior. This idea breeds dislike and disgust of the Hebrew people.

The Jews did not kill Y'shua. Nor did the Romans. No one took Y'shua's life from Him. He gave up His life freely for all mankind. "I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again," John 10:17-18. By offering Himself as a terumah gift to mankind, Y'shua gave up His life. No one person is responsible for killing him because each and every person who has ever lived is guilty of murdered the Man of Sorrows. Without us, He would have not died. By this, YHWH showed His great love for us as while we were sinners, Messiah died for us. Our response to his gift should be to offer our lives back to Him. We must give terumah to YHWH once we accept His terumah for us! "Present yourselves to YHWH as a living sacrifice (terumah) and be not conformed to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds," says Romans 12. One translation says, "in view of YHWH's mercies, offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for YHWH. This will please him; it is the logical 'Temple worship' for you." Release all of who you are and everything you have to YHWH and you will be blessed. Allow your mind to be renewed by His eternal word. Worship Y'shua for His sacrifice. "YHWH said unto me, Son of man, know and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of YHWH, and all the laws thereof; and know well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary," Ezekiel 44:5

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Did you know that even the most difficult areas of mathematics could be mastered by simply learning and applying specific formulas?

Algebra, trigonometry, and higher math are worked through using basic arithmetic skills in a designated order. The formulas used in these more-involved math areas simply mandate the order in which certain actions should be taken to solve the problem. For example:

$$(1 + z) \times 2 + 12 \div 3 - z \text{ when } z = 4$$

Here's another formula to consider: man's desire + exact obedience = YHWH's dwelling place

You can't solve any extreme equations through using the above expression, but it may help you to understand this week's Torah portion better.

Our Torah reading is called "Terumah" and recounts the instructions for building the mishkan (tabernacle.) "Terumah" is the Hebrew word that is often translated "offering" in Shemot 25:2. "YHWH said to Moshe, "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering (terumah). You are to receive the terumah for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give." Terumah literally means "offering, donation, best part, a present sacrifice, tribute and heave offering."

This terumah (the first building fund?) was to be used to put together the mishkan of YHWH. Through voluntary gifts and human hands, the dwelling place of YHWH was to be fashioned. It was to be made exactly as specified by the Almighty. There was not to be even a slight deviation from the original pattern shown to Moshe. "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you," said YHWH Adonai in Shemot (Exodus) 25:8-9. The following verses, indeed the rest of sefer Shemot (book of Exodus) details the building of and the work in the portable dwelling of YHWH.

In years past Yisra'el was forced to build the store cities of the Egyptians, but now they were to freely and lovingly construct the house of YHWH. This beit (house) was to be a labor of love not a building of slave labor. The construction of the mishkan was done by adding two key variables that would combine to equal

the place of YHWH's habitation. Remember our equation:

man's desire + exact obedience = YHWH's dwelling place

As stated above in Shemot 25:1-2, the mishkan was constructed totally of free-will offerings. Most English Bibles state that this terumah was "given" but the Hebrew literally reads that the offering was "taken." This fact of mistranslation illustrates the difference between the Hebraic mindset of charitable donations and the Western or Greek mindset of giving. Just read the Jewish Stone's Tanakh translation, "YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying, "Speak to the children of Yisra'el and let them take for Me a terumah; from every man whose heart motivates him you shall take My terumah," Shemot 25:1 & 2. The word that is often mistranslated "as give" is the Hebrew term "laqach" which literally means to "take, accept, bring, carry away, fetch, seize, and take away." What's the difference between giving and taking?

Our well-learned sage, Rashi, has taught that the obvious implication of this verse is that Yisra'el was to "take" some of their possessions and "give" them to the collection. Yet a person can only give what is truly theirs in the first place. To the Hebrew, it should be understood that man actually has nothing. Whatever we do have - money, talents, children, belongings - is actually YHWH's. "The earth is YHWH's and everything in it," Tehillim (Psalm) 24:1. You can't give to a ministry or to the poor because nothing is really yours to give in the first place. YHWH graciously gives man stewardship and dominion over the earth. In reality we are just custodians, all we do is shuffle His world around.

To make this point, just read the items that Israelite ex-slaves were to give for the building of the mishkan: "These are the terumah you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breast piece," Shemot 25:3-7. How many ex-slaves do you know of that have these kind of possessions? Well, the grand resources used for the mishkan were the plunder Yisrael received as they left Mitzrayim! "And the children of Yisra'el did according to the word of Moshe; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment," Shemot 12:35. The Israelites "borrowed" from the Egyptians the majestic possessions that YHWH "lent" Egypt.

Notice that YHWH did not make Yisra'el give the terumah. No, YHWH commanded that each person should give generously as their heart led them. Desire was to lead Yisra'el into establishing the mishkan. True terumah is taken from a grateful heart, responding to the need. Terumah starts with a heartfelt and sincere desire to take back to YHWH what He has given man. The Hebrews brought so much material to Moshe for the mishkan that Moshe had to order the terumah to be stopped. "They received from Moshe all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning...Then Moshe gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work," Shemot 36:1-6.

As great as desire is, it is not enough to bring about YHWH's dwelling place. Suppose for a moment that Yisra'el brought the terumah, laid it at Moshe's feet and that's all that happened. Just having or giving the supplies or the elements to make the mishkan was just not enough. Those raw materials, in and of themselves, did not constitute the mishkan. But, when they were fashioned exactly as Yah commanded then the blessing of His presence came. Our desire to please YHWH might be heartfelt and sincere. Yet desire must be accompanied with corresponding actions.

Just any old building would not please YHWH. The Almighty showed Moshe exactly how the tabernacle was to be made. Very specific materials were to be used. Generics wouldn't do, shortcuts wouldn't suffice, and alterations to YHWH's plan wouldn't be allowed. Four times in this week's Parasha YHWH told Moshe to build the mishkan exactly as he was commanded. Certain items were to be fashioned of pure gold while colored fabrics and linens were also used. Exact measurements required exact measuring by skilled workers. The mishkan was to be made "according to the pattern"

Math teachers will tell you that equations located on opposite sides of the equal sign must be equal. They cannot be different.

man's desire + exact obedience = YHWH's dwelling place

It takes both man's heartfelt devotion AND his obedience to create the sanctuary of YHWH. The emotional sincere desire of a believer should be coupled with

deliberate and exact submission to YHWH's will. Faith must be paired with works to do some holy math! Obedience is just not enough, nor is belief. If you have one without the other then you will always come up short. But, put the two together, add desire plus obedience, and you'll experience a visitation of the divine every time. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead," Ya'acov 2:26.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Terumah." What does this mean?
2. Read 1 Kings 5:12-6:13. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in 2 Corinthians 9:1-15. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Who did Yitro worship?
7. YHWH instructs Moses how to make a sanctuary for YHWH's presence. Can you describe different kinds of sanctuaries that are filled with YHWH's presence?
8. The Torah does not describe what transpired on the mountain. How and why were these instructions given there? What's the difference between given on the mountain as compared to given at the foot of the mountain? What thoughts come to mind when you think of the mountain of YHWH?
9. What is the Hebrew word for "tabernacle as used in this week's Torah portion?
10. Why is YHWH so precise on the details of constructing the sanctuary and ark and tabernacle? What difference does it make what these look like and how they are made?
11. What offering was to be given willingly? Was there an obligation to give to the tabernacle?
12. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
13. "They shall make an Ark two and a half cubits in length, one and a half cubits in width, and one and a half cubits in height," Exodus 25:10. Why did all the measurements of the Ark include fractions?
14. The Ark of the Covenant was at the heart of the Tabernacle. How does it correspond to the heart of man?
15. Why do you think the Ark is the first vessel described? Why must the Ark be overlay with gold on the inside and outside?
16. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?

17. Why is YHWH so precise on the details of constructing the sanctuary and ark and tabernacle? What difference does it make what these look like and how they are made?
18. What is expected to happen in between the two cherubim?
19. Why would YHWH want goat's hair to be donated?
20. What would acacia wood be used for?
21. What was the purpose of the tabernacle to be built? Who would dwell among the Hebrews?
22. Where did Moses see the original pattern of the tabernacle? Did Moses build the actual tabernacle by hand?
23. Is acacia wood smooth or thorny?
24. What was to be placed in the ark?
25. Explain the top of the ark. Why is this called the "mercy seat?"
26. How did Moses know what the angels/cherubim looked like in order to copy?
27. Why would YHWH meet at the ark and not at the altar of sacrifice?
28. What type of table was made of acacia wood?
29. "You shall make a table of acacia wood two cubits long, one cubit wide, and one cubit and a half in height," Exodus 25:23. Why was the width of the table less than the height?
30. What is the significance of the golden crown around the Table?
31. What is the Hebrew word for "table?"
32. Why is it important to study the tabernacle?
33. What is the "shew bread?" Who baked this bread? Who ate the bread?
34. Draw a picture of the temple menorah as described in this week's Torah portion. How many branches did it have? What direction did they face? Did the menorah hold candles or oil?
35. Why would the menorah be decorated with almond buds? What is the almond symbolic of?
36. Where did the Hebrew slaves get the gold and jewels that would be donated for the Temple fund?
37. What were the colors of the curtains? What is the significance of these colors?
38. How were angles woven "into" the curtains?
39. How wide were the curtains that were used in the tabernacle?
40. Why type of roof did the tabernacle have? Why?
41. What type of metal was used in the holy of holies? What type of metal was used in the holy place? What type of metal was used in the outer court? Explain the quality of metals and the positioning surrounding the Ark of the Covenant.
42. Describe two uses of oil, spices, and jewels.

43. The tabernacle was a type of four cornered garment with blue used throughout. What garment does this remind you of that is also spoken of in the Torah?
44. Explain the three compartments of the tabernacle. Where was the mercy seat placed? How about the table of sacrifice and the menorah?
45. How long and how wide was the altar of sacrifice? Why would it have "horns?"
46. Why did the ark and the altar have poles and not handles? What does this teach you about the moves of YHWH?
47. Why does the Torah, which is a book of laws, teachings, and history, suddenly spend a great amount of emphasis on giving the details of designing and building the mishkan?
48. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Tetzaveh

- Exodus 27:20-30:10
- Ezekiel 43:10-27
- Hebrews 13:10-16

The Torah Portion at a Glance

YHWH tells Moses to receive from the Children of Israel pure olive oil to feed the "everlasting flame" of the menorah, which Aaron is to kindle each day, "from evening until morning."

The priestly garments, to be worn by the Kohanim (priests) while serving in the sanctuary are described. All Kohanim wore: 1) the ketonet – a full length linen tunic; 2) michnasayim -- linen breeches; 3) mitznefet ormigba'at -- a linen turban; 4) avnet -- a long sash wound above the waist.

In addition, the Kohen HaGadol ("high priest") wore: 5) the efod, an apron-like garment made of blue, purple and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; 6) the choshen, a breastplate containing twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel; 7) me'il -- a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on its hem; 8) the tzitz -- a golden plate worn on the forehead bearing the inscription "Holy to YHWH".

Tetzaveh also includes YHWH's detailed instructions for the seven-day initiation of Aaron and his four sons –Nadav, Avihu, Elazar and Itamar-- into the priesthood, and for the making of the Golden Altar on which the ketoret ("incense") was burned.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The garments and sanctification of the priesthood are described in great detail in this week's Torah portion. It is no coincidence that this gives us yet another glimpse of our Master Y'shua. The priest, called "cohen" in Hebrew, was as an intercessory between man and YHWH. The cohen worked at the tabernacle and offered sacrifices. "Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to YHWH, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people," Hebrews 5:1-3.

Aharon and his sons were chosen as the first priests of the mishkan. To be a priest, a person must have been born into their family lineage. To be a priest of YHWH today, you must be born again. “Aharon and his sons shall have the priesthood by a perpetual statute so you shall ordain Aharon and his sons,” Exodus 29:9.

Much of our Torah portion specifically speaks of the Cohen HaGadol – the Great High Priest. This man was chosen to go behind the veil once a year to present a special sacrifice to YHWH for the atonement of the nation of Israel. This occurred on Yom Kippur and is detailed in Leviticus 16. The High Priest was set apart over the set apart priesthood. This Cohen HaGadol is of course a prophetic picture of our High Priest Y’shua. As Aharon was chosen, so was Y’shua. “So Messiah also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But YHWH said to him, “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.” And he says in another place, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek,” Hebrews 5:5-6. Just as the High Priest would wear specific garments, we too must clothe ourselves in the Moshiach. The book of Romans says to “clothe yourselves with YHWH Y’shua, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

The High Priest had an amazing task to accomplish. In many ways, Messiah Y’shua is superior to the Aharonic Cohen HaGadol. You can relate to YHWH because of our High Priest. You never have to worry about YHWH rejecting you or accepting you. “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Y’shua lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to YHWH through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens,” Hebrews 7:23-26

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Here are some weird facts about the Bible that you might find interesting:

- The only domestic animal not mentioned in the Bible is the cat. (Poor kitties)

- Stephen Langton first divided the Bible into chapters in 1228. The Old Testament was first divided by verses in 1448 and the New Testament was first versed in 1551. King James was not involved in either.
- In a 1631 edition of the King James Bible, in Exodus 20 verse 14, the word "not" was left out. This changed the 7th commandment to read, "Thou shalt commit adultery." Oops!
- The book of Esther does not contain the name of YHWH or even a direct reference to Him.
- "Tetzaveh" is the only Torah portion in the books of Exodus and Leviticus that does not contain Moshe's name.

Pretty weird, eh?

"Tetzaveh," the title to this week's Torah portion, literally means, "you shall command." In this reading, YHWH told Moshe to command the children of Yisra'el to do several specific actions. In the previous chapters of Shemot (Exodus), YHWH reveals His will to have a mishkan (tabernacle) built for His presence. These instructions for building and worship continue in our weekly reading.

Within the few short chapters of our reading, detailed words are given concerning lighting the menorah, the clothes and consecration of the priesthood, and the building of the incense altar.

Moshe paid close attention to these instructions given by YHWH. Some teach that Moshe had visions of the finished tabernacle while others say that Moshe saw actual blueprints for how everything was to be made. Regardless of how the mishkan was presented to Moshe on the mountain, it must be remembered that Moshe received very specific instructions. His building plans were set in stone, you could say.

Moshe could not shorten his message, compromise on the details, or allow just anything to be built for YHWH. Moshe had received from YHWH exact measurements, colors, and materials to be used. Moshe was to "tetzaveh" or pass along these mitzvah to the sons of Yisra'el.

The text of this Parasha brings to mind an important point – YHWH is very specific. He is picky. YHWH wants things done His way in His time and by His chosen people. The world says that "god works in mysterious ways," yet YHWH does not. He is not mysterious in the idea that His attributes and works are

hidden. YHWH has laid out His plan, His instructions, and His ways in the Torah. Moshe paid close attention to YHWH's words and memorized them to the exact facet. We should do the same.

Too many people have accepted the modern view of "god on Prozac" – a god that accepts anything anyone will dish out. But, YHWH has not changed - He is the same forever. Many people believe the teaching that the Almighty simply does not care and is not picky. It seems that the mindset is that the Father who was once very specific and demanding is now highly medicated on "grace" and doesn't require obedience or devotion. What the Father wanted in the past was too difficult...too hard...and too demanding. Moshe would disagree with this idea. So would Messiah Y'shua.

Moshe was committed to his call. He was submitted to YHWH's authority and Moshe had an insatiable desire to please YHWH. While Yisra'el "said" they would obey Him, Moshe did obey. Of Moshe the scripture says that "there has not arisen a prophet in Yisra'el like unto Moshe, whom YHWH knew face to face," Devarim (Deuteronomy) 34:10.

Yet there is One who is greater than Moshe...Y'shua Ha Moshiach. "And Moshe verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Moshiach as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end," Ivrim (Hebrews) 3:5-6. Moshe was detail-oriented while building the dwelling place of YHWH, - the people of YHWH – Yisra'el. Y'shua also came to build the people of YHWH into the dwelling place of His presence.

Part of Y'shua's ministry was to call people back to heartfelt Torah obedience through love. He did not come to do away with Moshe or the Torah but to turn Yisra'el's heart back to the Father. Y'shua would say things like "you have heard it said yet I tell you..." These comments were made to draw people to the intention behind the commandment. "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart," Mattitياهو 5:27-28. Y'shua was not nullifying the Tanakh commandment on adultery here. What He was doing was exposing a fuller meaning of the mitzvah. Y'shua was being like Moshe here. Y'shua was being concerned about the details.

You see, Y'shua and Moshe were both concerned about "tetzaveh" or commanding others what they had been commanded. Moshe and Y'shua both were to hear the

commands of Abba YHWH and relate those to Yisra'el. YHWH has not changed since Moshe and Y'shua is proof of that.

So, who care that Moshe's name is not mentioned in this Parasha? It is clear to see that Moshe is present – he is the one receiving the instructions and he is the one that is to instruct Yisra'el. He is the one that will pass these words along and relate the details about the mishkan, the priests, and the sacrifices.

Who cares that YHWH's name isn't in the book of Esther? Even a blind man can see YHWH's hand present in the book's story.

There are many weird facts in the Bible. Perhaps the weirdest of all is that how a large group of Bible believers have accepted an un-Biblical view of an Elohim who doesn't care. The Almighty who commanded an exact replica of the heavenly mishkan has been traded for the "Almighty of Bliss." God on Prozac, now that's really weird.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Tetzaveh." What does this mean?
2. Read Ezekiel 43:10-27. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 13:10-16. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. What was the shape of the tabernacle? What about the holy of holies? Compare these shapes to the shape and size of the New Jerusalem spoken of in the book of Revelation.
7. Why was olive oil used in the mishkan/tabernacle and not some other oil?
8. Research and discuss the process for grinding olives into pure olive oil. What can be learned from such? How does the Garden of Gethsemane relate to olive oil?
9. Does this command to light the Menorah appear to be out of place?
10. From what times of day did the priests serve?
11. Explain each specific garment of the high priest. Should people dress like this today?
12. What is the Hebrew term for "high priest?"

13. Why would the holy garments for the priests be made for “glory” and “beauty” as seen in Exodus 28:2?
14. What characterized the people who made Aharon’s garments?
15. Use this Torah portion to help you draw out the garments of the high priest. Review how each piece fit with the other and was given for a specific purpose.
16. What was the purpose and use of the robe?
17. What was the purpose and meaning of the breast plate?
18. Why use did the turban have?
19. Why would the priest wear the “band of the ephod?”
20. What was the “ephod” as mentioned in Exodus 28:6-14, 39:2-7?
21. What colors were used for the priest’s garments? Why did the Torah specify these colors?
22. Why would the priest wear a girdle?
23. Were the priests to always cover their heads? Why or why not?
24. Explain how the priests were “set apart” or ordained into YHWH’s service.
25. What items were used for sacrifices during the ordination of YHWH’s priests?
26. Were the priests washed/baptized before they were able to serve in the Temple?
27. How much anointing oil was used on the high priest?
28. Did the High Priest and the other priests wear the same type and style of head covering? Compare the Hebrew words used in Exodus 28:1-4 and Exodus 39:28 and Exodus 29:9.
29. Why did the priests place their hands on a bull and a ram?
30. Where the priests allowed to eat fat?
31. In your opinion, is there enough work in the tabernacle to keep all the priests in Israel busy all year long?
32. What are the priests and Levites expected to do with the rest of their 'spare time'? [See Deuteronomy 17:8-10, 33:10.
33. Explain how the priests wore garments that were hand-me-downs.
34. How many days did it take to set apart the priests and the altar?
35. What were purpose and symbolism of the pomegranates and the bells on the priest’s garments?
36. During the seven day sanctification process both the priests and the tabernacle need cleansing. Why would the priests need atonement?
37. What were the names of Aharon’s sons? What became of these four men?
38. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Ki Tisa

- Exodus 30:11-34:35
- 1 Kings 18:1-39
- 2 Corinthians 3:1-18

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The people of Israel are told to each contribute exactly half a shekel of silver to the Sanctuary. Instructions are also given regarding the making of the Sanctuary's water-basin, anointing oil and incense. "Wise hearted" artisans Betzalel and Ahaliav are placed in charge of the Sanctuary's construction, and the people are once again commanded to keep the Shabbat.

When Moses does not return when expected from Mount Sinai, the people make a Golden Calf and worship it. YHWH proposes to destroy the errant nation, but Moses intercedes on their behalf. Moses descends from the mountain carrying the Tablets of the Testimony engraved with the Ten Commandments; seeing the people dancing about their idol, he breaks the Tablets, destroys the Golden Calf and has the primary culprits put to death. He then returns to YHWH to say: "If You do not forgive them, blot me out from the book that You have written."

YHWH forgives, but says that the effect of their sin will be felt for many generations. At first YHWH proposes to send His angel along with them, but Moses insists that YHWH Himself accompany His people to the Promised Land. Moses prepares a new set of tablets and once more ascends the mountain, where YHWH reinscribes the covenant on these Second Tablets. On the mountain Moses is also granted a vision of the divine Thirteen Attributes of Mercy. So radiant is Moses' face upon his return, that he must cover it with a veil, which he removes only to speak with YHWH and to teach His laws to the people.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

A misunderstanding of YHWH's character leads to rebellion against His word and a lack of intimacy in our relationship with Him. It was the Pharaoh of Egypt that said, "Who is YHWH that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know YHWH, and besides, I will not let Israel go," Exodus 5:2. Many people have an understanding of YHWH that leads them to rebel against His word. The more we

know YHWH through His Torah (the first five books of the Bible), the more we will walk in His ways. We are told in Ephesians 5:1 to “be imitators of YHWH like dear children.” As we build our relationship with YHWH and better know Him, the more of His glory we will show the world in which we live.

Sermon after sermon is given about the miracles and parables that were revealed during the Savior’s time on earth. We also know about The Spirit. But what about The Father? Y’shua said in Yochanan (John) 14:9, “if you have seen Me then you have seen the Father.” This means that Y’shua was an exact representation of The Father YHWH. When we discover the truth behind Y’shua then we will build our relationship with His Father. Y’shua also said that many people did NOT accept Him as Messiah because they did not know the Torah of Moshe.

It is in the Torah of Moshe that we have the most accurate description of YHWH. In Exodus 33, Moshe cries out to YHWH for a greater revelation of His greatness. YHWH answers with a bunch of adjectives!!!

“And Moshe said, I beg You, show me Your tifereth. And He said, I will make all My tov to pass before you, and I will proclaim the Name of YHWH before you; And will show unmerited favor to whom I will, and will show rachamim to whom I will. And He said, You cannot see My face: for there shall no man see Me, and live. And YHWH said, See, there is a place by Me, and you shall stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while My tifereth passes by, that I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by: And I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back: But My face shall not be seen. And YHWH passed by before him, and proclaimed, YHWH, YHWH. An El, full of rachamim and favor, longsuffering, and abundant in, chesed, and emet, Keeping chesed for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the ahvot upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation. And Moshe hurried, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped,” Exodus / Shemot 33:18-23 & 34:6-9.

YHWH says that no man can see Him and live. This corresponds exactly with the words of Y’shua when He said, “pick up your execution stake and follow me daily.” To follow YHWH we are to die to ourselves daily. As YHWH passes by Moshe, He calls out His name and describes Himself in some surprising terms. This section of Scripture, especially verses 6 and 7 are called the “Shelosh Esreh

Middot” or the “Thirteen Attributes.” The Shelosh Esreh Middot is a listing of YHWH’s adjectives by YHWH Himself. These describe our Master Y’shua in vivid details!

Notice that these are terms of mercy and love. These are not terms of judgment, anger, or such. These attributes teach us about YHWH from His perspective:

In Hebrew this reads, “YHWH YHWH el rachum chanun erek a’payim rav chesed v’emet notzer chesed la’alafim nosei avon, nosei pasha, nosie chata v’nakel”

First, His Name is repeated twice in a row.
This is prophetic of YHWH The Father and YHWH The Son.
The Son, Y’shua, came in the name of the first YHWH.

Two)
YHWH is listed twice to show us His compassion before we sin and His compassion after we sin.
YHWH YHWH is full of mercy!

Three)
Next, He is called “el.”
This term literally means “mighty.”
It is often translated as “god” in English Bibles.

Four)
YHWH is a mighty el who is willing to judge with mercy.
He is full of “rachum” or mercy.
He is merciful that mankind would not be distressed.

Five)
He also has “chanun” or “favor” for us.
This is to comfort and help us if we already in distress or have problems.

Six)
The Torah calls Him “erek a’payim” or “slow to anger.”
Though we are quick to judge and cast out,
YHWH is patient and slow to get angrily easily.

Seven)

He is “rav chesed” or “abundant in kindness.”
His mercy knows no end.
It endures forever!

Eight)
YHWH is “emet” or “truthfull.”
YHWH has truthful and instructive consequences in place to push us closer to His love.

Nine)
The Torah also describes Him as a “preserver of kindness for thousands of generations.”
The Hebrew reads “notzer chesed la’alafim.”

Ten)
YHWH also forgives all types of sin, beginning with iniquity.
Iniquity is the result of a heart that is hardened against YHWH and His ways.

Eleven)
YHWH forgives transgression.
This is a willful violation of the Torah.

Twelve)
YHWH forgives sin. Man is sinful and lives according to the sinful nature.

Thirteen)
YHWH offers “v’nakel or “cleansing or pardon” for all sin.

This is YHWH! He is an El full of Mercy and Forgiveness.

IF we have been praying to or serving a different god, then it is time to confess and move on to the truth!

The overwhelming theme in these attributes is that of “mercy and forgiveness.” In the Hebrew these three key concepts are very similar in meaning. These words reveal much about how YHWH relates to mankind. Rachamum, Chanu, and Chesed are each translated as “mercy” throughout the King James Version Bible.

Mercy is the sum description of our being of worship. He is merciful and gracious. Many times we gloss over the idea of YHWH being full of mercy as a weakness or temporary laps of judgment. But this is not the case. It is through YHWH's mercy that the universe exists and we breathe.

“YHWH is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,” says Psalm 103:8. In this verse as well as many others, the terms “merciful and gracious” are used together. In Hebrew this reads “rachum v’chanun.”

This is YHWH! He has compassion and patience towards us at all times. To be merciful is to show empathy to a person. Empathy is the ability to recognize, relate, and directly feel the emotion of another person. To have empathy is to have rachamim. YHWH emphasizes with us.

It has been said that mercy is “not getting what you deserve.” Well, that definition is just a small portion of the truth. Rachamim is so much more.

YHWH's mercy is the force that sustains creation and allows the world to spin on its axis.

Many describe the “God of the Old Testament” as an angry judge of the world that sent His son to save mankind from the religion of Judaism. This is not so. Such an idea of a bearded man with lightening bolts and a huge throne relate more to Greek Mythology than the Bible. The Scriptures state that “YHWH did not send His son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved,” John 3:17.

Part of Y'shua's ministry on Earth was to restore the mercy and grace of the Torah. He did not come to start a new religion or write a second portion of the Bible called the “New Testament.” John 1:17 states, “The Torah was given by Moses and its unmerited favor and truth were revealed by Y'shua.”

Y'shua did NOT come to replace the Law with Grace. Our choice today is not mercy or torah but mercy and grace IN the Torah. This is a message we need to know, accept and share with others.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

\Con`tra*dic"tion\, n. An assertion of the contrary to what has been said or affirmed; denial of the truth of a statement or assertion; contrary declaration; gainsaying. n 1: opposition between two conflicting forces or ideas 2: (in logic) a statement that is necessarily false; "the statement `he is brave and he is not brave' is a contradiction"

Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, © 1996, 1998

A contradiction is a statement of opposites. It says one thing while meaning another. "Microsoft Works" for example could be considered a contradiction. So could the phrase "honest politician." Contradictions abound all over entertainment, news, and the internet. There are even those who teach that there are contradictions in the Bible.

It is true that some statements in the Scriptures seem to contradict each other but they simply do not. Some phrases do seem to make no logical sense in comparison to others, yet there are no contradictions in text of Genesis to Revelation.

The few verses in the Bible that may seem to cancel each other out can be understood by the willing. Like a person digging for buried treasure, the reader must be willing to search deeper to find the truth. Such is the case in this week's Torah Parasha called "Ki Tisa" and an apparent contradiction concerning Moshe.

Within the chapters of our reading is the story of Moshe experiencing the presence and power of YHWH Almighty. "Then Moshe said, "Now show me your glory" And YHWH said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, YHWH, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live," Shemot (Exodus) 33:18-21. What transpired after this conversation has been written about, preached on, and analyzed for thousands of years. Moshe hid behind a rock and YHWH passed by. "And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen," said YHWH in Shemot 33:23.

YHWH's admonition that if a person were to look upon Him then they would die, and indeed, this whole event is puzzling when one considers another verse in the Exodus story - "And YHWH spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh

unto his friend,” Shemot 33:11. How can YHWH say that man will die if He sees YHWH’s face yet this verse says that Moshe spoke “face to face” with YHWH? If you think this is interesting then just read Amos 5:4, “For thus saith YHWH unto the house of Yisra’el, Seek ye me, and ye shall live.” In one pasuk (verse) YHWH says to seek Him and live and another He says to seek Him will result in death! To bring more confusion here’s a prayer of David from Tehillim (Psalms) 27, “My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, YHWH, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper.” Is this more proof of a contradiction?

No. There is no contradiction here. YHWH meant what He said when He told Moshe that to see Him would result in death. YHWH also meant what He said when He called Yisra’el to seek His face and live. How can this be?

Well, many apparent inconsistencies in the Scriptures are simply misunderstandings. First of all, the Bible speaks to the reader on many levels – the plain, the hidden, the physical, the spiritual, the mystical, and so on. Also, much is lost when the original Hebrew text is translated into Greek, or English, or Spanish, or any other language. Conflicts occur when verses are taken out of context and each different Bible translation adds to the confusion. Take for example the New International Version (NIV) that completely deletes over 45 verses that are found in other Bible translations. For example, you won’t find Mattitياهو (Matthew) 18:11 in the NIV. Here’s what it says, “For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”

In our present dilemma it must be understood that YHWH was not speaking from both sides of His mouth. The “no man see me and live” pasuk is perfectly in line with the “seek me and live” verse when a person considers the teachings of Y’shua Ha Moshiach. “Then said Y’shua unto his talmidim (disciples), If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his execution stake, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it,” Mattitياهو 16:24-25. True life is found in death. When you die to your sinful desires and fleshly nature, the yetzer hara, then and only then can you experience the life of Messiah. When a person “sees” YHWH they do die – they die to themselves and thus they are changed.

Avraham, Ya’acov, Moshe, David, and even Kefa all died and yet lived once they truly experienced YHWH. Rabbi Sha’ul (Paul) had a vision of Y’shua on the road to Damascus and was never the same. He died to his ambitions and lived to

teach the message of Moshiach. "I am crucified with Messiah: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Messiah liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of Elohim, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Galatians 2:20.

So, if a contradiction is a statement of opposites then there is no contradiction in our weekly reading. Moshe saw YHWH. Moshe died, yet Moshe lived. True life is found in dying to self and living for YHWH.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The name of this portion is "Ki Tisa." What does this Hebrew phrase mean?
2. Read 1 Kings 18:1-39. How does this relate to the story of Exodus this week?
3. Consider the words found in 2 Corinthians 3:1-18. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to life.
6. The text states that the count of the Israelites was to be made using half-shekels. Why should a counting be tied to an offering?
7. Why is the command for making the laver placed later in the Torah than the command of making the other vessels in the Tabernacle?
8. The spices for the Ketoret did not only include sweet smelling herbs, but also substances with an evil odor - such as galbanum ('chelbena' 30:34). What may be learnt from having those unpleasant herbs in the ketoret?
9. YHWH states He filled Betzalel, the builder of the Mishkan, 'with wisdom, insight, and knowledge'. What do those three terms mean?
10. What was the nature of Moses' 'delay' (32:1) in returning to the Israelites at the foot of Mt. Sinai?
11. What rationale did Moses use in smashing the Tablets?
12. YHWH states that He will pass 'all My goodness' (33:19) before Moses. What is the meaning of that goodness?
13. The section detailing the prohibition of idolatry is immediately followed with the agricultural laws of the Festivals. What is the connection between the two?

14. What connection may be made between the way Moses taught the Torah after he received the Second Tablets, and the advice that Jethro gave to him, recorded in 18:17-23?
15. How many "geira" are in a shekel?
16. What was the minimum age of military service in the Hebrew army?
17. What were the three different types of terumah donated?
18. The Hebrews were counted after Yom Kippur and again after Pesach. Both times they numbered the same amount. How can this be? Didn't some 19-year olds turn 20 during that six month period?
19. How many ingredients comprise the incense of the Mishkan?
20. What is the difference between chochma (wisdom), bina (understanding), and da'at (knowledge)?
21. Shabbat is a "sign." What does it signify?
22. When did the Hebrew People begin to give contributions for the building of the Mishkan?
23. From where did the men take the earrings that they donated to make the calf?
24. Why did Aharon build the altar for the golden calf by himself?
25. Why did Moshe break the Tablets?
26. How can two brothers belong to two different tribes?
27. Why did Moshe ask that his name be erased from the Torah?
28. How has the sin of the golden calf affected the Jewish People throughout history?
29. In verse 33:2, YHWH says that the inhabitants of Eretz Canaan would be driven out of the Land. In that verse, only six of the seven Canaanite nations are mentioned. What happened to the seventh?
30. How did YHWH show that He forgave the Hebrew People?
31. How did Moshe become wealthy?
32. How do the light rays shining from Moshe's face show us the powerful effect of sin?
33. At what point in history does this parasha unfold?
34. Where does this parasha take place geographically? What are the setting and environment?
35. Who are the primary actors in the parasha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Identify any secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
36. What is the overall theme of this parasha? What are the subdivisions, if any?

37. What method was used to count the number of men of Bnei Yisrael? What was the purpose of the monetary gift they brought that was counted in place of each man? What was the age range of the men counted? What amount were they to give and why was it the same for rich and poor? What use was made of the silver coins and what purpose did they serve? Who got into trouble for counting Bnei Yisrael and with what result?
38. From what material was the laver made and where was it placed? Who was to wash with it and when? What would happen if they did not wash? For how long and for whom would this instruction be valid?
39. What ingredients did YHWH instruct Moshe to use in making the oil of sacred anointment? What and who were to be anointed with it and why? What restrictions did YHWH place upon its use and duplication? What ingredients were to be used to make up the incense? Where was the incense to be used and when? What restrictions were placed upon its manufacture and use?
40. Who were designated to be the chief builders of the Mishkan and its furnishings? What did YHWH give to them for this purpose? Who else was to be involved in the process?
41. What reason did YHWH give Moshe for requiring Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat? What would happen to those who desecrated it? What is the nature of the rest to be experienced on Shabbat and why? For how long was Bnei Yisrael to observe Shabbat? What purpose would it serve between YHWH and Bnei Yisrael? What did YHWH do next? Where does Abba desire to have his loving instructions (Torah) written?
42. What precipitated the push by some people for another leader to replace the one who had brought them from Egypt? What Hebrew word in verse one can have two meanings that are quite different and depend upon the context? What are the two different meanings and what difference would that make here? What did Aharon gather from the people? What was fashioned from it? What declaration did the people make and what Hebrew word again crops up with dual meanings? What difference would that make here? For whom did Aharon proclaim a festival on the next day? Who arose early the next day and brought offerings? What else did they do?
43. How did YHWH describe Bnei Yisrael in order to identify them with Moshe? What did YHWH wish to do to them? From whom would he create a great nation? How did Moshe respond on their behalf? What did he say Egypt would claim? Who and what did he call to the remembrance of YHWH? What did YHWH do? What did Moshe do and what did he carry

- with him? How did he describe the sound he heard from the camp? When Moshe arrived in the camp, what things did he do immediately?
44. As Moshe confronts and questions Aharon, his question implicates who as having been responsible for precipitating Aharon's actions? In the response of Aharon, what difference does the meaning of the word Elohim make to our understanding? Which meaning to you think it has here and why? How did Moshe respond to the condition of the people? Who joined with him? What were they to do and what was the end result? Given the size of this number in comparison to all of Bnei Yisrael, what conclusion can be drawn about the extent of this sinful episode?
45. On the next day, what did Moshe do and say on behalf of Bnei Yisrael? What difference do the dual meanings of Elohim found in verse 31 make to our understanding? What two elements are involved in the sin of idolatry found in Shemot (Exodus) 20:4-5? Who might have been involved with only the first of these elements? Would they have been guilty of idolatry on this basis alone; why or why not? Who was involved with both of these elements of idolatry? What happened to them? What sin did Bnei Yisrael as a whole and Aharon in particular commit in relationship to these idolaters? What did YHWH say in response to Moshe's pleas and what instruction did he give Moshe? What further punishment did he inflict?
46. As YHWH sends Moshe back to the people, what does he instruct Moshe to do and whom does YHWH remember? Who will he send before them, for what purpose, and why? What reaction do the people have to this news? How did YHWH respond and what instruction does he give Bnei Yisrael?
47. Distinguish between the tent that Moshe would pitch outside the camp and the Tabernacle to be erected later. What would happen at this tent? What relationship did Moshe and YHWH have? Who else would be present at this tent? Based upon the favor that he had with YHWH, what did Moshe ask YHWH to do for him and Bnei Yisrael? How did YHWH respond? What further favor did Moshe request? How did YHWH respond?
48. What instructions are given in this chapter for observances? What was the redemption of the firstborn? From the scriptures of the Brit Chadasha, who was the firstborn of all creation? How did his parents conform to this instruction? How are believers considered to be firstborn? How long did Moshe remain with YHWH and what did he eat and drink during that time? What had happened to his skin while on the mountain?
49. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Vayakhel and Pekudei

- Exodus 35:1-40:38
- 1 Kings 7:13-26, 40-8:21
- Hebrews 9:1-11, 8:1-12

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses assembles the people of Israel and reiterates to them the commandment to observe the Shabbat. He then conveys YHWH's instructions regarding the making of the Mishkan (Tabernacle).

The people donate the required materials in abundance, bringing gold, silver, copper, blue, purple and red-dyed wool, goat hair, spun linen, animal skins, wood, olive oil, herbs and precious stones. Moses has to tell them to stop giving.

A team of wise-hearted artisans make the Mishkan and its furnishings (as detailed in the previous Torah readings of Terumah, Tetzaveh and Ki Tisa): three layers of roof coverings; 48 gold-plated wall panels, and 100 silver foundation sockets; the Parochet (veil) that separates between the Sanctuary's two chambers and the Masach (screen) that fronts it; the Ark and its cover with the Cherubim; the Table and its Showbread; the seven-branched Menorah with its specially-prepared oil; and the Golden Altar and the incense burned on it; the Anointing Oil; the outdoor Altar for Burnt Offerings and all its implements; the hangings, posts and foundation sockets for the Courtyard; and the Basin and its pedestal, made out of copper mirrors.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

In the Mishkan (tabernacle) was a veil that separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies. In the Holy of Holies was placed the ark of the covenant along with the mercy seat. It was here that YHWH would meet with Israel and specifically with the High Priest once a year. It was here that the manifest presence of YHWH would fill the temple with glory. It was here that the cloud by day and fire by night would ascend. The mishkan and the temple were the center of religious life of the Hebrew people. The veil was an important part of the mishkan for it guarded the holy of holies from profanity. Historians have argued about the size and thickness of the veil, but it is commonly accepted that it was at least 60 feet high, four inches thick and horses toed to each side could not pull it apart.

"Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. A tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper," Hebrews 9:1-9

The veil was symbolic of sin. The word "veil" itself means to separate. This is exactly what sin does - it puts a boundary between us and YHWH. What more, the angels that were woven into the veil were symbolic of the angels that were placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden after the fall of Adam. The death and resurrection of the Messiah split the veil and allowed access for all people into the presence of YHWH. The power of Y'shua split the veil from top to bottom. "And when Y'shua had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Y'shua' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people," Matthew 27:50-51. Praise Y'shua for his gift of eternal life through His life, death and resurrection. Now, through Messiah we can each go behind the veil and experience the presence of YHWH. Heb 10:19-22
Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Y'shua, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of YHWH, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Actually our reading is two readings, the two portions that take up the last few chapters of the book of Shemot. First of all, the first of our two readings is called "Vayakhel" which in Hebrew literally means, "assembled." Our portion begins with Moshe getting the people of Yisra'el together for the construction of the dwelling place of the Most High. Moshe speaks to the k'halel (assembly) about a free will offering for the items to make the mishkan. He also reminds the people about the Shabbat.

As extremely important as it was for the tabernacle to be made, it was even more important for the Sabbath day of rest to be kept.

Moshe's pep rally was to set priorities, and the Shabbat is definitely a priority. At my restaurant I also make the Shabbat a main concern. Though Saturday is usually the busiest day of the week for our sales, it is one day that the store can do without the General Manager. There is a time to work and a time for rest. This was true at creation, it was true during the building of the tabernacle, and it is true today.

For the Yisraelites, the mishkan would not fall into their laps simply because they had faith in YHWH. No, it had to be built from top to bottom with their contributions and through their works.

The Scriptures say that "everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit made him willing brought YHWH's offerings...both men and women," Shemot 35:21,22. While many donated the necessary contributions, other people were singled out as skilled artisans to do the actual construction. These craftsmen were "endowed with the wisdom and skill necessary to carry out the work needed for the sanctuary," Shemot 36:1.

Just as the people were stirred in their hearts to give, B'tzal'el and Oholi'av were stirred in their hearts by the Ruach HaKodesh to work. Everyone had a part to play and everyone played their part. Accomplishing anything, from making the grandiose tabernacle to satisfying hungry customers takes skill and teamwork. Not just anyone could mold the many pounds of gold into the menorah, and believe it or not, not everyone can make a Big Mac or station the front counter register. It takes the right people working together to do anything of worth. Success comes in knowing what to do, having the proper skills or skilled people, and then doing it. Things come together when people come together.

Attention to the smallest details had to be given while constructing the sanctuary. The craftsmen could not take a lot of "artistic license" when doing their job. They were given very specific blue prints to produce an earthly copy of the heavenly model that Moshe had seen. The ark of acacia-wood HAD to be "three-and-three quarters feet long, two-and-a-quarter feet wide and two-and-a quarter feet high," Shemot 37:1. The ark could not be off by a foot, an inch, or a centimeter. The precision used in building the sanctuary is a reminder about how much the little things matter.

The world will tell you, "don't sweat the small stuff," but Y'shua says, "Anyone who breaks one of the LEAST of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven," Mattitياهو 5:19. Obedience in even the little things count to YHWH.

Details are what make up the bigger picture...Did you know that most chain restaurants have picky inspections that should be completed on a weekly basis? Our unit just passed a sanitation inspection that scrutinized over 180 areas for cleanliness. What you do, how you obey YHWH in the small things (in the details) is what you will do with "bigger" issues. How you act in the dark will be seen in the light. The thoughts you really believe will become the words you eventually say. Didn't Y'shua teach that as we are faithful in the smaller things then we would be ruler over the greater? It does matter how many pickles go on a whopper. It does matter if you wear your tzitzit. It is important that you eat only kosher food. We as Torah keepers need be concerned about our tongue, our honesty, and our witness?

Our Torah Parasha(s) continue as the finishing touches are made to the place of meeting. The priestly garments are hemmed, the copper is polished, and the anointing oil is mixed. Finally, Moshe is presented with the pieces of the Mishkan. "And when Moshe saw that they had performed all the tasks - as YHWH had commanded, so they had done - Moshe blessed them," Shemot 39:43. Moshe blessed their work. And YHWH would soon bless their work. Obedience is always awarded with blessing.

The tabernacle would be set up on the first day of the first month, the month of Aviv. On this day the cloud of YHWH's presence moved from the Mount to the Mishkan. All Yisra'el saw His glory in the cloud above their work. Through their trusting and faithful obedience, the mishkan accomplished its purpose to welcome the presence of the Almighty. And so this portion and this sefer (book)

end on a high note. The people who once built for Pharaoh have now made the mishkan for YHWH. The sin of the golden calf has been forgiven. The mishkan has been built correctly through generous donations. YHWH now resides amidst the people. Moshe can't even enter the tabernacle because of YHWH's presence being so great. It's amazing what happens when you do something right!

Portion Points to Ponder

1. What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?
2. The portion recounts the death of Sarah and not her life. Why was it named such?
3. Read the Haftarah portion of 1 Kings 7:13-8:21. How does this relate to this week's Torah portion?
4. Read the Newer Testament sections of Hebrews 8:1-12 and 9:1-11. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week's reading? What did you learn from these words?
5. What did you learn from this Torah portion?
6. How can you apply this portion to your life and faith?
7. Who can you share the message of this portion with this week?
8. How is the true seventh day Sabbath counted?
9. Why is the prohibition against doing work on Shabbat written prior to the instruction for building the Mishkan?
10. Why would YHWH forbid someone from lighting a fire on the Sabbath? How does this command apply today?
11. Why does the Torah specify the particular prohibition of lighting a fire on Shabbat right after it had already noted the general prohibition of doing work on Shabbat?
12. The offerings given in this week's portion were free will gifts from kind hearts. How did this allow everyone to be involved?
13. Who gave the offering to the tabernacle?
14. Where did the exslaves get the gold jewelry and fine linen used for the offering and subsequently used for the mishkan?
15. Why (notwithstanding the discussion above) were further donations to the Tabernacle no longer welcome - or even acceptable? Running the Tabernacle, as well as building it, was undoubtedly an expensive business. The excess contributions could surely have been traded into the funds needed for the costly daily and special-occasion communal offerings.
16. In what manner was the free-willed Terumah collected?
17. For what was the woven goat's hair used?

18. Where would the Israelites get the acacia wood if they were traveling on foot from Egypt?
19. Who did YHWH call by name to build the tabernacle?
20. Describe the Hebrew words used to explain the wisdom, knowledge, and understanding used by the tabernacles artisans.
21. Did Betzael make everything for the mishkan himself or did he teach others to do so? How should we teach others our personal skills?
22. What is the meaning of the name Betzael?
23. How did the artisans know how to prepare the items for the mishkan? Was this a talent or supernatural blessing?
24. Did the people give enough offerings for the tabernacle? What did Moshe eventually have to do with the offering?
25. What type of curtains were used in the tabernacle? What sizes? What materials were used?
26. Why is the word Mishkan stated twice in verse 38:21?
27. Why were animal skins used in the Mishkan for a ceiling?
28. The wood boards in the tabernacle are symbolic of what?
29. How was the veil made "with cherubim?" What does this mean? How did the artists know what angels look like?
30. What colors were used in the veil and the curtain doors? What are these colors symbolic of?
31. What shape was the ark of the covenant? Why is this important?
32. Why would YHWH command the ark to be carried by poles and rings? What happened if a person touched the ark?
33. How many pieces of gold were used to make the angels that were on top of the mercy seat?
34. What was the purpose of the golden table?
35. What materials was the menorah made from? Why was this material chosen and not iron or brass?
36. Explain the height, size, and design of the menorah.
37. Why does the Torah enumerate the quantities of precious metal used for the Mishkan?
38. Explain the height, size, and design of the incense altar. What was this altar used for?
39. Why would brass be chosen for use on the sacrificial table?
40. From what tribe was the craftsman Betzael a descendent from? What about Oliav?
41. What colored garments did the priests wear?

42. What stones were used according to the names of Israel on the breast plate?
43. What can we learn from YHWH giving exact instructions to Moses about the tabernacle and priestly garments? Does YHWH care about what kind of garments we wear today?
44. What does "kadosh le YHWH" or "holy to YHWH" mean to you? Where was this phrase placed on the high priest? What do you think this phrase meant to Moses and Aharon?
45. How did Moshe respond to the finished work of the mishkan? Was this a one person job or were many people involved?
46. On what exact date was the tabernacle set up for the first time? Why is this important?
47. How were priests anointed and set apart at the tabernacle?
48. What parts of the body did Aharon and his sons wash in Exodus 40. Compare this to the words of Peter as the Messiah went to wash his feet in the Gospels.
49. What happened when Moshe and Israel set up the mishkan? How did YHWH respond to their efforts?
50. Where in the Scriptures do we also read of YHWH filling the temple or tabernacle with His glory?
51. How was the presence of YHWH a visible sign to the camp of Israel of when to move and when to be still?
52. Go through the Parasha and list the professions which were employed for the construction of the Mishkan. Are these professions enough to ensure the functioning of society?
53. When was the Mishkan erected permanently?

Parasha Vayikra

- Leviticus 1:1-6:7
- Isaiah 43:21-44:23
- Hebrews 10:1-18

The Torah Portion at a Glance

YHWH calls to Moshe from the Tent of Meeting (mishkan) and communicates to him the laws of the korbanot, the animal and meal offerings brought in the Sanctuary. These include: the "ascending offering" (olah) that is wholly raised to YHWH by the fire atop the Altar; five varieties of "meal offering" (michah) prepared with fine flour, olive oil and frankincense;

The "peace offering" (shelamim), whose meat was eaten by the one bringing the offering, after parts are burned on the Altar and parts are given to the Kohanim (priests);

The different types of "sin offering" (chatat) brought to atone for transgressions committed erroneously by the High Priest, the entire community, the king, or the ordinary Jew;

The "guilt offering" (asham) brought by one who has appropriated property of the Sanctuary, who is in doubt as to whether he transgressed a divine prohibition, or who has committed a "betrayal against YHWH" by swearing falsely to defraud a fellow man.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Churches have "altar calls" every Sunday. This is a time for believers to come forward with their sins and problems to find solace through prayer. Sadly though, most "altar calls" do not involve death or sacrifice but people falling in the floor. True "altar calls" should involve sacrifice of self upon the altar of YHWH.

When one gives Himself to YHWH, he opens himself up to receive from YHWH. "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it," Matthew 10:39.

Even if sacrifice looks like losing, it is actually about receiving. When a person gives an offering, they are emptying their hands to be filled again. It is better to give than receive. Just picture a person clenching a lamb that is to be offered, and then releasing that lamb to be killed. Only after the animal is sacrificed can the blood be applied.

To give up something, to sacrifice a desire or habit, is to release control and accept liberation. It is only when a person gives; that they can accept back a blessing. Sacrifice is surrender.

To surrender is to give up, loose, and be conquered in battle. This is a great picture of the struggle waging inside every man. For before an army surrenders, there is usually a great battle. Combat is fierce during the fight. But, when one side surrenders, things change. Those who were once fighting against the enemy are now ruled. We don't need to fight YHWH! We just have to surrender! Waive the white flag, and be ruled by the Man of War. Receive mercy from the Great King. Surrender and receive.

It is odd, that the majority of the Mitzvot in the Torah, deal with the issue of temple worship and sacrifices. These commands are highly structured and controlled. Yet, even the rabbis have been perplexed that more of Torah is about sacrificing than any other subject. Why would Elohim use exact details to describe the sacrificial system, yet be silent in regards to the specifics of so many other issues? Why would the Bible speak about the correct way to kill animals and be silent on stem-cell research, global warming, and such?

The detailed commands surrounding the temple and tabernacle show us how meticulous we should be when coming before YHWH. Each of the sacrifices commanded in the Scriptures, from the red heifer to the Passover lamb, points to the Messiah's sacrifice.

Many people get confused regarding sacrifices. The truth is that since the temple is not standing, one actually obeys the Torah by not offering animal sacrifices. However, none of the Torah has passed away. The Mitzvot concerning the sacrifices remains. "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our YHWH remains forever," Isaiah 40:8. The sacrifices before Y'shua pointed to His coming. However, they did NOT stop when He came. Y'shua went to the Temple. The sacrifices continued being made until the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE. The book of Acts shows that the early believers continued to make sacrifices at

the Temple. Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) also made sacrifices and took vows at the Temple AFTER Y'shua's death. Just as the sacrifices before His coming pointed to Him, the sacrifices AFTER His coming pointed BACK to Him.

When Y'shua surrendered His life, He set the prime example for us to follow. May we pray, "not my will, but thine will be done." This is the whole issue of the sacrifices and the binding of Yitzchak. Y'shua gave up his very life and has called us to do the same. We are to climb upon the altar and offer ourselves to Him. "Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to YHWH, which is your act of reasonable worship. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the ongoing renewing of your mind, that you may discern what is the tov (good), acceptable, and even the perfect, will of YHWH," Romans 12:1,2.

The sacrifices were a way to draw near to YHWH and connect with Him. This is of course prophetic of Y'shua. Where is the Messiah in this week's Torah portion? He is spoken of in every single offering and every single sacrifice.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

If the Messiah died for our sins and the Torah has not passed away, then does that mean we are still supposed to offer sacrifices?

The sacrificial system that was set up after the Exodus pointed to Y'shua the Messiah. All of the commands in the Torah including the verses about the offerings were presented as ways to connect with the Almighty. There are many orders in the Bible about the sacrificial system. Of the six hundred and thirteen commands, most deal with the priesthood and the tabernacle. Where does this leave us today?

YHWH the Almighty doesn't need burnt offerings or peace offerings. YHWH doesn't eat the sacrifices. The Mitzvot or "commands" about the sacrificing in the Torah were given for the people worshipping as a mode of worship and devotion. The word for sacrifices in the Hebrew is "korban" or "korbanot." When we think of sacrifices or offerings we always think of losing or giving up something, but this word "korban" literally means to "draw near or approach." The purpose of the tabernacle and the reason for the many types of sacrifices was so that the nation of Yisra'el could draw near to YHWH through obedience. "Obedience is better than sacrifice" means that the underlying reason for the sacrifice is the obedience.

The elaborate and specific instructions about korban in the book of Leviticus were not given to confuse or distance the nation of Yisra'el from YHWH. Korban was given as a way to connect with YHWH. We don't offer korban today because there is no temple but that doesn't mean the decrees concerning the korban have been replaced or done away with. Remember that verse from Matthew I keep telling you. Y'shua said, "Think not that I have come to abolish the Torah. I have not come to do away with the Torah but to fulfill it."

Y'shua's death was an ultimate sacrifice for sins. The book of Hebrews teaches in chapter ten, verse ten "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Y'shua the Messiah once for all." The sacrificial system has not been done away with. This is difficult to understand, but nothing in the Torah has passed away. Just as the korban or sacrifices before Y'shua pointed forward to His life and death, the korban after Y'shua came pointed back to his life and death. Even after the Savior's ascension in the book of Acts did Paul continue to offer sacrifices and prayers at the temple.

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that time an offering should be offered for every one of them," Acts 21:26. And Acts 25:8, "Then Paul made his defense: "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

We should follow the book of Leviticus as best we can. Either the entire Bible is for us today or none of it is for us today. Leviticus is just as much Bible as the book of John is. Every aspect of this Biblical faith is either a rehearsal or a reminder. What we do, like celebrating the New Moon or the Passover Seder, is a reminder about past events. At Passover we remember how YHWH delivered the Hebrews from Egypt. At the same time we are rehearsing for the future Passover dinner, the "marriage supper of the Lamb." This event that we will be "rehearsing" for is spoken about in the book of Revelation. "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith YHWH," Isaiah 66:23.

The Bible, including the teachings or laws of Moses, is a book of love. It was given to Yisra'el and the world to show man how to live. The Torah is the rule book for life on Earth. There are many commands in the Scriptures though that we just cannot fulfill today. We don't offer sacrifices because there is no temple. And we don't keep the seven-year Shabbat for farmland because we don't live in the Land of Yisra'el. This is just like how women are exempt from the command

of circumcision for obvious reasons. The book of Leviticus has much for us to learn and apply to our lives if we will first accept the sacrificial system as part of YHWH's word.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Vayikra." What does this mean?
2. Read the portion from Isaiah. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 10:1-18. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Name all the types of animals and birds mentioned in this week's Parasha.
7. What two types of sin does an olah atone for?
8. Where was the olah slaughtered?
9. Why does the Torah describe both the animal and bird offerings as a "satisfying aroma"? Why is the term "nefesh" used regarding the flour offering?
10. Which part of the free-will mincha offering is burned on the altar?
11. The Torah forbids bringing honey with the mincha. What is meant by "honey"?
12. When does the Torah permit bringing a leavened bread offering?
13. Has an unintentional sin ever injured your relationship with another person? How were you affected by that event?
14. What is the meaning of the word 'korbanot' - the subject of the Parasha?
15. Can you suggest some reasons why Parasha Vayikra does not address intentional sins?
16. From where in this Parasha may it be learnt that YHWH does not forgive the sinner until he first appeases the victim of his misdeed?
17. "If the anointed Kohen sins...he shall offer a bull as a sin offering... And take the bull outside the camp...and burn it..." (Leviticus 4:3,12) How does the public sinfulness of the high priest speak to the Hebrew people of YHWH's grace?
18. What are the five different kinds of sacrifices to be offered in the sanctuary?
19. Describe the Olah - "burnt offering."
20. What exactly is the Minchah - "meal offering?"

21. Explain the "sacrifice of well-being" offering of fat and blood that cannot be consumed.
22. What sins did the Chatat - "sin offering" atone for?
23. What is the Asham - "guilt offering?" When would it be used?
24. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Tsav

- Leviticus 6:8-8:36
- Jeremiah 7:21-9:24
- Hebrew 9:11-28

The Torah Portion at a Glance

YHWH instructs Moses to command Aaron and his sons regarding their duties and rights as Kohanim ("priests") who offer the korbanot (animal and meal offerings) in the Sanctuary.

The fire on the Altar must be kept burning at all times. In it are burned the wholly consumed Ascending Offering; veins of fat from the Peace, Sin, and Guilt Offerings; and the "handful" separated from the Meal Offering.

The Kohanim eat the meat of the Sin and Guilt Offerings and the remainder of the Meal Offering. The Peace Offering is eaten by the one who brought it, except for specified portions given to the Kohen. The holy meat of the offerings must be eaten by ritually pure persons, in their designated holy place, and within their specified time.

Aaron and his sons remain within the Sanctuary compound for seven days, during which Moses initiates them into the priesthood.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

This week's Torah portion always falls on Shabbat HaGadol, the Sabbath before the Biblical festival of Passover. Within a few days of this reading, families will gather around the dinner table and recount the exodus. Unleavened bread, wine, and bitter herbs are shared while the story of the Passover Lamb is remembered. It is easy to see the Messiah as the Passover Lamb. He is also the sacrificial lamb that was offered daily in the Tabernacle. "Messiah loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to YHWH," Ephesians 5:2.

When Y'shua said that He was the "lamb slain from the foundation of the earth" He was referencing the Passover and the daily burnt offering. "YHWH commanded Aharon and his sons, saying, 'this is the law for the burnt offering: the burnt offering itself shall remain on the hearth of the altar all night until the

morning, and the fire of the altar is to be kept burning on it," Leviticus 6:9. This offering was one sacrificial lamb in the morning and one sacrificial lamb in the afternoon. This teaches us that Y'shua's sacrifice is continually before YHWH. (see Exodus 29:24-42)

There are four specific places in the Bible when a burnt offering is acceptably pleasing to YHWH. Through studying these we can begin to understand and appreciate the death of Y'shua. These four offerings were:

- the consecration of the tabernacle (Lev 9:24)
- when David called upon YHWH at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (1 Chronicles 21:26)
- at Solomon's dedication of the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1)
- when Elijah challenged the priests of Baal at Carmel (1 Kings 18:38)

As the Passover Lamb, Y'shua was the offering whose blood provided protection from the death angel. As the burnt offering, Y'shua is the payment for sin whose blood atones for both day and night. "Nor was it that He would offer Himself often... otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifest to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," Hebrews 9:25-26.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Read this week's Torah portion but please don't just read it.

Torah Parasha Tsav is this week's reading. This little portion of the Bible deals with the continued instructions being given on offerings and sanctuary worship. Aharon and his sons are given the priestly garments and are anointed along with the tabernacle. All that is within it and the priests are set apart as special for YHWH's use. The offerings that are given point to the purpose of the mishkan and the priesthood - to draw near and commune with YHWH Eloheynu.

To approach the Holy One of Yisra'el there are certain steps that must be taken. The Torah is very clear and specific about proper worship. Not just anything will do. To experience YHWH's presence and receive a deeper revelation of Who He is requires obedience to YHWH's word.

Adam is instructed not to eat from a certain tree. Avraham is commanded to

sacrifice his only son. Moshe is told to take off his shoes. And the priests go through a series of events. These proceedings enable the Levites to minister to YHWH before the people in the correct manner.

What takes place in this Parasha is a prophecy made and a prophecy fulfilled. The prophecy fulfilled is that the actions you'll read about are a direct accomplishment of Shemot (Exodus) 28:41. It says, "And thou shalt put them upon Aharon thy brother and his sons with him; and shalt anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office."

The prophecy made is that the pattern of ordination that the kohanim or priests go through is also the pattern for all believers.

- Anointing
- Purification
- Sanctification

First, they were anointed. In Vayikra (Leviticus) 8:12 the kohanim were anointed with the sacred anointing oil - "And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aharon's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him." During Torah times a person was anointed when the Ruach (spirit) of YHWH would minister and move through them. Today it is no different. The anointing of the Ruach HaKodesh is YHWH's mighty presence that empowers the believer. But, don't mistake this as some "feeling" people experience. The anointing is not some cheap thrill of goose bumps but an endowment of the Living Elohim. Please don't dismiss and minimize the anointing as something a person "feels." The anointing is something a person is.

Believers are anointed with the Ruach HaKodesh. "Now he which established us with you in Messiah, and hath anointed us, is Elohim; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. The anointing is an endowment of Ruach power and you as a believer have been endowed.

Second, they were purified. In Vayikra / Leviticus 8:14 there is a sin offering of a bull made for the priests and the place of worship. Aharon and his sons laid their hands on the animal's head as a means of identifying with the transference of guilt. Sin requires death, so the bull takes the place of the kohanim as the

chat' at or sin offering. This offering purifies the defilement of sin that has affected the mishkan. Chat' at offerings were given for sins that might have taken place by accident or without knowledge. This purification offering cleanses from unintentional sin.

Purification is a process in every believer's life. It is the development of removing whatever causes life to be impure.

Being pure for each moment in life leads to staying pure throughout life. Purity in the scriptures means to be "fair, bright; clear, unadulterated, levitically uncontaminated; morally innocent, clean, purged." First man is given or anointed with the Ruach HaKodesh, and then the Spirit begins to work its job. The job of the Ruach is to cleanse or purify the believer from the defilement of sin and worldly ways. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see Elohim," Matthew/Mattitiyahu 5:8. When a person is purified through YHWH then they are clear - their life is transparent and people see the Almighty in them. You can see straight through a purified believer and what you should see is YHWH Y'shua. Perhaps a different rendering of the Mattitiyahu verse could be, "Blessed are the pure in heart for YOU can see Elohim through them."

Third, they were sanctified. "Then Moshe took some of the anointing oil and some of the blood from the altar and sprinkled them on Aharon and his garments and on his sons and their garments. So he consecrated Aharon and his garments and his sons and their garments," Vayikra 8:30.

Before the sons of Aharon can minister in the mishkan they must be set apart through proper preparation. The ram offering and anointing oil acts as a type of ordination that takes a total of seven days. What lessons could be learned from the priests!

Before doing any "priestly" work or sacrifices for the people they themselves experience the sanctification of YHWH. They look to leadership; they follow the precepts of the Torah; they spend time in YHWH's presence.

"Sanctification" is a big churchy word that literally means "setting apart." For the priesthood to be sanctified they had to be removed from the ordinary for seven days. Sanctification doesn't happen over night. It comes over time as the believer walks in obedience to YHWH through the Ruach's power. Sanctification happens as a person resists the world and the enemy and clings to YHWH. And

the priests weren't the only people called to be set apart to YHWH. The entire nation of Yisra'el was chosen to withdraw from the ways of the world and separate themselves. "For thou art an holy people unto YHWH Eloheynu: for YHWH Elohim hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth," Devarim 7:6.

The process of the priesthood is not some "quick fix" for spiritual problems but an overview of the spiritual transformation a person goes through when they follow after YHWH. It is not easy. Nor is it exactly fun. The progression of being anointed purified, and then sanctified was the pattern of the kohanim and is the pattern of believers today. Considering this, where are you right now? How is YHWH sanctifying you or setting you aside from the world? Did you know that you have been given a spirit of power love and self-control? Do people see YHWH through your actions?

Don't just read about this Parasha...be it...live it for the glory of YHWH.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Tsav." What does this mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 7:21-8:3 and 9:23-24. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 9:11-28. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. What is a burnt offering?
7. What is the difference between a meal offering and a sin offering?
8. Why would frankincense be put in a meal offering?
9. Where the priests allowed to eat some of the offerings and sacrifices?
10. How much is an "ephah?"
11. When would a sin offering need to be given?
12. Was the guilt offering totally burnt up?
13. Where the peace and thanksgiving offerings made with leavened bread?
14. If an offering was given voluntarily could it be eaten within a two day span?
15. Why would unclean people who offer sacrifices be "cut off" from Israel?
16. Who is forbidden from eating fat and blood according to Leviticus 7:23? Does Acts 15 agree with this?
17. What does Leviticus 7:27 specify as the punishment for consuming blood?
18. Why would Aharon and his sons be washed in water in Leviticus 8? Is

baptism important today?

19.Explain the usage of the Urim and the Tummim. Why would YHWH allow decisions to be made by casting lots?

20.How many times was anointing oil sprinkled on the altar? Why was this number chosen?

21.How much oil was traditionally poured on the head of the High Priest? Did it run down his beard?

22.Why was the altar sanctified before it was first used? Where else in the Scriptures is this repeated?

23.Leviticus 8:24 shows blood of a sacrifice being placed on specific body parts of the priests. Why?

24.When were the leaders told to stay day and night for seven days at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting?

25.What separated the priests skin from the priestly garments?

26.How often were the ashes removed from upon tabernacle?

27.If someone extinguishes the fire in the temple, how many Torah violations has he transgressed?

28.When a priest/Kohen is inaugurated, what offering must he bring?

29.When is a Kohen disqualified from eating from a chatat sin offering?

30.What is the difference between a copper and earthenware vessel regarding removing absorbed tastes?

31.In which four instances is a thanksgiving offering / korban todah brought?

32.What are the 5 categories of korbanot / offerings listed in this Parsha?

33.What do you think the fire on the altar represents and why would YHWH want it to burn eternally?

34.Food seems to play a large role in the sacrificial rituals. What makes food holy?

35.Why only the males of Aaron's descendants?

36.Why would something become holy by merely touching the food allocated to the priestly class?

37.How do you think slaughtering animals affects forgiveness from YHWH?

38.Why would someone offer a sacrifice for no apparent reason at all? Would you?

39.Sacrifice represents the principal form of worship in the days of the Temple. What in your mind is the connection between sacrifice and worship?

40.Some sacrifices had to be consumed on the same day. Others could be finished the next day or even several days later. What does the time of consumption have to do with purpose of the sacrifice?

41.The Hebrew word for ordination is s'micha. In what context is s'micha used

today?

42.How would you explain the use of blood and oil to consecrate ceremonial clothing?

43.What qualities does blood have that it might consecrate objects, like clothing?

44.What does the anointing oil do? What does anointing actually mean?

45.Does the order of the offerings given in this Torah portion signal a special meaning?

46.When would the peace offering be presented?

47.What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Shemini

- Leviticus 9:1-11:47
- 2 Samuel 6:1-7:17
- Hebrew 7:1-19

The Torah Portion at a Glance

On the eight day following "seven days of inauguration," Aaron and his sons begin to officiate as Kohanim (priests); a fire issues forth from YHWH to consume the offerings on the Altar and the Divine Presence comes to dwell in the Sanctuary.

Aaron's two elder sons, Nadav and Avihu, offer a "strange fire before YHWH, which He "commanded them not" and they died before YHWH. Aaron is silent in face of his tragedy. Moses and Aaron subsequently disagree as to a point of law regarding the offerings, but Moses concedes to Aharon that Aaron is in the right.

YHWH commands the kosher laws, identifying the animal species permissible and forbidden for consumption. Land animals may be eaten only if they have split hooves and also chew their cud; fish must have fins and scales; a list of non-kosher birds is given, and a list of kosher insects (four types of locusts).

Also in Shemini are some of the laws of ritual purity, including the purifying power of the mikvah (a pool of water) and the wellspring. Thus the people of Israel are enjoined to "differentiate between the impure and the pure."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Our Torah portion provides the laws of clean and unclean foods in list format. This section of reading is the ammo used by those who teach that kosher eating is still an applicable commandment today. Naysayers suggest that the Savior declared all food clean and just a simple blessing of grace before a meal sanctifies the food. What did the Savior teach about clean eating? What Scripture passages are misunderstood about this issue?

Mark 7:19 in the New International Version is one passage that complicates the issue. It reads, "for it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.") Here, the Savior is speaking about the tradition of religious hand washing. The words in parenthesis are found in most modern translations but not in the King James Version Bible. Nor are the parenthetical words found in the oldest manuscripts of

the New Testament. This commentary was added by Bible translators in an attempt to free people from the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Regardless of such confusion, the precepts of the Bible are eternal and the Messiah would have never told his audience to rebel against the Torah and eat anything their taste buds desired. The laws regarding clean and unclean animals do indeed apply today.

The Torah makes it clear that some animals may be eaten by man for food while some are not to be eaten. What the Torah calls clean is clean and what the Torah calls unclean is still unclean. The kosher commands did not pass away with the Savior or with Paul's letters. Romans 14:14 is another verse of confusion. It says "I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean." Most think that this verse means that all food is ok to eat, regardless of what the Old Testament. Through viewing this verse according to the Torah, one would understand that it means "that no food NOT MENTIONED IN THE TORAH is unclean in itself." The animals that qualify for "food" are the animals permitted for consumption. The pig, lobster, shrimp, or cockroach are not permitted in the Scriptures and therefore would never be considered food to the Rabbi Paul or his original audience.

Finally, there is another misunderstood passage in Acts 10:9-19. In these verses Peter is said to have been extremely hungry. He is also confused about the acceptance of the Gentile believers. He then has a vision about various four-footed creatures. Peter is told to slaughter and eat as all are now made clean. When the vision concludes, Peter doesn't eat barbeque pork. Instead, he understands that the vision is not about unclean foods but unclean people. He proclaims, in Acts 10:28, "You know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but YHWH has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."

The Messiah kept a strict kosher diet and we can actually see him in the foods that are permitted to be eaten. He is the first fruits from the earth and He is pictured in the spotless clean animals. These commandments to eat clean foods and stay away from unclean animals are considered to be a "chukim" or "rulings without known meaning." Though we think that we can understand the kosher diet from a basis of disease and cleanliness, these commandments truly are beyond our human understanding. In fact, all of the mitzvot/commandments are indeed spiritual and must be followed by faith. "Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will

know everything completely, just as YHWH now knows me completely," 1 Corinthians 13:12.

YHWH said what animals are permissible for food and what animals are abominable. Our human reasoning doesn't match up to the unfathomable wisdom of YHWH that is found in Y'shua. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of YHWH! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways," Romans 11:33.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Do you believe in coincidences? Do things just randomly happen? Or, is there a greater order to the events in life?

Think about the deaths of two famous American presidents:

- Lincoln and John Kennedy both have seven letters in their last names.
- They were elected to office 100 years apart, 1860 and 1960.
- Both were assassinated on Friday in the presence of their wives, Lincoln was killed in Ford's theater and Kennedy in an automobile made by the Ford motor company.
- Both assassins went by three names: John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald, with fifteen letters in each complete name.
- Oswald shot Kennedy from a warehouse and fled to a theater, and Booth shot Lincoln in a theater and fled to a barn (a kind of warehouse).
- Both succeeding vice-presidents were southern Democrats and former senators named Johnson (Andrew and Lyndon), with thirteen letters in their names and born 100 years apart, 1808 and 1908.

There are many startling similarities between the assassinations of Lincoln and Kennedy. Just how did these events occur? Isn't this a bit strange?

Well, the rabbis claim that, "coincidence is not a kosher word!" Just think about your life and you'll agree that things don't just happen. Fate is not in control.

Hidden within life and even the Biblical text itself are hints and clues of skillful design. Jewish sages teach that there is a unity of coincidence that exists within the realm of the universe. This idea is that through the opposites in the world there is an overcoming of boundaries, which produces an establishment of

harmony. Or to put it plainly the actions and affairs in life mix EVENLY with the reactions and circumstances of the world. People reap what they sow, the rain falls on the just and the unjust, and all things work together, this is amazing when you consider the order of the universe and the scope of the Bible and its message.

You see, things just aren't written down in the Bible. The events of the scriptures did not haphazardly occur. The scribes did not just pick random numbers and Hebrew letters. Nor did the adversary sneak up on the Almighty and tempt Adam and Eve/Chava into sin. YHWH would not be Almighty if this had occurred. On the contrary, YHWH is sovereign. And the sovereignty of YHWH establishes the fact that He is supreme. His Word proves over and over that there is a designed plan within the Scriptures.

What happens in the Bible and in today's life doesn't just happen out of happenstance. Indeed, everything written within the text of the Torah is YHWH's plan. Take for example this week's Torah Parasha named "Shemini." This reading is Vayikra (Leviticus) chapters 9, 10, and 11. These pages tell the story of some things that just couldn't happen by accident. The priests begin their ministry on the eighth day following the seven-day period of ordination for Aharon and his sons. Fire falls from heaven, as the Shekinah of YHWH inhabits the mishkan/tabernacle. Then, just as things are going on as planned Aharon's firstborn and second born sons offer a "strange fire" to YHWH. The two brothers are struck dead. The Parasha continues with Moshe and Aharon disagreeing on certain laws. After a resolution has been reached, instructions are then given about ritual purity and clean and unclean foods. Is it a fluke that these events took place on the day after the seventh day?

The truth is that numbers in Scripture aren't just numbers, they are also symbols. With the Hebrew alphabet letters are numbers and letters are signs. Confused? Well, the study of Hebrew letters is called "gematria." In gematria each Hebrew letter is assigned a number. Gematria suggests that if two words have the same number, there is a connection. One web site says "gematria is the calculation of the numerical equivalence of letters, words, or phrases, and, on that basis, gaining, insight into interrelation of different concepts and exploring the interrelationship between words and ideas."

Even with numbers and letters, what happens in the natural is a reflection of the supernatural. For example the number one speaks of unity and sovereignty.

Seven is the numeral of divine completion, perfection, and wholeness. And the number ten is the number of law and establishment. It should be no surprise to the Bible student that something special happens on day number eight of the sanctuary's formation. The number eight, shemini or shemonei, is the symbolic number of new life.

Shemini is associated with newness, regeneration, and order. When the world was covered by the flood of water, it was Noah who was the "eighth person" (2 Peter 2:5) who stepped out on to a new earth to commence a new order of things. "Eight souls" (1 Peter 3:20) passed through it with him to the new or regenerated world. Also, on the eighth day of the life all Hebrew boys are to be circumcised as found in Genesis 17:12. Eight is also the first cubic number, pointing to the new life found in the holy of holies and the New Yerushalayim/Jerusalem.

The point is that numbers are more than just numbers. The Creator did not just haphazardly allow things to happen or allow things to be written in the Scriptures. There is certainly a method and symbolism to the use of numbers in scripture. Volumes more could be written about numbers, numerology, gematria, and their profound impact upon Biblical understanding. What is important to remember is that accidents just don't happen. There is always something to be learned from the events in our lives. There is great learning and insight to be found in just the numbers and letters of the Torah, how much more then its message as a whole. To help you learn more about numbers in scripture and their significance, provided below is a chart for your use.

Name(E)	Number	Meaning
Aleph	1	Unity, sovereignty, whole
Bet	2	Division, witnessing
Gimel	3	Completeness, resurrection
Dalet	4	Weakness
He	5	Grace, giant
Vau	6	Man, manifestation of sin
Zayin	7	Completion, divine number
Chet	8	New birth, new creation
Tet	9	Plagues, fruit of the Spirit

Yod	10	Legal number, testimony
Kaph	20,500	Going Out and Coming In; military; generation; redemption
Lamed	30	Priest hood, dedications, blood
Mem	40,600	Generation, divine discipline, trials, probation, testing
Nun	50,700	Congregation, Ruach HaKodesh, Holy Spirit
Samekh	60	Worldly production, pride
Ayin	70	Elder, pastor, teacher, Yisra'el
Peh	80,800	Strength, saints
Tzaddi	90,900	Election, new order
Qoph	100	Divine production, election of grace
Resh	200	Insufficiency
Shin	300	Almighty
Tau	400	Being without

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Shemini." What does this mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 2 Samuel 6:1-7:27. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 7:1-19. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, sinned with fire and were punished with death by fire. This seems like a very "negative" occurrence, so why did Moses say of their deaths, "Of this did YHWH speak saying, 'I will be sanctified through those nearest Me, thus will I be honored before the entire people'."
5. The name of the Parasha, Shemini, means "the eighth," and refers to the day on which Aaron and his sons were inducted as the priests of the Sanctuary.
6. What is the relationship between the numbers "seven" and "eight" in Torah?
7. How is the number eight associated with the Time of the Redemption?
8. As seen in this Parasha, the "seven days" working on the Tabernacle prepared everyone for the "eighth" day, when they experienced the presence of YHWH. How is this related to the idea of seven thousand years of human history (including

the Millennial Kingdom) followed by the "eighth day" of the Olam Haba (World to Come)?

9. Define the Hebrew terms "chukim." What is a "chuk" commandment?
10. How is believing in a YHWH who tells us which foods are spiritually best for us, like trusting the doctor who prescribes healthy foods or proper medications?
11. How is the keeping of those commandments considered "chukim" (such as eating kosher) associated with the idea of the "eight day" and the holiness which goes beyond the physical world?
12. What scripture states that it should not be grievous to walk in YHWH's commandments?
13. What is the purpose of the Torah?
14. What were Nadav and Avihu sin?
15. Nadav and Avihu had no regard for YHWH's what?
16. How must YHWH be regarded by those who approach him?
17. Which of Aharon's korbanot/ offerings atoned for the golden calf?
18. What was unique about the sin offering that was offered during the induction of the Mishkan?
19. When did Aharon bless the people with the priestly blessing in this portion?
20. Why did Moshe go into the Tabernacle with Aharon?
21. Why did Nadav and Avihu die?
22. Aharon quietly accepted his sons' death. What reward did he receive?
- What prohibitions apply to a person who is intoxicated?
24. Why did Moshe direct his harsh words at Aharon's sons?
25. Was Moshe upset that Aharon and his sons did not eat the chatat sin offering? Why?
26. Why did YHWH choose Moshe, Aharon, Elazar, and Itamar as His messengers to tell the people the laws of kashrut?
27. What are the signs of a kosher land animal?
28. How many non-kosher animals display only one sign of kashrut?
29. If a fish sheds its fins and scales when out of the water, is it kosher?
30. What requirements must be met in order for water to maintain be pure?
31. Why is the raven forbidden to be eaten while the dove is kosher?
32. Why does the Torah portion say the "daughter of the ostrich" are not kosher? .Why does it specify "daughter" when all ostriches are forbidden?
33. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Tazaria and Metzora

- Leviticus 12:1-13:59
- 2 Kings 4:42-5:19a
- Luke 7:18-35

AND

- Leviticus 14:1-15:33
- 2 Kings 7:3-20
- Matthew 23:16-24:2, 30-31

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The Parasha of Tazaria continues the discussion of the laws of Tumah v'Taharah, ritual impurity and purity.

A woman giving birth should undergo a process of purification, which includes immersing in a mikvah (a naturally gathered pool of water) and bringing offerings to the Holy Temple. All male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day of life.

Tzaraat ("leprosy") is a supra-natural plague, which also can afflict garments. If white or pink patches appear on a person's skin (dark red or green in garments), a Cohen / priest is summoned. Judging by various signs, such as an increase in size of the afflicted area after a seven-day quarantine, the Cohen pronounces it tameh (impure) or tahor (pure).

A person afflicted with tzaraat must dwell alone outside of the camp (or city) until he is healed. The afflicted area in a garment is removed; if the tzaraat spreads or recurs, the entire garment must be burned.

This second portion is Metzora and begins by detailing how the recovered metzora / infected is purified by the Cohen (priest) with a special procedure involving two birds, spring water in an earthen vessel, a piece cedar wood, a scarlet thread and a bundle of hyssop.

A home can also be afflicted with "leprosy" by the appearance of dark red or green patches on its walls. In a process lasting as long as nineteen days, a Cohen determines if the house can be purified or it must be demolished.

Ritual impurity is also engendered through a seminal or other discharge in a man, and menstruation or other discharge of blood in a woman, necessitating purification through immersion in a mikvah.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

This week's Torah reading is usually a double portion of Scripture unless it is separated during a leap year. The subject matter is similar in both sections as the laws of ritual purity are discussed. These verses have much application for us today if we will study the Torah with an open mind and allow the Ruach HaKodesh to speak through the living word.

First, consider that most people will acknowledge that "Jesus was born a Jew." What most people don't want to accept is the fact that he never lost his Jewish heritage. He was given the Hebrew name "Y'shua" and circumcised on the eighth day. His life was spent in joyous obedience to the Law of Moses and he never once violated the written word's commands. When he died upon a tree, Y'shua took mankind's sin upon Himself and became accursed.

The life of Y'shua started in obedience to the Torah. In Luke chapter two, the mother of Y'shua followed the exact precepts given in our Torah portion. Messiah was circumcised on the eighth day and his mother Mary, or "Miriam" in Hebrew, came to the temple and offered the prescribed sacrifices. "And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Y'shua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the days of her purification according to the Torah of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to YHWH," Luke 2:21-22. This passage is amazing to as it shows us that Y'shua was born in obedience to the Torah and continued his entire life in submission. It is also telling to reflect on the fact that Miriam waited to approach the temple until "the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were completed." This means that Miriam waited for forty days to bring a sacrifice to signify that her days of impurity were complete. Miriam's offering of two turtle-dove birds, according to Luke 2:24, illustrates that her family was not well-off financially but willing to

sacrifice what they had in order to obey the Torah. There is much to be learned from these examples.

Finally, the “blood of purification” time that Miriam observed was in accordance to our Torah portion as well. “Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering,” Leviticus 12:4,6. The birth of Y’shua was in accordance to the Torah. This included his mother observing the “blood of purification” so that Y’shua Himself could offer His blood as purification for the world.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

It has been suggested that there is a possibility that the Messiah was stricken with the horrible skin disease spoken of in this Torah portion. Modern translations refer to this disorder as at type of “leprosy.”

Could Y’shua have taken upon Himself the infirmities of mankind in the form of leprosy?

The disease in our portion is not “leprosy” or Hansen’s disease as we understand it today but something far worse called “tzaraat.” This infection would rot the flesh and disfigure the body while causing tremendous pain. Even houses, walls, and fabrics could become tainted with this sickness. Bible scholars agree that tzaraat could be contracted through natural and supernatural means as in the Bible; tzaraat was a type of spiritual judgment for sin and is the only disease that renders a person unclean. It was a horrible plague that forced contagious lepers to walk separately from others and shout out the warning, “Unclean! Unclean!”

The idea of a sick savior seems totally ridiculous to many believers who insist that Y’shua never stumped his toe or caught the common cold. The Messiah healed “all who were oppressed by the devil” but why wasn’t the physician able to heal himself? The Jewish Talmud calls the Messiah the “Leper of the house of study” and several writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, the healing of leprosy was a sure sign that the Messiah had come. “Y’shua answered and said to them, Go and show John/Yochanan again those things that you do hear and

see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them and are acquitted. And blessed is he, who shall not be offended by Me,” Matthew 11:4, 5. Wouldn’t people be offended of a Messiah with tzaraat?

It makes sense to believe the Scriptures at face value when it says Y’shua “took our diseases” upon Himself. Isaiah 53:4 states that “surely our grief He Himself bore.” The word for grief here in Hebrew is actually sickness, like tzaraat. The Amplified Bible clearly shows this in Isaiah 53:4, “Surely He has borne our grief (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by YHWH [as if with leprosy].”

In the book, Tears in a Bottle, author William Bragg wrote, “The transliterated Hebrew words “naga” used in Isaiah 53:4 and “nega”, used in Isaiah 53:8 are used almost exclusively in the Scriptures to describe the plague of leprosy! Nega (Neh'-gah, Strong's #5161) and naga (Na-gah', Strongs # 5060) are used repeatedly in the Scriptures in connection with being stricken or plagued with the marks of leprosy! Initially leprosy manifests itself as light spots or marks on the skin, which later evolve into severe festering boils of puss! Leprosy causes the hands and the feet to become severely clawed, knurled, and disfigured! Fingers and toes get shorter because of bone loss and they become pitifully distorted! The face and the eyes are severely deformed as the nose sinks into distorted facial muscles, which over time causes a multitude of eye abnormalities and eventual blindness! Before the time of Constantine, the followers of YHWH's narrow Way were well aware that Y’shua had leprosy! They knew that the appearance of Y’shua was vile and repulsive! They also knew that by the end, Y’shua didn’t even look human anymore, just as the book of Isaiah had reported! However, in the years, after Constantine, the Messiah Y’shua was depicted by Rome as having perfect physical beauty and form! Of course, that image is completely opposite from the TRUTH, but that’s still the image of ideal beauty that “Jesus” is depicted in today!”

The Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98b, in reference to Isaiah 53:4 states: ... What is his [the Messiah's] name?-"The School of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, until Shiloh come. The School of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, His name shall endure forever: e'er the sun was, his name is Yinnon. The School of R. Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah,

as it is written, Where I will not give you Haninah. Others say: His name is Menachem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, Because Menachem [‘the comforter’], that would relieve my soul, is far. The Rabbis said: His name is ‘the leper scholar,’ as it is written, surely he hath born our grief, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of YHWH, and afflicted.”

Tzaraat was not always contagious nor was it necessarily a death sentence. The Messiah’s leprosy would have certainly been the non-contagious kind as He often walked in the midst of crowds and often visited the temple. If Y’shua had the disease tzaraat then He would have also been in no danger in sitting with other lepers. His diagnosis of this disease would clarify many puzzling Scriptures like Psalm 38 and Psalm 22.

In Matthew 8 the Messiah healed a leper through touch and therefore was made unclean. “And, see, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Master, if You will, You can make me clean. Will You heal me? And Y’shua put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed,” Mathew 8:2, 3. So, did Y’shua have tzaraat? Was the Messiah a leper?

It is truly unknown if the Messiah walked the earth with this dreadful disease and it is disturbing just to consider the idea. However, removing the Messiah from the comfortable box we our theologies have made for him is good for the soul as it allows us to more full appreciate His life and His sacrifice.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are “Metzora” and “Tazaria.” What does these mean?
2. Read 2 Kings 4:42-5:19a and 7:3-20. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 7:18-35 and Matthew 23:16-24:2, 30-31. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion to your life.
6. In Tazaria what does childbirth remind the children of Yisrael?
7. What specific transgression does the experience of childbirth bring to remembrance?
8. Why is a woman unclean during her menstrual cycle?

9. Is it a sin to be ritually impure/unclean? What does it mean to be ritually unclean?
10. What is the offering that YHWH requires after the birth of a child supposed to remind the participants of?
11. What is YHWH declaring when a male child is circumcised?
12. Why would YHWH command circumcision in Leviticus 12:3 if the custom was already practiced by the Hebrew people?
13. The word 'tzaraat' is popularly translated as 'leprosy'. Is this the most accurate meaning?
14. Explain the difference between a burnt offering and a sin offering. Why would these need to be discussed during this week's Torah portion reading?
15. For what sins was 'tzaraat' a Divine punishment?
16. What categories of garments could acquire 'tzaraat'?
17. The Torah does not make clear what is meant by blood purification. How come the mother is unclean only seven days if she gives birth to a boy?
18. The Torah doesn't state what causes the blood to purify. What do you think makes blood a purifying agent?
19. How does YHWH make the sacrifices for purity accessible for all rich and poor people? See Leviticus 12:7-8
20. What do you think makes menstrual flow unclean?
21. Leviticus 12:6 speaks about the completion of her period of purification for either son or daughter; she shall bring to the priest, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, a lamb in its first year for a burnt offering and a pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering. In what ways can animal sacrifice enable a person to become pure again?
22. Why should a woman who bears a child become unclean?
23. What was so sinful after childbirth that a sin offering is required?
24. In ancient times, who were the "doctors" that diagnosed skin disease and sickness?
25. Leviticus 13:47-46 says, "He shall be unclean as long as the disease is on him. Being unclean, he shall dwell apart; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." In what way does disease make one unclean?
26. Was Tazaria leprosy or a different skin disorder?
27. How can you relate this disease with other bodily discharges that make people unclean?
28. How serious do you think uncleanness is, so that unclean people must dwell outside the camp? Is uncleanness contagious?

29. Leviticus 13:47-48 says, "When an eruptive affection occurs in a cloth of wool or linen fabric, in the warp or in the woof of the linen or the wool, or in a skin or in anything made of skin." Is it possible that some kind of diseases affect cloth or skins? What would you call such a disease?
30. Why would the priests be interested in affected cloth or skins?
31. A woman after giving birth is tamei (has a ritual impurity). What is the status of a woman who has a miscarriage?
32. Read Leviticus 13:45-46. How should a person with Tazaria behave?
33. After a woman gives birth, she is required to offer two types of sacrifices. Which are they?
34. Who determines whether a person is ritual clean or unclean?
35. If the priest sees that the tzaraat has spread after one week, how does he rule?
36. How does the "seventh day" play an important role in the purification of skin disorders?
37. In areas of the body where collections of hair grow (e.g., the head or beard), what color hair is indicative of uncleanness?
38. What signs of mourning must a metzora/leper display?
39. Why must a metzora call out, "Tamei! Tamei!" or "Unclean! Unclean!"?
40. Why is a metzora/leper commanded to dwell in isolation?
41. What must be done to a garment that has tzaraat? How can a fabric contain leprosy?
42. Why does the metzora/leper require birds in the purification process?
43. In the purification process of a metzora, what does the cedar wood symbolize?
44. How can a house have a plague of mold or streaks? Does this happen today?
45. In the tabernacle, when the metzora was presented "before YHWH" (14:11), where did he stand?
46. What happens to the vessels that are in a house which was found to have tzaraat?
47. Why do bodily discharges make a person unclean?
48. When a person enters a house that has tzaraat, when do his clothes become unclean?
49. What is the overall theme of this Parasha? What are the subdivisions, if any?
50. How does the Torah suggest hand washing as a type of cleansing in this portion? When did science finally agree with the importance of washing?

51. Why would the birth of a girl cause a woman to be ritually impure for twice the length of time as the birth of a boy? (Try to think of a non-sexist answer!)
52. Why would a woman have to bring a sin offering after giving birth?
53. Read Leviticus 15 verses 16 and 18. Does this mean that a person should shower and wash their bed clothes immediately after having relations with his wife?
54. The laws of niddah are discussed in Leviticus 15. What is niddah? How can a person keep these commandments today?
55. In Parasha Tazaria, YHWH tells Moses that male infants are to be circumcised on the eighth day. Tradition says that the number eight represents one day more than the period of creation, reminding us that it takes human intervention to perfect YHWH's creation. Can you think of other ways in which human culture perfects the natural gifts that YHWH has given us?
56. Leprosy, now known as Hansen's disease, was a very disfiguring disease and the people who suffered from it were often shunned by society. Although Hansen's disease is very rare in our time, there are other ailments whose victims are shunned by society. What do you think you could do to become more comfortable with such people?
57. Leviticus 15:31 seems to explain the ritual impurity laws and their affects upon worship. What does this verse mean to you? How can you apply this week's Torah portion to your personal life?
58. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Archarei Mot and Kedoshim

- Leviticus 16:1-18:30
- Amos 9:7-15
- Ezekiel 22:1-16
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-20

AND

- Leviticus 19:1-20:27
- Ezekiel 22:1-16
- Amos 9:7-15
- Ezekiel 20:2-20
- Matthew 5:43-48

The Torah Portion at a Glance

This is a double portion reading that is only separated during leap years. The section begins after the deaths of Nadav and Avihu, YHWH warns against unauthorized entry "into the holy." Only one person, the Kohen Gadol ("high priest"), may, but once a year, on Yom Kippur, enter the innermost chamber in the Sanctuary to offer the sacred ketoret to YHWH.

Another feature of the Day of Atonement service is the casting of lots over two goats to determine which should be offered to YHWH and which should be dispatched to carry off the sins of Israel to the wilderness.

The Parasha of Acharei also warns against bringing animal or meal offerings anywhere but in the Holy Temple, forbids the consumption of blood, and details the laws prohibiting incest and other deviant sexual relations.

The Parasha of Kedoshim begins with the statement: "You shall be holy, for I, the YHWH your YHWH, am holy" followed by dozens of mitzvot (Divine commandments) through which the believer sanctifies him or herself and relates to the holiness of YHWH. These include: the prohibition against idolatry, the mitzvah of charity, the principle of equality before the law, Shabbat, sexual morality, honesty in business, honor and awe of one's parents, the sacredness of life.

Also in Kedoshim is the dictum which the Messiah equaled to the greatest commandment of the Torah – love your neighbor as yourself.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The Messiah is pictured in this week's Torah portion through the detailed works of the High Priest on Yom Kippur. The High Priest had special garments that he wore as he ministered unto YHWH. It tells us in Shemot/Exodus 19 that we are a "royal priesthood, a holy nation of peculiar people." As a "royal priesthood" we have priestly garments that we are to wear. These garments are the basis for the Armor of YHWH that is spoken of in Ephesians 6. The basis for the armor is found throughout the Old Testament.

Isaiah 59:17 is an amazing passage about the armor of YHWH and the priestly garments of the believers. It says, "for He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak." Clearly in this verse we can see the helmet of salvation are not New Testament concepts. In fact, the entire armor of YHWH can find its foundation in the priestly garments of the High Priest.

In the Wisdom of Solomon, chapter 5, the Bible says "But the righteous live forever, and their reward also is with YHWH, and the care of them is with the Most High; therefore, shall they receive a glorious kingdom and a beautiful crown from the hand of YHWH. For with His right hand shall He cover them, with His arm shall He protect them. He shall take to Him in His zeal, all the armor, and shall armor with Him all His creation. For the desolation of the detestable ones. He shall put on righteousness as a breastplate and judgment that is not false instead of a helmet, and He shall take holiness for an invincible shield. His wrath He shall sharpen for a sword, and the world shall fight with him against the foolish." Again, these verses are speaking of YHWH and are a picture of the priestly garments.

Ephesians 6 speaks of the same armor that is worn by YHWH, the High Priest, and now believers –"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of YHWH, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of YHWH, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day,

and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of YHWH; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.” This teaching will examine the priestly garments that are known as the “armor of YHWH.”

It says in Ephesians 6 to “stand, therefore, having your waist wrapped around with the belt of truth / belt of emet.” In Hebrew it’s called the avnet emet. The high priest would wear this linen belt, more like a sash, that he would wrap around himself. The avnet emet, or the belt of truth, is for us to combat the lies of the enemy with the truth. It is this belt that sets us free.

The avnet emet / the belt of truth keeps falsehood from showing. It tells us in Isaiah 11:5 to “gird up your loins with truth.” This linen belt of truth for the high priest holds up the breastplate of righteousness. So, without the truth, there is no righteousness. What did Y’shua say? He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” So without Y’shua as the truth, do we have any righteousness? No. We have none.

In Exodus 28 and Leviticus 16 the Bible speaks a lot about the priestly garments. In one passage it says, “the intricately woven hand of ephod shall be of the same workmanship, made of gold and blue and purple, scarlet, fine-woven linen.” The belt of truth was made of the same items that the breastplate of righteousness was made of, and it held up that righteousness.

So the first part of the armor, of the garments, is the avnet emet. The next part is “having on the breastplate of righteousness.” The word for righteousness here is tzedeka. This word, tzedeka, is the Hebrew word for “righteousness or justice.” It’s a word that means to do justly or to do right. Today it is equated in Judaism with giving money and helping out the poor.

In Hebrew, the breastplate of righteousness is the hoshen tzedeka. On the breastplate is a symbol of Israel. Exodus 28:15, it says, “Set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones, and on these stones will be the names of the children of Israel, 12 according to their names.” The 12 stones stand for the 12 tribes of

Israel. Because of what Y'shua did, the people of Israel have right standing with YHWH.

In Ephesians 6 the next piece of the armor is the “feet fitted with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” Your feet are to be clothed with the gospel of peace. Here is the interesting thing about the high priest: He didn't wear any shoes. He was barefoot. He walked around barefoot. He walked around exposed with the gospel of peace.

When you walk around barefoot, what happens to your feet? They are soft at first, but then they what? They become calloused, and they become hard. At first, when we are walking around in the faith we're soft, we're learning. If we get hurt, we may get a thorn, but then we become calloused and hard. Not hard-hearted, or hardened of heart, but our feet become hard to the Good News. It tells us in Exodus 3 that Moshe was with YHWH, and what did YHWH say to him? “Take off your shoes because you are standing on holy ground.” Part of being ready is to be barefoot so you can shake off the dust from your feet when you're not welcome. Kick it off. Shake it off.

It tells us in Exodus again, that the high priestly garments included a cloak with the shapes of pomegranates and then bells. This is so that when we walk in the truth that people can hear the besorah. They can hear the gospel. They can hear it. Just like the people could hear the high priests' ministering, that as we walk out in the truth, then our feet have the Good News of shalom. They can hear the Word, and also, that is a picture of fruitfulness. When we are walking out our calling as priests of YHWH, we are going to be fruitful.

In Isaiah 52, it says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.” It is not because they have New Balance or Nikes on our feet that make them beautiful. It is because their feet are barefoot. Going over the mountains, but have you ever seen a mountain without a valley somewhere? “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” We're walking through that valley barefoot, if we are walking like a priest, but we are not staying in the valley.

In Ephesians 2:10, it tells us to, “walk in good deeds.” And the book of Job 12:19 says, “He makes his priests walk about barefoot,” and wherever we put our feet becomes holy ground. Every place the sole of your foot treads shall be yours states Deuteronomy 11:24. That means as you function and you live as a priest

of YHWH that you are going to be able to walk in truth. You are going to be able to walk in His emet.

Let's go back to Ephesians 6. It says in verse 16, "Above all..." What is the most important part of our garment? It says, "...taking up the shield of faith." The shield of faith. In Hebrew, this is *magen emunah*. The shield of faith. Can you see faith? Faith is like an intangible. It is a shield of faith. The shield of faith is not something that is seen, but it is there. The truth is, without faith, we are open to the enemy's attacks. It tells us very clearly in Psalm 28:7. It says, "YHWH is our shield." So whose faith do we need? We need YHWH's. We need His faith. The Psalms also say that "YHWH is a shield for me, the glory and the lifter of my head."

Hebrews 12 defines faith for us - "now, *emunah* (faith) is putting evidence to things hoped for and giving proof to things not yet seen." True faith is putting evidence to where you are just hoping, and it's having proof for something that's not seen. It tells us that we are to live by faith, to walk by faith, not by sight.

What good does this shield of faith do us? It says, "Above all, take up the shield of faith with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery arrows of the enemy...of the wicked one." When you walk in faith and not doubt, not unbelief but true faith, that is when the enemy's fiery arrows come against you and they will be quenched. Yes, they may stick into your skin, and they may sting, and they may hurt, but the fire is not going to spread any farther.

What happens when you begin to doubt? When you begin to worry? Is that faith? What happens when you begin to have fear? Is that faith? No. All these arrows start attacking you, and they are fiery arrows. So one is going to ignite another, is going to get your hair on fire, is going to get your clothes on fire, and all of a sudden, your *tallit* of light is darkness. We have to have *emunah*...faith...to guard us from those fiery arrows.

Let's look next...verse 17 of Ephesians 5. "And take up the helmet of salvation." The helmet of salvation is the next piece of the garment. This is not the Roman soldier's helmet but something greater and something more. In Hebrew, for the priests to have the helmet of salvation, the words in Hebrew are *tzitziyot Y'shua*. This is similar to where we get the word *tzitziyot* from for fringes or tassels. The helmet of salvation would have *tzitziyot* or tassels to keep it attached. *Tzitziyot Y'shua* is the helmet of salvation.

The problem with the helmet of salvation is there are a lot of people who have the helmet of salvation, and that is all they have placed on their spiritual body. So picture for a minute putting on a helmet and running around naked. That is not a pretty sight, but what do most people do? They have salvation. They think that is all there is to the faith, and they run around nude with just a helmet of salvation on. "I got salvation. Oh, I'm saved. I'm waiting on the rapture bus. I'm saved..." That's not just it. YHWH has so much for us than salvation. There is the whole armor of YHWH. Don't just put on the helmet of salvation.

Here is another way to look at it. Put on the mind of Messiah. Start thinking like He thinks and have your mind renewed to His thoughts. Our minds should act like really good helmets. It should stop thoughts or doubts or temptations. It should stop what the enemy is doing because he will toy with us in our minds. Consider this truth: you cannot be tempted with something you don't think about. It all starts in the mind as you do what you are thinking about. If you are thinking about eating a steak, you are not going to go to McDonald's and order an ice cream cone. You are going to find a good steak restaurant and order up! You are going to do what you think about. You can't be tempted with something you don't think about. It all starts in the mind. We have to have our minds renewed to YHWH's will and Spirit.

The high priest wore a special helmet. In the King James it's called a mitre. It was more like a turban than like a kippah that we see Jewish people wearing today. It had these words on it, "Kadosh Le-YHWH," which is, "Holy to YHWH."

What if your mind, your brain, or your forehead had those words written on it? "Kadosh to YHWH." What if every time a bad thought or a bad deed or something evil came to mind, something harsh, something not of YHWH came to mind, it bounced off that helmet that said, "Kadosh to YHWH?" Wouldn't that be lovely? That is what He wants for us. Our minds are to be renewed to the emet...to the truth...that it is kadosh. In Hebrew, kadosh doesn't just mean holy, it means set apart. Our minds, our thoughts, and our thinking are to be set apart to YHWH. So every time you have a thought...every reaction we have is to be judged against this helmet. Is it kadosh?

It tells us in Proverbs 23:7, "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Then in 2 Corinthians 10:5, it tells us to "take every thought captive to the obedience of Y'shua." Thoughts are like wild animals that must be taken captive and taught obedience. Send your thoughts to obedience school! Take that wild animal of a

thought and train it. “As a man thinks in his heart, so he is.” Put on the helmet of salvation and allow it to filter your mind to only what is Kadosh Le-YHWH.

In Ephesians 6 verse 17 the priestly garments continue - “...and the sword of the Spirit (Ruach) which is the Word of YHWH.” The sword of the Ruach is part of our armor. Do you know what the sword was for a priest? It was their blade that they used to sacrifice with. For the priest, this sword of the Spirit was a double-edged sword they used to kill the animals for sacrifice. The Word of YHWH is used to kill the animal flesh. We all have an animalistic nature. I call it the flesh...the nefesh and our animal desire or drives will lead us against what YHWH wants. It leads us to be prideful. It leads us to be selfish. Yet, the Word tells us in Hebrews 4 that the Word of YHWH is like a “sharp double-edged sword that is able to pierce even to the dividing parts, the being and the Ruach...between the joints and the marrow and bone and is a discerner of the thoughts and the intents of the heart.”

So what does the Word of YHWH, the sword of sacrifice, do? When you sacrifice, it tells us very clearly, it says, “it divides between the joints and the marrow and the bone. It cuts off the flesh.” Don't let people tell you that sacrifices have been done away with. It's absolutely not true. Do we have a temple where we sacrifice? No. But do we have a temple where we sacrifice? Yes. Our body is the temple of the Ruach HaKodesh, right? So where do the sacrifices occur? They occur right here. Every day, you are going to be given opportunities to decide whether you are going to sacrifice what your flesh wants, what you want to say, what you want to do, what you want to think. Will you allow the Word of YHWH to put it to death?

Here's a great thing about the sacrifices in the temple. They were humane. They were quick. They were done so the animal would feel no pain. That's the way the Word of YHWH should act to us. In Hebrews it says that the “word of YHWH is quick and powerful.” That is how the sacrifices were to be done in the temple. Quick and powerful. One cut, it's done. Kill the animal. That's how it should be for us. Quick and powerful. Our defense and our offense is the Word of YHWH. Where we are swift and quick to say, “Ha'satan...it is written.”

Go back to Ephesians 6 and see that the armor of YHWH is not done. There is one last piece. Verse 18 says, “Making prayer always with all intercession and supplication in the Spirit, and watching in the Ruach, with all endurance and petitions for all the saints.” The last part of the armor of YHWH is prayer at all times, in the Ruach.

Did you know the high priest would have that incense that he would burn? Holy smoke, Batman! It was this incense that would be burning, and in Romans 8:3 and 4, it says that our prayers are like the incense of smoke. In Exodus 30, it talks about special ingredients are a part of this incense, that our prayers reach up to Heaven like the incense. In Leviticus 16, it says that it was sweet incense offered daily as part of the priestly duties.

The priests would take the coals from the altar of sacrifice and put them in the censor of incense. It tells us in 2 Corinthians 2:15 that we are unto YHWH a “sweet savor of incense,” of Y’shua, and it tells us in Luke 1:10...this is good: “And when the time of burning incense came, all of them assembled together were worshiping and praying outside.” When we come together in unity, it’s like burning incense in the temple.

Remember where it says that the “smoke filled the temple,” in the book of Isaiah? That wasn't just any smoke. It was incense. Malachi 1:11 says, “From the rising of the sun...” So when should you begin praying? With the rising of the sun. “...even to the going down the same.” So when should you stop praying? When you go to bed. “The name of YHWH shall be great among the gentiles.” This is Malachi 1:11. “And in every place, incense shall be offered unto My name; a pure offering, for My name shall be great among the heathens.”

The armor of YHWH is not some Roman-Greek idea, but it’s our high priest, Y’shua. When we put on the armor of YHWH, by living in truth then we can be victories in our walk as priests.

Pray this...

“Father YHWH we come before you right now. We clothe ourselves in Your light, and we put on the armor of YHWH, the breastplate of your righteousness that has the stones of the 12 tribes. We proclaim that You are holy. We take up the avnet emet, the belt of truth that holds up that breastplate, that without truth, nothing will stand.

Father we put upon ourselves the helmet of salvation, the Tzitziyot Y’shua, the garment that says ‘kadosh Le-YHWH,’ that all of our thoughts would be compared to your thoughts, that we would remember and remind ourselves that we have been made in your image; therefore, we are to portray your image to those around us. We have to guard our thoughts because Ha’satan cannot tempt us of something that we don't think about.

Father, we put up that shield of faith. We are reminded that that is You. You are a shield for us. We believe that You are there, even though we can't always feel You, even though we can't always see You, even though we can't always touch You...we believe.

Father, we take off the shoes of our own flesh, of our running, of our being swayed from winds of doctrine. We shake off the dust of others who do not receive Your will and Your way, and we stand upon holy ground today, and we know that as we walk out in Your way, no matter what we face, no matter how bad the valley gets, that there will be fruitfulness as we remember the pomegranates and the bells upon the priestly garments.

We take up the sword of the Spirit to do sacrifice, to sacrifice our will and our desires, to sacrifice our flesh to You. We climb upon the altar as our spiritual act of worship to have our mind renewed and our bodies renewed and transformed. We take up that sword.

And finally, Father, we pray in the Spirit. We pray in the morning and throughout our day, in all things give thanks, to pray always, as Your Word says. We offer up our prayers as incense unto You. Understanding that as priests, we have been called to pray, we've been called to stand, we've been called to reach out, to believe Your Word and Your ways.

Father, remind us that this armor of YHWH is an armor of light. It is a privilege and an honor to put upon, and yet we do it through what You've done in us. May we clothe ourselves in Your light today and forevermore. May we live in You and walk in You, and put down the works of the enemy. Amen."

Applying the Portion to Life Today

There are some things in life that are just difficult to understand, like how grainy and course sand becomes clear and beautiful glass. Or how people can wait in line for hours to purchase tickets for a rock concert yet the same people get frustrated if the line at Wal-mart is a little too long. It is hard to grasp just how professional ball players are paid more money than teachers, nurses, and police officers combined. Some incidents are just a little too peculiar and irrational.

Just like things in life are sometimes hard to comprehend, so are many of the mitzvot/commandments in the Torah. Let's face it; there are many commandments in the Bible that just don't make any sense. Verses that deal with ritual purity, wearing tzitzit, and eating certain foods aren't rational.

Obedience to these commands serve a higher spiritual purpose and they often can not be reasoned out and understood fully. But what really can? What verses in the Bible can a person understand fully? What chapters in the Scriptures do you have the fullest comprehension of?

The Jewish Sages have divided the Torah commands into two basic categories. The first, called “Mishpatim” are considered to be rulings that are basically rational. These are often translated as “judgments.” Statements like “do not murder” and “do not steal” are easy to reason out and therefore fit without difficulty into this area of interpretation. The second category of Mitzvot is called “chok.” These are directions given to man as “decrees” and are usually translated as such. Chok are found in verses that deal with seemingly irrational concepts like inflicting yourself on Yom Kippur or wearing tassels.

Mishpatim conform to a sense of just living. Chukim can only be understood as a decree from YHWH the King. There are many chukim and Mishpatim found throughout the double portion Torah reading this week. Acharei-Kedoshim, found in Vayikra (Leviticus) 16-21, begins with instructions on how to properly observe the Day of Atonement and continues with specific thoughts on animal or meal offerings and laws prohibiting sexual relations within certain relationships. The second section stresses the set apartness of the Yisraelite through the mitzvot. Verses in this area deal with everything from honesty to charity to idolatry. Some of these concepts are easy to fathom while others are seemingly unfathomable.

Chasidic thought teaches “chok emphasizes the supra-rationality of our commitment to Elohim, while Mishpat stresses the function of the mitzvot as educators and enlighteners of human life.” Y’shua said in Mattitياهو 18:3 that we must come to him with the faith of little children.

All of this week’s reading and indeed all of the Torah presents the Divine Will of YHWH. The believer must choose to obey the Divine Will against his own will. Certainly it is much easier to be a buffet believer and pick and choose what to accept in the Torah as valid for today. Who eats everything at a buffet anyway? There is definitely a struggle between the mind, the will, and the soul when it comes to accepting as lifestyle the Torah commands that just don’t make any sense. Yet it is in these mitzvot that our faith is tested.

Western or Greek thinking instinctly says that before you do something you should understand the purpose and reason why. Biblically mandated obedience says to just do it. Western or Greek thinking teaches to reason and then obey

while many of the mitzvot in the Torah can only be understood after they have been experienced. This faith is truly experiential. This means that to grasp the importance and meaning of Torah one must first experience the power and obedience of Torah. It is difficult to “delight in the Sabbath” until the first time you experience Sabbath rest. It is hard to comprehend why a person should eat kosher until you eat kosher foods. Surely you don’t have to know exactly how the microscopic electrical parts of your computer work but you still use your computer, right? It is the same with the chok of the Torah. In fact it is the same with the whole of Torah. All of Torah is indeed chok.

Yes yes, you just read that the Jewish Rabbis have divided the scope of the Torah into Mishpatim and chukim – two sections of laws that can be reasoned and those that can’t. But, the evidence that a chok is a divine decree and the witness that all of YHWH’s word is truly unfathomable and greater than human reason will lead to the verdict that all of Torah is chok.

To us it makes sense not to kill or steal. It doesn’t make sense to refrain from marring the edges of our beards. Yet to YHWH it is the same. A mitzvot is a mitzvot. A decree is a decree. Obedience is obedience. You don’t have to fully understand “why” you are following Torah to follow Torah. Just understand that you are obeying the will of Almighty YHWH.

Much can be learned by studying and researching all of the Torah, including the chok commandments. Rabbi Rambam has written that “although the chukim of the Torah are supra-rational decrees...it is fitting to contemplate them, and whatever can be explained, should be explained.” Take for example the decree in this week’s Torah portion found in Vayikra 19:19.

“Don’t wear a garment made of two kinds of cloth,” Vayikra says. To the casual reader this pasuk (verse) doesn’t mean much. But to the believer who wants to walk out their faith in Ruach and Emet a whole new can of worms is now being opened. What does it mean to not wear a piece of clothing with intertwined fabrics? Why not? What fabrics are ok and what material should be avoided? Is this valid for today? What was YHWH thinking?

Friend, some principles in Torah can be “taught” while others have to be “caught.” The Yisraelite must “catch” the Almighty’s call for faith filled obedience instead of reason when it comes to the chok of “sha’atnez.”

“Sha’atnez” is the Hebrew term for counterfeit, false, or unholy mixtures prohibited by YHWH’s Torah. The wearing of mixed fabrics is just one of three

sha'atnez that are to be avoided. The context of Vayikra explains this a little further. "Keep my decrees. Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed. Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material," Vayikra 19:19. We are not to mix:

- Plants with other plants and create a hybrid
- animals with other animals and create a mongrel
- plant based fabrics with animal based fabrics and create a garment

"You are not to wear a garment with two kinds of thread, wool and linen together," says Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:11. This command is a definite chok. There is no apparent reason other than expressing Divine Will with this mitzvah. Linen is a plant-based material and wool of course is an animal based material and the two should not be mixed for attire. If linen and wool appear in the same garment then you should not wear that item of clothing teaches the Torah.

The Rabbis have concluded that it is wrong to wear anything when these elements are sewn, tied, pasted together, weaved, twisted or carded. The Talmud even prohibits sitting on a fabric with sha'atnez! How does all of this relate to life today? Well, if you believe the Bible then not much has changed.

"The grass withers and the flowers fade but the word of YHWH remains forever," says Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 40:8. Just as it is wrong to lie or steal, it is still wrong to wear sha'atnez. It doesn't matter if you understand this command or agree with it. The Word of YHWH remains forever.

A simple look through your closet with a fast examination of clothing tags will reveal if you own any sha'atnez. Be careful though! Many suits of wool have linen liners or pockets and many items with padding may mix the two threads. Also, "lano/lino" is Spanish for wool/linen. You don't have to discard of the garment if it is sha'atnez, just don't wear it. (The Torah only prohibits "wearing" these – not making them or owning them.) Or you can donate the clothing to a local thrift store or trash the clothes if you so choose. It is much easier to not wear something if you don't have it in your closet or dresser.'

What is the meaning behind the mitzvah of sha'atnez? Jewish rabbis and students have pondered this question for literally thousands of years. Some say not to wear sha'atnez because only the garments of the Cohen Hagadol (high priest) could be made of linen and wool. Many Sages teach that sha'atnez has its origins in pagan cults of old. Others point out that sha'atnez completes the set of

forbidden combinations and man should not change creation to “improve” upon it. For various teachers sha’atnez is a reminder of the story of Kayin and Hevel. Kayin’s offering was from the produce of the ground and Hevel’s was from his flock. Keeping wool and linen separate in garments reminds us of this episode and its lessons.

Sha’atnez is unusual, just like much of Torah. The Mishpatim and the chok of Torah are YHWH’s Divine Will. Like them or not – understand them or not – they are all to be obeyed.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are "Archarei Mot" and "Kedoshim." What does these mean?
2. Read Amos 9:7-15, Ezekiel 22:1-16, and Ezekiel 20:2-20. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 and Matthew 5:43-48. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week’s Torah portion?
6. Leviticus 19:3 says, "Every man shall fear his father and his mother." In this verse the word man ("ish") usually refers to an adult, someone over the age of Bar-Mitzvah. Why in stating this does the Torah use "man"?
7. Why does Leviticus 19:13 emphasize “your friend” – “You shall not cheat your friend and you shall not rob him.”
8. What are some ways that you can love your neighbor as yourself?
9. In Parsha Kedoshim, there is a very important pasuk/mitzvah which unfortunately is very often overlooked. Read 19:18 for this passage.
10. Many commentators have noted that one can find an example of each of the Ten Commandments (or a very similar mitzvah) in the opening verses of Parsha Vayikra. Before seeing the commentaries inside, carefully review chapter 19 and attempt to find these parallels on your own. Can you find these?
11. In Shemot 20:13, the Torah commands "Do not steal." What does the Torah add when it commands in Vayikra 19:11 "Do not steal?"
12. "Do not do wrong to your neighbor" (19:13). To what "wrong" is the Torah referring?
13. By when must you pay someone who worked for you during the day?
14. When rebuking someone, what sin must one be careful to avoid?
15. The Torah forbids tattooing. How is a tattoo made?

16. What penalty does the Torah state for cursing one's parents?
17. When the Torah states a death penalty but doesn't define it precisely, to which penalty is it referring?
18. Is it proper for a Messianic believer Jew to say "I would enjoy eating ham?"
19. In Leviticus 19:18, we read: "Do not seek vengeance and do not bear a grudge. ..." The Jewish Rabbi Rashi explains the difference between vengeance and a grudge: One person says, "Lend me your ax," and the other says, "No." The next day, the second one requests, "Lend me your ax," and the first one says, "You wouldn't lend yours to me, so I won't lend mine to you!" That is vengeance. However, when the first person says, "Although you wouldn't lend me your ax, I am not like you, so here it is" – that is bearing a grudge. Can you think of examples from your own life when you acted in this way? What's wrong with seeking revenge or bearing a grudge? What would the world be like if everybody sought revenge?
20. In this week's Torah portion, we are commanded "you shall keep my laws and my rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live: I am the YHWH" (Leviticus 18:5). How do we attain life by the observance of commandments?
21. Why after the death of Nadav and Avihu did YHWH instruct the Kohanim not to enter the Beit Hamikdash while intoxicated (10:9), nor to enter the Sanctuary at all times? What relevance do these prohibitions have to all Jews, even in contemporary times
22. "You shall keep My statutes and My laws... and he shall live in them." (18:5) What does the Torah emphasize with the words "vechai bahem" — "he shall live in them"?
23. "You shall not take a woman in addition to her sister." (18:18) Since the Torah forbids marrying the sister of one's wife, it should have said the reverse, "You shall not take a sister in addition to a woman"?
24. You shall fear every man his father and his mother and My Shabbats shall you observe: I am YHWH your YHWH." (19:3) Why is the observance of the Shabbat placed next to the law of fearing one's father. Why is Shabbat written in the plural ("Shabtotai")?
25. When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap the corner... You shall not pick the undeveloped twigs of your vineyard... For the poor and the proselyte you shall leave them, I am YHWH your YHWH" (19:9-10). In the commandment to give gifts to the poor, why is it necessary to emphasize, "I am YHWH your YHWH"?

26. "You shall not withhold a worker's wage until morning." (19:13) To what extent should one go to fulfill this precept?
27. "You shall not withhold a worker's wage until morning. You shall not curse the deaf, and you shall not place a stumbling block before the blind." (19:13-14) What is the link between these three commandments?
28. "You shall not be a talebearer among your people; you shall not stand idle while your fellow's blood is shed." (19:16) What is the link between these two commandments?
29. "You shall love your fellow as yourself." (19:18) How can the Torah demand that one love a stranger as much as oneself?
30. "Love your fellow as yourself, I am YHWH." (19:18) What is the connection between "Love your fellow as yourself" and "I am YHWH"?
31. "When you shall come to the land and you shall plant any food tree, you shall treat its fruit as forbidden; for three years it shall be forbidden to you; it shall not be eaten." (19:23) What is the significance of a boy's first haircut (upsherenish) at the age of three?
32. "A land flowing with milk and honey." (20:24) There are so many exceptional things about Eretz Yisrael. Why does the Torah choose to emphasize milk and honey?
33. "Speak to the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy for I am holy, YHWH your YHWH.'" (19:2) Why is the word "kedoshim" written without a "vav" and the word "kadosh" written with a "vav"?
34. 16:1 A cursory reading of the Scriptures seems to indicate that there exists overlapping similarities between some of the blood atonement ceremonies of Passover/Pesach and the Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur. What are the differences between the sin atonement offerings of Pesach and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)? Perhaps realizing the fact that the Passover occurred during the spring feast day season and Day of Atonement occurred during the fall feast day season may answer this question. Prophetically the spring feast days picture Messiah Y'shua's first coming while the fall feast days prophetically point to his second coming. How does this understanding shed light on the answer to this question?
35. 16:7 Why were there two goats? Do both goats represent Y'shua and the atoning work he accomplished on the cross, or will accomplish yet in the future? If so, how does each goat represent a different facet of this work? Some see in the name Azazel some satanic implications, therefore leading them to believe that this goat represents the adversary himself and his ultimate exile from mankind. Is this possible? Is it possible to reconcile

these two viewpoints? (See John 3:14, which sheds some light on this apparent dilemma.) We deal with the issue in more detail in our teaching article on Yom Kippur mentioned below.

36. Leviticus 17:11 is a crucial Scripture theologically regarding the blood atonement. Presently, the Jewish religion offers no hope for its followers in light of this passage. For believers in Y'shua, the message of Messiah and him crucified addresses this issue. The importance of the blood of the Lamb in the atonement for sins as well as in overcoming sin, sickness (1 Peter 2:24) and the powers of hell (Rev 12:11) cannot be over emphasized. How thorough is your understanding of the power of the blood? Do you appropriate this power on a regular basis in your life? The power of the blood is central to the efficacy of the communion elements. The concept of the blood of Y'shua is central to the gospel message with 40 to 50 references to it in the Apostolic Scriptures. Such terms are used as "blood of the Lamb," "blood of Messiah," "precious blood of Messiah," "blood of the everlasting covenant," "redemption through Messiah's blood," "blood of His cross," "communion of the blood of Messiah," "faith in his blood," and "purchased with his blood." Is the reality of the blood of Messiah in your life central to your faith walk? How so? If not, why not?
37. Leviticus 18 discusses sexual sin. We live in a sex-crazed society where the immoral and flesh-alluring antics of the heathens could easily ensnare the righteous if they let down their guard. Everyone seems to make excuses why their personal sex-sin is permissible. Torah is very clear about what is right and wrong in this regard. Liberal Christians have gutted Scripture to excuse sexual deviancies that Scripture calls abominable practices. You may not be living in open sexual sin, but what about your thought life? What about the movies, magazines, internet sites, television shows and advertisements you look at? We have to make a choice before YHVH: either we are a holy nation and people, or we are profane and worldly. Either hot or cold ... there are no gray areas. Luke warmth will be spit out (Rev 3:16).
38. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Emor

- Leviticus 21:1-24:23
- Ezekiel 44:15-31
- Luke 14:12-24

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The Torah section of Emor ("speak") begins with the special laws pertaining to the kohanim ("priests"), the Cohen HaGadol ("High Priest"), and the Temple Service: A Cohen may not become ritually impure through contact with a dead body, save on the occasion of the death of a close relative. A Cohen may not marry a divorcee or a woman with a promiscuous past; a Cohen Gadol can marry only a virgin. A Cohen with a physical deformity cannot serve in the Holy Temple, nor can a deformed animal be brought as an offering.

A newborn calf, lamb, or kid must be left with its mother for seven days before being eligible for an offering; one may not slaughter an animal and its offspring on the same day.

The second part of Emor lists the annual Callings of Holiness -- the festivals of the Jewish calendar: the weekly Shabbat; the bringing of the Passover offering on 14 Aviv; the seven-day Passover festival beginning on 15 Aviv; the bringing of the Omer offering from the first barley harvest on the 2nd day of Passover, and the commencement, on that day, of the 49-day Counting of the Omer, culminating in the festival of Shavuot on the 50th day; a "remembrance of shofar blowing" on 1 Tishrei; a solemn fast day on 10 Tishrei; the Sukkot festival -- during which we are to dwell in huts for seven days and take the "Four Kinds" -- beginning on 15 Tishrei; and the immediately following holiday of the "8th day" of Sukkot (Shemini Atzeret).

Next the Torah discusses the lighting of the Menorah in the Temple, and the showbread placed weekly on the table there.

Emor concludes with the incident of a man executed for blasphemy, and the penalties for murder (death) and for injuring one's fellow or destroying his property (monetary compensation).

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The Levitical Laws of this week's Torah portion includes the well known principle of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." This concept has been misunderstood by many who fail to understand the passage in context of the whole of Scripture. Yes, the Torah does call for strict justice for sin. The wages of sin is death. This judgment for sin was paid by the Messiah Y'shua and is available to anyone who calls upon His name. The name "Y'shua" is the name of salvation from the punishment of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." This can be seen as the letters that make up the Savior's name are studied.

Hebrew is an amazing language. It resembles hieroglyphics more than it does English, in the sense that each Hebrew letter is full of meaning and symbolism. In English an "a" is an "a" and nothing more. Yet in Hebrew each letter is assigned a number and a word picture based upon ancient scripts. A Hebrew word can be better understood by examining each letter used and comparing how these correspond and relate to each other. For example, there's nothing special about the English word "dog." But in Hebrew, a dog is "kelev." This Hebrew term for dog communicates depth and definition as to what a "kelev" really is. Kelev is a compound word made from two basic Hebrew terms. "Ke" in Hebrew means "as or like." While "lev" is the Hebrew word for "heart." Kelev is a Hebrew word picture showing that a dog is "like the heart" of man. Or a dog is a man's best friend. Wow! (Or is it bow wow?)

It is no surprise then that the name of Savior is also highly symbolic. At the most basic meaning, the Messiah's name is explained when it is given by the angels. "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Y'shua, because he will save his people from their sins," Matthew 1:21. Clearly, "Y'shua" means salvation. This meaning is further magnified by examining each letter of the Savior's name.

In Hebrew Y'shua is spelled with the letters yod-shin-vav-ayin. Together, these letters powerfully exhibit the Savior's life and ministry. The first letter in the Savior's name is the "yod". The yod is also the first letter in the Divine name of the Father, spelled Yod – Hey – Vav – Hay - YHWH.

YHWH is the name given to Moses at the burning bush. This name is to be used by all Bible believers as a "memorial forever," Exodus 3:15. YHWH means "to be." YHWH is and YHWH is His name. However, this name has been hidden behind the English words "LORD" and "GOD" in modern Bibles. Today, people all

over the world are rejecting false titles and accepting the true name of the Father. The prophecy of Zephaniah 3:9 is coming true, "For I shall turn unto the peoples a clean lip, so that they all call on the name YHWH, to serve Him." YHWH is restoring the holy Hebrew tongue and the majesty of his name, starting with the yod.

The modern script of the letter yod resembles a comma suspended in the air. The actual Hebrew word "yod" means "arm or hand." The "arm or hand of YHWH" is an idiom repeated time and time again in the Scriptures. This phrase is a picture of strength and power, pointing to Y'shua the Messiah. It was the arm of YHWH that conquered Pharaoh and his army. And the psalmist declared, "You scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm," 89:10. The arm of YHWH brings deliverance and victory. Whenever you read about the hand or arm of YHWH in the Bible, this is prophetically referring to person of Y'shua.

Another letter in both YHWH and Y'shua's names is the vav. This letter resembles a hook and means "nail." The vav is also the number 6, the number of man. Y'shua came as the Son of Man. He is YHWH in the flesh. What does the vav teach us about Y'shua? Remember that Hebrew letters are pictures and symbols. The connection in these letters is apparent. Y'shua (the yod) came as the son of man (the vav) to offer His life as a sacrifice. His hands (yod) were pierced by a nail (vav) to bring salvation. Y'shua was crucified through his hands and feet, as prophesied in Psalm 22:16 – "The assembly of the wicked have enclosed me. They have pierced my hands and my feet." The letters in Y'shua's name foretell His death. There is no other name given unto man for salvation. But why did he have to die such a cruel death? This question is also answered in His name.

Y'shua came to offer His life as the remedy to sin and death. Whenever you read the term "salvation" in an English Bible, it is almost certainly the name of the Messiah translated from the Hebrew. His name is actually found all throughout the Older Testament. . When the Patriarch Jacob (Ya'acov in Hebrew) prayed in Genesis 49:18, he actually used the name of the coming Savior. He said, "I have waited for thy salvation / Y'shua." Jacob trusted in Y'shua even before Y'shua was born into this world! In Psalm 62:6, David too proclaims his faith in Y'shua, "He alone is my rock and my Y'shua / salvation, I will not be moved." People living during Older Testament times were redeemed by putting their faith in Y'shua. The sacrificial system did not save anyone. In Hebrews 10:4 we read, "for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." Salvation has always been by grace through faith in the salvation of the Almighty.

His very name doesn't just mean salvation, it is salvation! "Neither is there salvation / Y'shua in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Act 4:12. Y'shua came to save us from our sins and to redeem man from the curse of the law. He did NOT come to remove the Law, or "Torah" in Hebrew. The Torah is the first five books of the Bible. These books explain how a believer is to walk out their faith. Instructions are given in the Torah for every part of life, including how to get along with fellow man and how to properly worship YHWH. Disobedience to the commands in the Torah is called "sin." The Torah explains what sin is. But the Torah is not sin. Romans 7:12, "So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good." Y'shua didn't come to save us from the Law but from our breaking of the law. He said, "think not that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets," in Matthew Chapter 5. Y'shua paid the price for mankind's Torah breaking. He suffered the curses of our disobedience. The last remaining letters in Y'shua's name show how He conquered the curse of sin.

These last two letters in the Messiah's wonderful name are the "ayin" and the "shin." These letters have a special connection, so they will be discussed together. The shin resembles a "w" and is one of the most widely used Hebrew letters. In paleo-Hebrew, the shin was a picture of a tooth. Today the Hebrew word "shin" means "tooth or chewing."

The final letter in the name of Y'shua is the "ayin." In ancient times, this letter was drawn as an eye. In modern Hebrew, the word ayin means "eye." The eye and the tooth, the ayin and the shin, show us the power of sin. Combined, the yod, vav, shin, and ayin show us the power of YHWH.

In the legal world there is a principal called "lex talionis." This form of law says that the punishment must fit the crime. In the Law of Moses, the Torah, punishments are given for different offenses against YHWH or man. The Torah explains in exact terms how a person is to treat their neighbor and worship YHWH. Sin comes when a person one doesn't follow the Torah. "Sin is lawlessness," says 1 John. The punishment for sins, big or small, is separation from YHWH. This is the curse of the Torah. "The wages of sin is death," Romans 6:23. All have sinned and fallen short of the requirements of the Torah. All, that is, except one – Messiah Y'shua. The sinless son of YHWH paid the price for sin and died a sinner's death. The Torah required justice for all of humanity's sin. The Torah mandated an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

"If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise," Exodus 21:23-25. The torah requires an eye for an eye – an ayin for an ayin, and a tooth for a tooth – a shin for a shin. Here the Torah called for "lex talionis," or exact punishment for the crime. The crime is sin. The punishment is death. We are the accused. Y'shua willingly took our punishment and died in our place. Torah justice required by the ayin (eye) and the tooth (shin) was met by the nailed (vav) hand (yod) of Y'shua. Mercy answered justice's call. Y'shua offered His life for us, meeting the demand for an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Colossians 2:14 says, that "He Blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."

We are told in John 1:17 that the "word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This verse isn't kidding. The word spoken of in this verse must be the Older Testament books. Of course, these books were written in Hebrew. So to paraphrase, "the Hebrew alphabet was made flesh and dwelt among us." The Living Word came and gave His life as His Name foretells. "But now in Y'shua, you who were once far off have been brought near by His blood," Ephesians 2:13.

The punishment of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" was met by the Messiah. The world is guilty of sin and therefore deserves justice and wrath. Yet a person can be saved from judgment and wrath by trusting in YHWH Y'shua. His life is a living example for us to follow. Have you trusted Y'shua for your salvation? Obedience to the Torah does not save you. Good works do not save you. Jewish lineage does not save you. Church membership does not save you. We are saved by the person and the name of Y'shua! Blessed be His wonderful name!

Applying the Portion to Life Today

If you were to pull out an old cookbook, and try your hand at one of the most complex recipes, you would learn a lesson about this week's Torah sidrah.

Many recipes call for a number of distinct ingredients to be placed into a mixing bowl. Then the instructions call for the cook to "stir the items to uniform consistency." The author of the recipe expects you to fold this stuff together, over and over again, until the individual ingredients are blended so well that every spoonful of the final mixture looks the same. This is "consistency" in cooking terms. Our weekly reading includes the principles of integrity, holiness, and consistency of witness.

Just read the portion titled “Emor” and you’ll learn all about the high calling of the priesthood, how to determine the right offerings, when the Biblical holy days are, and how to properly keep them and more. In several particular verses found in our Parasha the essential concept of sanctifying YHWH’s name is mentioned. “You shall faithfully observe my commandments: I am YHWH. You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Yisraelite people – I YHWH who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt) to be your Elohim, I am YHWH,” Leviticus/Vayikra 22:31-33. Later the sidrah reads, “And to the Israelite people speak these words: ‘If anyone curses his Elohim, he will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of YHWH must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when a person blasphemes YHWH (the Name), he must be put to death,” Vayikra 24:15-16.

What is really interesting about the above sections is not just what they say, but also what happens to be found between them. Rules on setting apart the blessed name of YHWH are bookends to the specific instructions given about the Biblical feast days of Leviticus 23. Directives on living a worship-filled life are found all around the mitzvot of glorifying the Divine Name. This teaches the reader that YHWH’s name is praised and exalted when believers obey YHWH’s commands. Yes, YHWH’s name is sanctified when people fulfill YHWH’s will as revealed in the Torah. His name is cursed when people disobey the Torah.

“The purpose of Israel’s existence is to sanctify YHWH’s name, that is, to attest to His existence, to publicize His oneness, and to advertise His greatness, by worshipping Him and by keeping His laws. Their failure to do so also has the opposite effect: His name is profaned, that is, His fame is diminished and His reputation tarnished,” says the Jewish Study Bible. One of the most important Biblical concepts can be learned in this week’s reading – the concept of “Kiddush Hashem” and “chillul Hashem

“Kiddush Hashem” is the Hebrew and rabbinic term for “setting apart the Divine Name.” The term “chillul Hashem” means to “profane or disrespect the reputation or name of YHWH.” The actions of every person who claims to follow the Bible either Kiddush Hashem or chillul Hashem. What we do either praises YHWH or profanes YHWH.

The Talmud tells the story of when Simeon b. Shetah bought a donkey from an Arab and his servants were delighted at finding a jewel hanging from its neck. He at once returned the gem to its owner, who cried out, “Blessed be the Elohim of the Jews Who renders His people so scrupulous in their dealings with other men.” Simeon’s actions led to YHWH’s name or reputation being praised and upheld. Simeon’s witness proved his character and stressed the foundation of the Torah – to do to your neighbor what you would have done to yourself.

Y’shua our Messiah said that “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth,” Acts 1:8. When Y’shua said this He did not say whether our witness would be for or against Him. He just said that we would be His witnesses! Our actions prove who we really are and who we really worship...YHWH or self.

Man is responsible for YHWH’s honor in the eyes of the world. When man follows the precepts of the Torah then YHWH is revered. In Judaism the phrase “Kiddush Hashem” denotes more than just respecting the Eternal, it is also the term applied to Jews who are martyred for their faith. The Rabbis have taught that a Jew faced with the strictest of persecutions should sacrifice his life to honor YHWH, to Kiddush Hashem. “Kiddush ha-Shem was declared obligatory in the case of three commandments and a person had to suffer death rather than violate them: idolatry, unchastity (gillui arayot: including incest, adultery, and, under certain circumstances, any infraction of the moral code), and murder (Sanh. 74a). One should violate all other commandments rather than suffer death,” says the Encyclopedia Judaica. This of course is the most extreme way to honor YHWH. Not surprisingly though, this is the way the Son of Man honored YHWH. “For YHWH demonstrated his own love for us (glorified His own Name) in this: While we were still sinners, Moshiah died for us,” Romans 5:8.

On the other side of this coin is the concept of chillul Hashem or profaning the name of YHWH. To understand this idea better just remember the quote from our weekly Parasha “You shall faithfully observe my commandments: I am YHWH. You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people – I YHWH who sanctifies you, who brought you out of the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt) to be your Elohim, I am YHWH,” Leviticus/Vayikra 22:31-33. When a person does not faithfully obey the devar YHWH (word of YHWH) then YHWH’s name is profaned or blasphemed. Keep in mind that in Biblical times and the in Biblical culture a name is more than just a name.

According to Biblical tradition, a name communicates power, reputation, character, and authority. A name isn't just something you call someone, it is something you call about someone. Names have meaning and names give definition. To chillul Hashem is to misrepresent YHWH, to tarnish his reputation, and to darken His light to the world. This is similar to when a child is disobedient to the parents' wishes. When word spreads that the child is wild, then those actions "ruin the family name."

There are some Rabbis that teach that to chillul Hashem is to actually speak His name. They teach that the four-lettered Hebrew name of YHWH is too holy to utter, use, or call upon. This teaching is clearly in error and contradictory to the words of the Bible. The Torah tells mankind over and over again to use His name. "Elohim also said to Moshe, 'Say to the Israelites, 'YHWH, the mighty one of your fathers--the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitz'chak and the Elohim of Ya'acov--has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation,'" Shemot (Exodus) 3:15. The name of Yod-Hey-Wav-Hey is to be used by Yisra'el. To be realistic, NOT using His name is to chillul Hashem. Not using the name of YHWH is in direct violation of one of Ten Commandments. "You shall not misuse the name of YHWH your Elohim, for YHWH will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name," Shemot 20:7.

In the Tanakh, Jeremiah/Yermi'yahu the prophet spoke to the nation about profaning the name of YHWH when they broke the Torah to fulfill their own selfish desires, (Yermi'yahu 34:16). Also in Amos 2:7 another prophet condemned sinful actions and immorality as chillul Hashem. These examples prove that what you do either praises the Name of YHWH or profanes the Name of YHWH.

There are so many believers who say they follow the Bible yet their actions prove them to be hypocrites. Too many people say one thing and do another. This type of religion is void of any spiritual power and has become sour to the world. Yes, talk is cheap but what really makes a difference in people's lives is when YHWH's name is praised through faithful trusting obedience. Benjamin Franklin said, "a good example is the best sermon." Who can disagree with that?

The concept of "Kiddush Hashem" and "chillul Hashem" shows the importance of actions and their corresponding reactions. Israel's call as a nation is to be a light to the world. We are to shine the truth always. The direct result of this is

YHWH's evangel being spread and His Name being exalted. This occurs when Yisra'el acts like Yisra'el. This is the subject of consistency.

Consistency is being the same all the way through. When a recipe calls for "uniform consistency" it means that all of the ingredients are mixed together so well that you can't tell them apart. The milk, eggs, flour, vanilla, water and sugar now form something totally different. For us this means that what we are on the inside should be who we are on the outside. Consistency is a real issue in most congregations because of so many double standards. What about your worship group? What about you? Does what you believe reflect what you do? Do the words you say on Tuesday mirror the words you use on Shabbat? Is your witness for or against the Moshiach? Is your attitude consistent or does it change with the emotions of the day? Do you Kaddish Hashem or chillul Hashem?

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Emor." What does these mean?
2. Read Ezekiel 44:15-31. How does this relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 14:12-24. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. At what point in history does this parasha unfold?
7. Where does this parasha take place geographically? What are the setting and environment?
8. Who are the primary actors in the parasha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
9. What is the overall theme of this parasha? What are the subdivisions, if any?
10. Aharon and his sons as the kohanim/priests were not to contaminate themselves by coming in contact with a dead person. What were the exceptions? What signs of mourning were prohibited to the kohanim? Why? Who were the kohanim prohibited from marrying? Why were the kohanim to remain holy?
11. Why would a person be defiled through a dead body?

12. What dead person was the Cohen HaGadol/ High Priest allowed to come near? What two signs of mourning could the Cohen HaGadol not display? Where was he to remain during the funeral of a relative? What two qualifications were required of his wife? Why?
13. What was the general rule that disqualified a son of Aharon from serving as a Kohen? Why? What benefit of the kohanim could he share in? What two things was he expressly prohibited from doing? Why?
14. How does this portion reinforce the New Testament idea that teachers are held to a higher standard?
15. What was the general rule regarding a Kohen who was tamei (contaminated/unclean) coming into contact with the offerings to YHWH? What was the punishment for violating this rule? What was the food of the kohanim and what were they prohibited from eating? Why? What persons were prohibited from eating of the holy things and what persons were allowed to do so? What was one to do who inadvertently ate of the holy things?
16. Consider what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 about Y'shua's last supper. Describe the parallels between the holy food of the kohanim, Y'shua, believers in him and their ability to partake of the holy food of YHWH when qualified according to 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. What parallels do you see to the Kiddush - eating challah and drinking the fruit of the vine each week?
17. What is the penalty for offering sacrifices while being ritually unclean?
18. What were the characteristics of the animals brought as an olah (elevation/burnt) offering? What were the characteristics of the animals brought as a shlamim (peace) offering? What was the minimum age for an animal to be acceptable as an offering to YHWH? What parallels do you find between these offerings and their characteristics and Y'shua Ha Moshiach as described by 1 Peter 1:18-21?
19. How does the strict principle of offering the best animal for a sacrifice speak to you about giving your best to YHWH? Did YHWH accept second best or did he always want the unblemished offerings?
20. What two-part instructions did Moshe give regarding his holy name? Who does he declare himself to be? How does this relate to the purpose of Bnei Yisrael and its existence? What do the Sages teach is the primary privilege and responsibility of every Israelite and how is that accomplished? What did Y'shua teach in Matthew 5:13-20 regarding the purpose of the children of Israel and those who would believe in him? How long did he say that the Torah, the loving instructions of our Father, would last?

21. How does a person profane the name of YHWH today?
22. How does the setting of the sun act as a type of cleaning for uncleanliness?
23. Leviticus 23 gives the feasts of YHWH. List these worship days and explain the significance of each one.
24. What is the very first weekly feast that is mentioned in this Torah portion? Can a person choose their own Sabbath day or is it set from creation?
25. Are the events in Leviticus 23 only for the Jewish people? Are these “Jewish feasts?”
26. When exactly does Passover begin? Is the Aviv barley applicable today?
27. How long is the feast of unleavened bread?
28. What was the first of the moadim (appointed times/seasons) of YHWH listed in this parasha? What two ways of observance were ordained and what prohibition?
29. What is the second of the moadim listed here and when was it to be celebrated? \
30. What festival followed immediately thereafter and for how long?
31. What was done on the first day and the seventh day and what was prohibited?
32. What was to be brought from the first harvest and to whom? What did he do with it? What other offerings were brought at this time? How long a period transpired between this observance and the next of the moadim? What was it called and why?
33. What offerings were to be brought to the kohanim and what did they do with them? What else did the people do on this day and what were they prohibited from doing. For how long was this to be celebrated? What prohibition did YHWH place upon the harvest of the land and why? What was the fifth moadim to be celebrated? When? In what two ways? With what prohibition? With what offering?
34. What was the sixth moadim to be celebrated? When? In what 3 ways? With what prohibition? For what purpose? With what consequence for violation? For how long was this to be celebrated?
35. How many days are counted to Shavuot? When does the counting begin? Does Shavuot have to always be on a Sunday?
36. What was the final moadim to be celebrated? When and for how long a period? What were the people to do and not do on the first day and the eighth day? What offering was brought to YHVH? What four species were

- used to rejoice before YHWH at Sukkot? For how long a period was this instruction to apply? What was its purpose?
37. How does Leviticus 23:22 correlate with the festivals of YHWH?
 38. When is the seventh month of the Biblical calendar?
 39. What does it mean to “deny yourself” on Yom Kippur?
 40. When according to Leviticus 23:22 does the fast of Yom Kippur begin?
 41. What does it mean to “live in booths” for seven days?
 42. What was used to kindle the menorah and who was responsible for doing so? What special food item was offered to YHWH, where and with what additional ingredient? How often was it changed? To whom did it belong and what did they do with it?
 43. What kind of oil was used in the menorah?
 44. Explain the 12 loaves of bread of the Temple. Did this stay fresh for seven days? What does the showbread symbolize?
 45. In what two ways did the young Israelite offend the name of YHWH? What did YHWH instruct Moshe to do to him? What further instruction did YHWH give Bnei Yisrael through Moshe? What did Y'shua say about one who blasphemes against the Ruach HaKodesh / Holy Spirit?
 46. In Leviticus 24:10-16 the Torah describes how the son of an Israelite blasphemed the name of YHWH. Is this the unpardonable sin?
 47. How is blasphemy of YHWH's name equal to taking the life of another person?
 48. What statements did Y'shua make (as recorded in Yochanan) that were self pronouncements of his divinity? Why were the Judeans outraged and wanted to stone him? From these episodes, what is the general rule of Judaism regarding Hashem (literally, the name) YHWH? What was done to the blasphemer?
 49. What punishment was to be imposed upon one who struck and killed another human? What punishment was imposed upon one who struck and killed an animal? What was required of one who inflicted a wound on his fellow? Is this to be understood literally or as requiring restitution? What categories of persons were covered by these instructions?
 50. In this Parasha we find the command, "You should count for yourselves, beginning with the day after the day of rest when you bring the Omer waving offering. Seven weeks shall be (counted and) completed until the day after the seventh week - fifty days." (Leviticus 23:15-16) What does this mean? How do you count the omer?
 51. Moses gave YHWH's message to Pharaoh on several occasions saying, "Let my people go so that they may serve Me." The Hebrew people indeed were

allowed to "go" on Passover, but that was only half of what YHWH said through Moses. The freedom they received lacked a clear purpose until they were given the Torah on Mount Sinai on Shavuot. How was their emancipation in itself only a means to an end? What role did the seven weeks from Passover to Shavuot play in preparing the people to receive the Torah?

52. How are Passover and Shavuot different in terms of the former being "passive" on the part of the people (YHWH miraculously did everything) and the latter being "active" in that the acceptance of the Torah established a covenant between two active participants?
53. How does the transition from Passover to Shavuot reflect a path begun in emotional certainty, followed by intellectual doubt, and ending in intellectual clarity? How does this intellectual clarity (based in knowledge of Torah) enable a person to love YHWH at a different level? How did this impact the Israelites as "one people," and how does this impact a group or community today?
54. In Leviticus 23:22 we read, "And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corner of your field; and the gleanings of your harvest you shall not gather; for the poor and the stranger you shall leave them (the corners and the gleaning)." Why is the owner commanded to leave the corners and gleanings rather than being commanded to gather the produce and give it to the poor? How does this action help maintain the dignity of the recipient? What does it teach the giver?
55. The priests were given a prominent role in the service to the Temple. With this role came many spiritual benefits that the common people did not receive. How were these privileges balanced by additional responsibility, accountability and a higher level of discipline? What does this teach us about working toward "spiritual greatness?"
56. The festivals of YHWH, which you shall proclaim them to be holy convocations, these are My festivals. (23:2) Is not the word "them" superfluous?
57. Except for his relative that is closest to him, to his mother, and to his father [shall he defile himself]... [The High Priest] shall not come near any dead person; for his father or his mother he shall not defile himself (21:2,11). Why in the case of the High Priest, who is forbidden to become impure for anyone, does the Torah first cite the father and then the mother, while for the regular priest, who is permitted to become impure for certain relatives, the mother is mentioned first?

58. Which male descendants of Aharon are exempt from the prohibition against contacting a dead body?
59. Does a Kohen/priest have an option regarding becoming ritually defiled when his unmarried sister passes away?
60. How does one honor a Kohen/priest?
61. How does the Torah restrict the Kohen gadol / High Priest with regard to mourning?
62. The Torah states in verse 22:3 that one who "approaches holy objects" while in a state of tumah (impurity) is penalized with excision. What does the Torah mean by "approaches"?
63. Who in the household of a Kohen may eat terumah/offerings?
64. If the daughter of a Kohen marries a "zar" she may no longer eat terumah offerings. What is a zar?
65. May a person slaughter an animal and its father on the same day?
66. How does the Torah define "profaning" the Name of YHWH?
67. Apart from Shabbat, how many days are there during the year about which the Torah says that work is forbidden?
68. How big is an omer?
69. On what day do we begin to "count the omer"?
70. Why do we begin counting the omer at night?
71. How does the omer differ from other offerings?
72. The blowing of the shofar on the Feast of Trumpets is called a "zichron teruah" (sound of remembrance). For what is it a reminder?
73. What is unusual about the wood of the etrog tree used during Sukkot?
74. Who was the father of the blasphemer?
75. What is the penalty for intentionally wounding one's parent?
76. The priests were not allowed to defile themselves by coming in contact with dead bodies. What were the exceptions to this rule?
77. Whom is a priest forbidden to marry?
78. What is the first holy day mentioned in the parasha?
79. Which holiday takes place in the first month?
80. When a farmer reaped his harvest, he was required to leave certain portions for the poor. What were they?
81. Besides the poor, for whom were the corner and the gleanings left?
82. Who was purported to be the father of the blasphemer? What was his mother's name and of which tribe was she?
83. Who decreed the punishment for the blasphemer, and who carried it out?

84. In this parasha there is a famous saying used today for punishment; an eye for eye, a tooth for tooth, and what else? What exactly does this expression mean?
85. Could Israel treat foreigners, sojourners, or illegal aliens differently than natural born Hebrews?
86. Upon coming into the land and reaping the harvest, we are commanded to take the first fruits of the harvest to the priest for a wave offering. This was the harvest of what?
87. According to Ezekiel in this week's haftarah, when the priests come into the inner court, what was the fabric of their clothes, and what physical condition were they to avoid at all costs?
88. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parashot Behar and Bechukotai

- Leviticus 25:1-26:2
- Jeremiah 32:6-27
- Luke 4:16-21

AND

- Leviticus 26:3-27:34
- Jeremiah 16:19-17:14
- Matthew 22:1-14

The Torah Portion at a Glance

On the mountain of Sinai, YHWH communicates to Moses the laws of the sabbatical year. Every seventh year, all work on the land should cease, and its produce becomes free for the taking for all, man and beast.

Seven sabbatical cycles are followed by a fiftieth year -- the jubilee year, on which work on the land ceases, all indentured servants are set free, and all ancestral estates in the Holy Land that have been sold revert to their original owners.

Behar also contains additional laws governing the sale of lands, and the prohibitions against fraud and usury.

YHWH promises that if the people of Israel will keep His commandments, they will enjoy material prosperity and dwell secure in their homeland. But He also delivers a harsh "rebuke" warning of the exile, persecution and other evils that will befall them if they abandon their covenant with Him.

Nevertheless, "Even when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away; nor will I ever abhor them, to destroy them and to break My covenant with them; for I am YHWH their Elohim."

The Parasha concludes with the rules on how to calculate the value of different types of pledges made to YHWH, and the mitzvah of tithing produce and livestock.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Y'shua is the Messiah that walked in the midst of the sinners of the world. He stayed with sinners, talked to prostitutes, and befriended lepers. We do not worship a Savior is too high above us to recognize our concerns. Y'shua can relate to every facet of our lives because of a prophecy in this week's Torah portion. Vayikra / Leviticus chapters 26 verses 11 and 12 show us the promise the dwelling power of YHWH Y'shua. "Moreover, I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. I will also walk among you and be your Elohim and you shall be my people." These promises are for the Messianic kingdom, for the time when Y'shua was on the earth, and today.

Our Torah portion also discusses the relevance of the yovel or "jubilee" times. Every 50 years, debts are forgiven and land is restored. YHWH is an Elohim of restoration. Yovel is proclaimed with a sounding of the shofar, much like the return of Y'shua will be heralded with a shofar blast. "You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land," Leviticus 25:9. Every 50 years is a time of freedom and consecration. It is like the time when Y'shua said, "The Spirit of the YHWH is upon me because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to the captives and the favorable year of YHWH," Luke 4:18-19. These verses show us that the time of yovel is a reminder of how it was when Y'shua was with man – the blind could see, the dead lived, and what was lost was restored. Every year can be a type of yovel for those that understand that Y'shua "came to set the captives free."

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Hola amigos! Bonjour madam! Shalom alechem!

Have you ever tried to learn a second language? Did you excel in your Spanish course in school or did you struggle through the new dialect?

Most people speak only their native tongue and find it extremely difficult to master the words of another people. New phrases, different dialects, funny word order, various gender endings, and tongue twisting pronunciations make learning another language quite hard.

Perhaps what is most challenging about becoming bilingual is the fact that to really be bilingual you can't just learn how new words are spoken. To correctly speak French or Russian you must also learn about the culture of the people. Culture and language go hand in hand. You see, actions that are proper in Britain might insult a person in the Middle East. Phrases have different meanings all across the world. A Southern breakfast delicacy called "grits" is despised by Americans who live in the North. Worldwide, societies and traditions are very different. And little variations can create a great divide.

Learning the Bible is no different than learning a different language. A person cannot simply understand the message or methods of the Scriptures without first having some knowledge of the society to whom and by whom the Bible was written.

To the average Joe today, life is all about super fast computers, convenience stores, and risqué entertainment. The average Joe in 204 BCE had never even heard of an ATM nor even conceived of the technological advancements of our time. Life during Bible times was extremely diverse compared to life today. And just as problems arise between a person who only speaks English and a person who only speaks Spanish, troubles come up when a person tries to interpret 3,000 year old manuscripts with a modernized mindset.

In the double reading Torah portions for this week, we are once again reminded of how much in life has changed. The sidrah speaks of an agricultural rest for The Land, rules on having indentured servants, and the year of jubilee. Also discussed are ancestral and purchased fields, blessings for obedience, and how to redeem a household. Frankly, these issues are not the most pressing subjects facing people today. Yet they were important thousands of years ago and they are important in this century. Mankind has grown away from the agriculturally based life of long ago. But mankind has not grown away from its dependence upon Almighty YHWH and His Word.

Friend, it just might be easier to learn another modern language than it is to grasp the culture and themes of the scriptures. Humankind is so separated from how life used to be that we have forgotten how life should be. To help solve this problem the Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) has written that we should, "In view of YHWH's mercies, present yourself to Elohim as a sacrifice, living and set apart for Elohim. This will please Elohim: it is the acceptable temple worship for you. In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the patterns of the olam hazeh

(this world). Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you will know what Elohim wants and will agree that what He wants is good, satisfying, and able to succeed,” Romans 12:1-2

In this verse Rabbi Sha’ul exhorts the reader to not be pressed like cookie dough by a cookie cutter into the pattern of this evil world. Believers should instead be transformed from what they used to be to what they should be. This happens by making the mind and thoughts focused on the things of Torah.

YHWH is merciful, Sha’ul writes, and in view of His wonderful mercies mankind should react through obedient surrender to the mind of Moshiach. “You have the mind of Moshiach,” says 1 Corinthians 2:16. What was Y’shua’s mind thinking on? Well, if Y’shua is the “word made flesh” then it is no doubt that his being was in fact focused on the Torah and Torah itself. “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things,” Philippians 4:8.

Having the thoughts of Messiah and on Messiah is not easy. Today the world has grown cold; life has grown away from the Light of Torah. Everywhere you look there are reminders of this fallen state. From billboards to magazines at a grocery store, the last thing this culture promotes is a Torah-based lifestyle.

What believers need is a culture shock. We need a culture change. We need a return to the culture and life of the Torah. “Here is what YHWH says: ‘stand at the crossroads and look; ask about the ancient paths, which one is the good way? Take it and you will find rest for your souls,’” Yermi’yahu (Jeremiah) 6:16. The latest spiritual “how to” books and methods will not produce lasting differences. What does alter the life and eternal life of a person is a return to the “ancient paths.” Revisiting the Torah and a Hebraic mind set on things above produces rest, fulfillment, and shalom. “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things,” Colossians 3:2.

Do you agree that if you were to try to speak Portuguese without knowing about the Portuguese people that you would soon become frustrated? Aren’t language and culture connected? Then stop trying to figure out the Bible without knowing about Biblical culture. This week’s Torah portion as well as most of the Bible doesn’t make much sense without a Hebraic mindset. Here are a few ideas to help you know more about YOUR culture and heritage:

- 1) Question what you have been taught. Do this even if you think what you know is absolutely correct. Question, seek, ask and “study to show yourself approved.” Find real answers in the Bible and reject any teaching contrary.
- 2) Accept the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation as instructions for living. Don’t forsake any part of the Scriptures as being “done away with.” Dividing the Bible only divides the truth.
- 3) Learn about church history. There are reasons to why the church does what it does. When you look up issues in Encyclopedias and web sites you will be amazed. Research into the holidays of Christmas, Halloween and Easter will reveal their evil practices and pagan roots. A small examination into church teachings on the rapture, the trinity, or replacement theology will expose more falsehoods. Be careful!
- 4) Learn about Judaism. The Jewish people have kept the Torah of YHWH for thousands of years. They have hashed out the difficult verses and debated the “smallest” of issues. Learning how to be a Jew will teach you how to be a believer in Messiah. But, be on guard as you do this. Judaism as a whole does not accept Y’shua as Messiah. Also, there are some sects of Judaism that are full of unbiblical, pagan, and New Age beliefs.
- 5) Be open to the truth about life, the faith, and historical facts. Don’t be misled or deceived.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are “Behar” and “Bechukotai.” What do these mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 32:6-27 and 16:19-17:14. How does these relate to the story of Leviticus this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 4:16-21 and Matthew 22:1-14. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. Why does the Torah specify that the laws of shemita were taught on Mt Sinai?
6. If one possesses shemita food after it is no longer available in the field, what must he do with it?
7. The Torah commands, "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year." How is this done?
8. Which two "returns" are announced by the shofar during yovel/jubilee?

9. From where does the yovel /jubilee year get its name?
10. What prohibitions are derived from the verse "v'lo tonu ish et amito -- a person shall not afflict his fellow"?
11. What is the punishment for neglecting the laws of shemita?
12. If shemita is observed properly, how long is the crop of the sixth year guaranteed to last?
13. After selling an ancestral field, when can one redeem it?
14. Under what circumstance may one sell ancestral land?
15. If a home in a walled city is sold, when can it be redeemed?
16. What does the word "days" mean in this week's Parasha?
17. What is considered a walled city?
18. To what is one who leaves Eretz Yisrael / the Land of Israel compared?
19. List three prohibitions which demonstrate the dignity with which one must treat a Hebrew indentured servant.
20. Who supports the family of the Hebrew indentured servant during his years of servitude?
21. If an Israelite is sold as a servant to a non-Hebrew, does he go free after six years?
22. To what do the words "bechukotai telechu" (walk in My statutes) refer?
23. When is rain "in its season"?
24. What is the blessing of "v'achaltem lachmechem l'sova" (and you shall eat your bread to satisfaction)?
25. What is meant by the verse "and a sword will not pass through your land"?
26. Mathematically, if five Hebrew soldiers can defeat 100 enemy soldiers, how many enemy soldiers should 100 Israeli soldiers be able to defeat?
27. Which "progression" of seven transgressions are taught in Chapter 26, and why in that particular order?
28. What is one benefit which the Hebrew People derive from the Land of Israel's state of ruin?
29. What was the duration of the Babylonian exile and why that particular number?
30. How many years did the Hebrew People sin in Israel up till the time the northern tribes were exiled?
31. In verse 26:42, the name Yaakov is written in Hebrew with an extra "vav." From whom did Yaakov receive this extra letter and why?
32. What positive element is implied by the words "and I will bring them into the land of their enemies?"

33. In verse 26:42, why is the word "remember" not used in connection with the name of Yitzchak / Isaac?
34. Why does the Torah say in 26:46 "Torot" (plural) and not "Torah" (singular)?
35. What happens when a poor person dedicates the value of a man to the Beit Hamikdash / Temple and doesn't have sufficient funds to fulfill his vow?
36. If a person dedicates his ancestral field to the Beit Hamikdash and fails to redeem it before yovel/jubilee what happens to the field?
37. How does a person tithe his animals?
38. After we came into the Land, we would live off of it by farming. When were we to refrain from doing that, and what were we commanded not to do?
39. Every 7th year. We were to neither sow the field nor prune the vineyard. What about produce that grew by itself? Were we allowed to gather it? Why not?
40. After each 49 years passed, we were to proclaim a what? When and how were we to do it?
41. What were we commanded to do during that jubilee year?
42. What did YHWH say our reward would be if we observed the jubilee year properly?
43. If we were not allowed to sow or harvest during the Sabbath year, how were we to survive?
44. If a person was forced to sell his property because of poverty, did he have to wait until the jubilee year to redeem it? If no, how was it done?
45. If a person were forced to sell his property, it would always be redeemed during the jubilee year with one exception. What was that?
46. In the case where a person sold his house in a walled city, could he ever redeem it?
47. Were the Levites allowed to sell their houses and the fields of the open land?
48. What is the special law about charging interest on a loan to a brother?
49. In this Parasha [26:3-4], YHWH says "If you will follow My statutes and observe My laws and you will do them; then I have given your rains in their time and the land will give its produce, and the tree of the field will give its fruit." How does this relate to being a "hearer and doer" of the Torah, as taught in the books of Romans and "James?"
50. How does the energy we invest in being such a "hearer and doer" of Torah compare to work in the physical realm in terms of how we define the "reward" or "success" of each?

51. How is the seventh year like the Sabbath day?
52. How do we know which is the seventh sabbatical year?
53. Describe and explain the yovel jubilee year. How is this counting similar to the counting to Shavuot?
54. How do the blessings of the Torah offer us a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven on earth?
55. How does the Messiah break the yoke of bondage today?
56. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

CHAZAK, CHAZAK, v'NIT'CHAZEK.
Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened!

Parasha Bamidbar

- Numbers 1:1-4:20
- Hosea 1:10-2:22
- Romans 9:22-33

The Torah Portion at a Glance

In the Sinai Desert, YHWH says to conduct a census of the twelve tribes of Israel. Moses counts 603,550 men of draftable age (20 to 60 years); the tribe of Levi, numbering 22,300 males age one month and older, is counted separately. The Levites are to serve in the Sanctuary, replacing the firstborn, whose number they approximated, who were disqualified when they participated in the worshipping of the Golden Calf. The 273 firstborn who lacked a Levite to replace them had to pay a five-shekel "ransom" to redeem themselves.

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kehatites, who carried the Sanctuary's vessels (the ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merrari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's entryway to its east were the tents of Moses, Aaron and Aaron's sons.

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Menasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Throughout the Torah are many countings of the people of Israel. YHWH seems to suggest that numbers are indeed important as over 603,000 Israelite men are counted in this Torah portion. "On the first day of the second month, in the second year following the exodus from the land of Egypt, YHWH spoke to Moses

in the wilderness of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting, saying: Take a census of the whole Israelite community by the clans of its ancestral houses, listing the names of every male, head by head. You and Aaron shall record them by their groups, from the age of twenty years up, all those in Israel who are able to bear arms," Numbers 1:1-3. The Torah also records another census in Exodus 30 for record keeping of donations to the tabernacles. Later, King David would sin by counting his men to see how many were able to fight his battles. Hosea 2:1 states, "the number of the children of Israel was like the sands of the sea, which can't be measured."

The census in Numbers has been a query for thousands of years and thousands of debates. This question bothered the famed Jewish Rabbi Rashi, who explained: "Because of YHWH's love for the people He counts them constantly. When they left Egypt He counted them; when some perished after the incident of the Golden Calf, He counted them to ascertain how many remained. When He was about to cause His presence to dwell among them He counted them: the Tabernacle was erected on the first of Aviv/Nisan, and on the first of Iyar He counted them."

Were the people counted for a military purpose? Why were the Levites counted at only a month old? Indeed, the counting brings to attention many questions, One fact that we can be sure of is that this census in the wilderness reminds us of the Messiah. The sages of Judaism have long taught that a census will take place in the days of Messiah. The Talmud references Jeremiah 33:13-15 as proof of such a tally: "In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith YHWH. Behold, the days come, saith YHWH, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land." Here, the people are counted or "the flocks pass again under the hands" and then the Messiah rises up as the "Branch of righteousness." This verse provides more proof that Y'shua is the prophesied son of YHWH!

The Newer Testament speaks of census that took place while the Savior was born. "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the entire world should be taxed. ([And] this taxing was

first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered," Luke 2:1-6. Each census in the Torah foreshadows the counting that would ensure the Moshiach was born in Bethlehem. Each event in the Old Testament / Tanakh points to the Moshiach Y'shua.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Do you know who is the leading exporter of flowers to the continent of Europe? What country sends more plant-life to Europe than any other?

The answer is NOT America, Kenya, Russia, or anywhere in Africa. The answer is Yisra'el.

This year, according to the International Flower Festival, over 1.5 billion flowers were shipped to Europe from the tiny nation of Yisra'el. What is amazing about this is that two-thirds of the Land of Yisra'el is nothing but desert. Even more amazing perhaps is that most of this shrubbery sent all over the world was grown in the Negev Desert. From the steamy southern Negev Desert, Europe receives most of its flowers! The prophet Yesha'yahu / Isaiah spoke of this time when "the wilderness and the solitary place will be glad for them, and the desert will bloom as a rose," Yesha'yahu (Isaiah) 35:1. As the Israelite people are reunited, the Israelite Land rejoices and produces abundance. Who would have thought that such greatness could come from a desert?

Another great "plant" also comes from the desert - the Torah. "And Elohim spoke to Moshe in the desert of Sinai," Bamidbar (Numbers) 1:1. From the sunny land of sand came forth Torah. It wasn't in the land of Mitzrayim (Egypt) that Torah was given. It was in the land of desperation, in the land of the desert that YHWH gave His divine will. In the midst of the desert a flower bloomed for the teachings of Torah are a "tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her," Mishlei (Proverbs) 3:18. Who would have thought that such greatness could come from a desert? Selah.

The English word "desert" is a translation of the Hebrew term "midbar." Strong's

Exhaustive Concordance defines midbar as "in the sense of driving; a pasture (that is, open field, whither cattle are driven); by implication a desert; also speech (including its organs): -desert, south, speech, wilderness." Midbar comes from the root word "dabar" which means to "say, speak, be spokesman, subdue, talk, teach, tell." Learning from the root word "dabar," to speak, and the word "Bamidbar," in the wilderness, quickly shows that the Torah was spoken in the wilderness or desert! This lesson can be learned just from understanding the Hebrew word "bamidbar" or reading Numbers 1:1.

"Bamidbar" or "in the desert" is the name of the current Torah portion. It is also the Hebrew name of the current scroll of reading. "Numbers" is an English moniker derived from the Greek Septuagint and counting of Yisra'el that takes place in the book. Our short reading this week recounts the counting of the Hebrew males of military age, the arrangement of each tribe around the mishkan, and the honor and census of the Levites. It was also in this Parasha and in the midbar that the tree of life was given. "Why was the Torah given in the desert? To teach us that if a person does not surrender himself to it like the desert; he cannot merit the words of Torah. And to teach us that just as the desert is endless, so is the Torah without end," says one Rabbi.

The desert is a place of desolation. Throughout the Bible the dangers of the midbar are mentioned. Hunger, thirst, wild animals and enemies lead to the midbar being described as wilderness, as "land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt," Yermi'yahu (Jeremiah) 2:6. YHWH took Yisra'el through these dangers to teach them some lessons. Bnai Yisra'el had to learn to trust Abba, to obey His mitzvot, and depend totally upon Him. "For YHWH's portion is his people; Ya'acov is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So YHWH alone did lead him, and there was no strange YHWH with him," Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:9-11. It seems that the midbar, the desert, is some type of training arena for the Almighty where He prepares them for The Promised Land. Wasn't Moshe too found in the desert? Did not Y'shua spend time in the desert before His ministry began?

"The Midrash says that the Torah was given in three stages: through fire, through water and in the desert. These three stages are symbolic and they teach us how

one merits Torah. Fire: the fiery arousal of longing for their father in Heaven that burns in the heart of every Hebrew; water: moderation, contemplation and clarity of thought, to think in the ways of Torah, in the right spirit and mind; desert: doing without all the pleasures and desires of this world that hinder the person in reaching perfection," wrote Shem MiShmuel.

This three-stage giving of the Torah mirrors the Biblical precepts of mikvah (baptism). Remember that when you look at something in the mirror that you see the exact opposite, so this list is opposite of fire, water desert:

- Mikvah in the Desert: this is the baptism that shows a person's teshuvah from sin and return to YHWH. A person is immersed in water but is coming out of the desert. "In those days came John the Baptist / Yochanan the Immerser, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Mattitiyahu / Matthew 3:1-2.
- Mikvah in the Water: this is the baptism of the Ruach HaKodesh that endows the believer with power from YHWH. Yochanan / John said in Mark 1:8, "I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Ruach HaKodesh."
- Mikvah in the Fire: this is the baptism of purification and cleansing through trials and tests. "Yochanan / John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire," Luke 3:16.

During the first Shavuot, which took place in the desert, the Israelites were to wash their clothes, prepare their lives, and abstain from defilement until the baptism came. "Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because YHWH descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moshe spoke and the voice of Elohim answered him," Shemot (Exodus) 18:17-19. (Compare this to a later Shavuot and a later mikvah found in Acts 2 for some enlightenment.)

"Fire, water, and desert - by these we established our commitment to the Torah. The first Hebrew, Avraham, was cast into a fiery furnace for his loyalty to the way

of Elohim. And lest one say that this was an extraordinary act by an extraordinary individual, at the shores of the Red Sea an entire people plunged into the ocean's waters when the Divine command to "Move forward!" issued forth. And lest one say that this was spur-of-the-moment heroism, for forty years the people of Yisra'el followed Elohim through the barren, hostile desert, trusting in Him to provide for them and protect them. As the prophet Yermi'yahu claims, "I remember the kindness of your youth, your bridal love, your following after me in the desert in unsowed land," said Rabbi Meir Shapira of Lublin.

It is no surprise that throughout Jewish writings that the galut (Diaspora or exile) is compared to the wilderness. As the galut comes to an end the wilderness blooms and prepares for mikvah, "water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert," Yesha'yahu 35:6. Flowers are blooming in Yisra'el in record numbers. The twelve tribes are slowly coming back together. Mikvah into the truth is taking place worldwide as the Torah is being proclaimed. Who would have thought that such greatness could come from a desert?

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Bamidbar." What does this mean?
2. Read Hosea 1:10-2:22. How does these relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 9:22-33. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Parasha Bamidbar is read on the Shabbat before Shavuot, the Feast that celebrates the giving of the Torah. Shavuot is called the "wedding of Israel to YHWH" and thus the days leading up to it are preparation for the great event. From the time they left Egypt to today's Parasha there were three census taken of the Israelites. The first was on their departure from Egypt, the second prior to building the Tabernacle and the third following this event. How did these three events correspond to the stages of YHWH's revelation to them? How did their level of involvement go from being completely passive (YHWH's grace only) to one of both grace and merit? How did the involvement of Aaron in the last census (only) reflect this change from revelation solely from "above to below" to one of connecting from "below to above?" How did this "spiritual evolution" relate to the people being prepared to receive the Torah that YHWH gave on Shavuot?

6. In the middle of the Israelite encampment were the Levites and the sanctuary. Surrounding this center were the 12 Tribes. The image of the Israelite camp is like a wheel with many spokes all leading to one hub. The tribes had a specific order and method of movement. How did everyone "knowing their place" foster harmony among the people? What is the correlation between such harmony and spiritual preparedness to receive the Torah? How did this arrangement teach YHWH's humility? What is the relationship between such humility and advancing spiritually "toward YHWH?" What does such spiritual advancement teach us about our own limitations?
7. Consider this concept: Bamidbar means, "In the desert," and is read before the holiday of Shavuot when the Torah was given on Mount Sinai. How does this relate to passages such as Romans 5:3-5 and Hebrews 12:3-11? In your opinion, is Bamidbar a continuation of Leviticus? If so, explain how and why. If not, explain why it is not.
8. Could Bamidbar be considered a continuation of Sefer Shemot / Book of Exodus? If so, explain why.
9. Why does the book of Numbers start where it does? [In other words, why does it begin with a census taken on the first day of the second month in the second year?
10. Recall how the books of Genesis and Exodus/Shemot contained primarily 'narrative', i.e. an ongoing story), while Leviticus/Vayikra contained primarily mitzvot (commandments). What about Numbers?
11. Why were the Hebrew People counted so frequently?
12. What documents did the people bring when they were counted?
13. What determined the color of the tribal flags?
14. What is the difference between an "ot" sign and a "degel" sign?
15. How do we see that the Israelites in the time of Moshe observed "techum Shabbat" - the prohibition against traveling more than 2,000 amot on Shabbat? Does this apply today? What about during Y'shua's time?
16. What was the signal for the camp to travel?
17. What was the sum total of the counting of the 12 tribes?
18. Why are Aharon's sons called "sons of Aharon and Moshe?"
19. Who was Nadav's oldest son?
20. Why did the levi'im receive ma'aser rishon the first tithes?
21. Why were the Levites chosen in place of the firstborn?
22. What is the significance of the firstborn in the Torah?
23. Which groups of people were counted from the age of one month?
24. Name the first descendant of Levi in history to be counted as an infant.

25. Who assisted Moshe in counting the levi'im / Levites?
26. Why did so many people from the tribe of Re'uven support Korach in his campaign against Moshe?
27. Why did so many people from the tribes of Y'hudah, Yissakhar, and Zevulun become great Torah scholars?
28. In verse 3:39 the Torah states that the total number of levi'im was 22,000. The actual number was 22,300. Why does the Torah seem to ignore 300 levi'im?
29. The firstborn males of the Hebrew People were redeemed for five shekalim. Why five shekalim?
30. During what age-span is a man considered at his full strength?
31. As the camp was readying itself for travel, who was in charge of covering the vessels of the Mishkan in preparation for transport?
32. Numbers 1:49 says, "Do not on any account enroll the tribe of Levi or take a census of them with the Israelites" The Levites were selected from the tribes for special service to the Tent of Meeting? Why the Levites? Is there something special about them? Why are they not included in with the rest of the Israelites?
33. What does their special service have to do with the wanderings in the wilderness?
34. Numbers 1:52 says, "The Israelites shall encamp troop by troop, each man with his division, and each under his standard." What are the Israelites preparing for? Journeying to the Promised Land or war? What are some reasons for them to organize by ancestral clan? Where are all the women, the elderly and the children? Don't they count? Do you think the Torah is just talking about warriors? If so, what's the significance of warriors?
35. Numbers 2:2 says, "The Israelites shall camp each with his standard, under the banners of their ancestral house; they shall camp around the Tent of Meeting at a distance." Three tribes were to camp on each of the four sides of the Tent of Meeting. Picture the Tent in the center and three tribes were aligned on each of the four sides. What can you think of in today's values that consists of three groups of four? What is the difference between this verse and the previous one? What comes to mind when you visualize this scene of the ancestral houses aligned in military formation with their banners flying?
36. Numbers 2:32 says "Those are the enrollments of the Israelites by ancestral houses. The total enrolled in the divisions, for all troops: 603,550." The Torah says "troops". Doesn't this sound like some kind of military encounter rather than a nation who set out to worship in the

desert? Chapter 1 made it clear that the enrolled census amounted to 603,550. Why is it necessary to repeat it here? What do we learn from counting heads? We have seen census taken in previous portions of the Torah and more accounting of people to come. Why is the Torah concerned about numbers of people?

37. Numbers 3:8 says "They shall take charge of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting--a duty on behalf of the Israelites--doing the work of the Tabernacle." The Torah holds the Levites, apparently, in very high esteem. Why was this responsibility laid upon the Levites? What special qualities do they have? Why is it important for a select group to do this particular work? Why couldn't any Israelite take charge of the furnishings? It seems as if the Torah is making a statement of getting ready to move at any given moment. Where are they going? Why do they need an army of troops to accompany them?
38. Numbers 3:13 says, "For every first-born is Mine: at the time that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I consecrated every first-born in Israel, man and beast, to Myself, to be Mine, YHWH's." Why does YHWH need first-borns to be His possession? Is it to show the contrast between the first-born Israelites as opposed to the first-born Egyptians that were smitten? Or is there something more important? If it was first-born Egyptians that YHWH smote, why are beasts included? Do you think there is a relationship between Israelite first-borns and the oldest sibling in your family?
39. Numbers 4:4 says, "This is the responsibility of the Kohathites in the Tent of Meeting: the most sacred objects." The Kohathites were a clan of the Levite tribe. Why do you think they were singled out to handle the most sacred objects? If you look back at the genealogy of the Kohathites, could you find something distinctive about them that they would be chosen for this task? Why is there so much ritual that surrounds the moving of the Tent of Meeting from one location to another?
40. Numbers 4:5-6, "At the breaking of the camp, Aaron and his sons shall go in and take down the screening curtain and cover the Ark of the Pact with it. They shall lay a cover of dolphin skin over it and spread a cloth of pure blue on top; and they shall put its poles in place." Could this sudden breaking of camp have anything to do beyond the journey or war? Could it have to do, somehow, with a more spiritual purpose? The priests had to cover all the most sacred objects before the Kohathites could move them. Why did they need to be covered by the priests? What would happen if the

Kohathites moved them without the covering? What is it about the sacred objects that they may not be seen or touched?

41. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
42. How would you describe the characters in the story? Who do you know who's like them?
43. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Nasso

- Numbers 4:21-7:89
- Judges 13:2-25
- John 12:20-36

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Completing the head count of the Children of Israel taken in the Sinai Desert, a total of 8,580 Levite men between the ages of thirty and fifty are counted in a tally of those who will be doing the actual work of transporting the Tabernacle. YHWH communicates to Moses the law of the "Sotah", the wayward wife suspected of unfaithfulness to her husband.

Also given is the law of the Nazir. This is a person who takes a "Nazarite Vow," who forswears wine, lets his or her hair grow long, and is forbidden to become contaminated through contact with a dead body. Aaron and his descendents the Kohanim are instructed on how to bless the people of Israel.

The leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel each bring their offerings for the inauguration of the altar. Although their gifts are identical, each is brought on a different day and is individually described by the Torah.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

"YHWH bless you, and keep you; YHWH make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; YHWH lift up His countenance on you, and give you peace," Numbers 6:24-26.

For Christianity this is the final benediction which is spoken at the end of worship services. For Judaism this is the "priestly blessing" which is proclaimed with a special hand gesture before the congregation is dismissed. In the Hebrew, this is called the "Aharonic b'racha" or literally "aharon's blessing." Some refer to this as the "B'rachot HaKohanim" or literally "the Priestly Blessing." These two verses hold great truth and meaning as during Biblical times the High Priest would raise his hands and his voice to proclaim this b'racha on the nation of Israel. Today, Y'shua our High Priest is proclaiming this passage upon all who would associate with the people of Israel. All "grace and

truth” comes through Messiah Y’shua – John 1:17. To receive the blessings of this prayer then Y’shua must be your High Priest!
The “Aharonic B’racha” shouldn’t be reserved only for the end of our worship times. Instead it should be studied, understood, and utilized in our daily walk of faith. YHWH transfers great power to us as we learn and apply His word.
To better understand this portion of Torah or ANY section of Scripture, we must return and study the original Hebrew language. Indeed, the Sages of Judaism have said that this blessing should only be recited in the “kadosh lashon” or “holy tongue.” To express this prayer in any other language would be like singing the American National Anthem with a mouth full of bubble gum.

As we study this prayer let us examine its purpose, meaning, and benefit.
To begin, let’s read this in context from Numbers 6.
“22 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying, 23 Speak to Aharon and to his sons, saying, This is the way you shall bless the children of Yisrael, saying to them, 24 YHWH bless you, and keep you: 25 YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you: 26 YHWH lift up His countenance upon you, and give you shalom. 27 And they shall put My Name upon the children of Yisrael; and I will bless them.”

In the Hebrew, this prayer reads -
Yevarech’cha YHVH v’yishmerecha.
Ya’er YHVH panav eleycha viyechuneka.
Yissah YHVH panav eleychha veyasem lecha shalom.

יְבָרֵךְ יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁמְרֶךָ:
יֵאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּעֲחֶךָ:
יִסַּח יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ וַיַּשֶּׁם לְךָ שְׁלוֹם:

This prayer is all about understanding YHWH’s blessing! He has commanded His blessing on and to us –
Tehillim / Psalms 133:3

As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descends upon the mountains of Tzion: for there YHWH commands the bracha / blessing, even chayim le-olam-va-

ed / life forever. Shalom be upon Yisrael!” Concerning the nation of Yisra’el, YHWH gets involved and offers His blessings!

YHWH has proclaimed and even “commanded” this blessing upon us. The “aharonic b’racha” was given to set the nation of Yisra’el apart as the blessed seed of the righteous!

By simply being the nation WE are blessed! Don’t doubt it – “If you belong to Messiah / Christ then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise,” Galatians 3:29. We are blessed because we are YHWH’s chosen people – 1 Peter 2:9. There were NO preconditions for this blessing other than being the nation of Yisra’el. This blessing is absolute and unconditional! The Encyclopedia Judaica says, “The priestly blessing does not simply call for YHWH to bless out of his goodwill. Rather, the blessing calls for YHWH to have an attitude of goodwill toward the persons blessed. The benefit which the blessing called upon YHWH to bestow does not consist of fertility, prosperity, or dominion, but YHWH's favor itself. “

This is not some magical practice on the part of the priests, nor do the priests have some power over the divine. The text makes it very clear that while the priests may pronounce the words of blessing, it is YHWH who does the actual blessing

This blessing is one of the best examples of the ultimate use of the power of speech. Life and death is in the power of the tongue.

One reason this blessing was given was to place the Name of YHWH upon the nation. The nation is reminded of YHWH’s greatness as the priests recited this prayer.

The sections of this prayer start small and then build with meaning and power. The blessing also has a simple structure, of YHWH + paired verbs: bless – keep, shine – grace, and lift – peace. Each phrase is a bit longer and a bit more expansive and detailed than the previous one. It has been said that, “The progression in the number of words mirrors the outward movement and flow of YHWH's blessing through the single priest to the broader community.”

The first line of the priestly blessing is asking YHWH to bless and keep us; that is, to do good for us, protect us, sustain us, provide for us and rescue us from all evil and distress. It’s a blessing for the physical!

Yevarech'cha YHVH v'yishmerecha.

The first sentence is three words long in Hebrew and is considered to be a blessing for material success. "YHWH shall bless you and watch you."

We are told that the priest invokes YHWH's goodness to grant material prosperity and guardianship. Not only should you get an increase, but this increase should be protected.

YHWH will return, "that which the palmer-worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten," Joel 2:25.

YHWH's blessing is meant to be kept or stolen BUT shared.

YHWH does want to bless you with material wealth! Just look around and see that YOU ARE WEALTHY. Whatever you have is your wealth! And your wealth is given for you to use and to bless others with.

A blessed person has a generous spirit and is always pouring out blessings. It is only when we empty ourselves that YHWH can fill us again! A person who does not empty their vessel of their blessings has no room for additional blessings that YHWH would offer us each day. You also need to make sure your blessings are not leaking away from debt, problems, waste, etc. A person whose vessel for reception has a "hole" in it cannot receive or give blessings. They are always empty for the wrong reasons. One minister tells the story of one of the first churches he served as a youth minister. They had a fund called the Emergency Fund and it had \$100 in it. They told him that he could use the fund at his discretion, provided he dispensed the money according to the conditions. So he asked, "What are the conditions?" The chairman of the committee said, "You are not to give the money to anybody who is in need as a result of laziness, drunkenness, or poor management." The young minister said, "Well, what else is there?" Far as he knows they still have the money.

We are to use the blessings YHWH has given us wisely. We are to share with the body our physical blessings. And we are to share the blood of Y'shua with the lost.

Rambam said in Teffilah 15:7, "Do not wonder, "What does this blessing from ordinary people accomplish?" The blessing is not really dependant of the Kohanim, but rather on YHWH. The verse says, "They will place My name upon the Hebrew people, and I will bless them." The Kohanim need only do what they were told to do. Then YHWH will bless The Hebrew people as He desires to."

The first line of this blessing is all about physical prosperity and being a vessel to share His goodness. The second blessing is five words long and is a blessing for spiritual development and spiritual growth. YHWH wants our spiritual life to GROW and not stay stagnant. He does not want us to be lukewarm! We are to be empowered with the zeal of YHWH and share His message with others.

Ya'er YHVH panav eleycha viyechuneka.

25 YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you:

With this portion of the prayer we are receiving divine light from the very face of YHWH.

This is a blessing to be successful in learning Torah. This is a blessing for intellectual and spiritual advancement. Rashi explains the shining of YHWH's face as a beaming, friendly expression. He paraphrases, "May YHVH show you a smiling face." YHVH is looking toward us, paying attention to us and taking note of us. YHWH lifts up His face upon in order to show us grace or mercy. This phrase is also found in Psalm 31:16 and 80:3. The Newer Testament provides another facet with John 1:7, "For the Torah was given by Moshe; its unmerited favor and emet came by Y'shua the Mashiach."

As we learn the Torah we see our need for YHWH's grace.

Devarim says, "YHWH make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you." The more Torah we learn, the more we should realize our sinfulness. This is one purpose of the Torah! Rabbi Sha'ul / Paul said in Romans 7:7 that he "had not know sin but by the Torah." 1 John 3:4 shows us that "sin is transgression of the Torah." The Torah defines sin and shows us our sinfulness. The wages of sin is death – the decree has been made that because we have sinned, we deserve eternal death. The gift of YHWH is eternal life – Y'shua took our place and died for us so that we could have eternal life. NOW, we must allow the Torah to "shine upon us" and illuminate our path. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path," Psalm 119:15. Our lives are changed by his amazing grace when YHWH shines his face upon us through His Torah!

Psalm 19:7, "The Torah of YHWH is perfect, converting the soul." The Torah converts our soul to be unified with YHWH and more like Him! "YHWH showed His love / grace / face to us in this way, while we were still sinners Y'shua died for us," Romiyah / Romans 5:8. This is clearly seen in Isaiah / Yesha'yahu

30:18, "YHWH longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you."

This blessing of spiritual enlightenment comes from the very face of YHWH. Remember that the Torah says that "no man shall see YHWH and live." YHWH lifts up his face upon us and we hear and obey the very words from His mouth – the Torah. As this happens we do not live. We die to ourselves and our ways. No man shall see YHWH and live could also be understood to mean that "no man shall hear and obey the Torah of YHWH and live in the flesh." Finally, the blessing of shalom is given to us. The peace / shalom of YHWH passes all understanding. This peace is greater than physical wealth or spiritual knowledge. This final sentence is seven words long. Of course seven is a symbolic number of completions.

Yissah YHVH panav eleychha veyasem lecha shalom.

The result of YHWH's blessings of abundance and spiritual knowledge should be peace. This peace comes directly from the FACE of YHWH. Remember that the blessing for wealth is only three short words. The prayer for spiritual help is five words. The blessing for peace has seven words. "Material prosperity is fairly easy to come by; its blessing consists of only three words. Spiritual and intellectual enlightenment is more difficult, and therefore it requires two more words, a total of seven. However, peace is the most difficult to realize, it requires the most words, a total of seven words."

Peace is a fruit of the spirit. In the Hebrew, the word for peace is "shalom." This well known phrase literally means "wholeness."

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance defines "shalom" as, "to be well, happy, complete, in good health, prosperous, to be whole, and wholly." The events of Luke, chapter 8 shed some interesting light on this. "But as He went the people thronged Him. And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment; and immediately her issue of blood stanch'd. And Y'shua said, 'Who touched Me?' When all denied, Peter and they that were with Him said, 'Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and sayest thou, Who touched Me?' And Y'shua said, 'Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue has gone out of me.' And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was

healed immediately. And He said unto her, 'Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made the whole; go in Shalom,'" – verses 42-48.

In this story, the woman with the issue of blood received her healing as she touched the tzitzit (fringes) upon the garment of the Messiah. Her faith led her to reach out for the Savior, and the end result was her healing. Not only did the flow of blood stop; she was also completely made whole. Don't miss this. She was healed and made whole. She had found the Messiah. The void in her soul was now overflowing with shalom. Her life was now filled with Him. The woman had come face to face with the Prince of Peace, Y'shua Sar Shalom, and she would never be the same.

By the power of Shalom we can walk in faith amidst the troubles of life. Through His Shalom we can make it though a bad day or a string of terrible events. The book of Ephesians proves how this is possible. "He is our Shalom, Who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." - Ephesians 2: 14. Our shalom is the presence of Master Y'shua. It is Him. Nothing more and nothing less. He is our peace. The Prince of Peace is our wholeness. He is the one that completes us. To illustrate this, a Jew who accepts Y'shua as Messiah is often called "completed Jew." Rav Sha'ul wrote, "For YHWH was pleased to have all the fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making shalom through His blood, shed on the execution stake," Colossians 1:19, 20.

This blessing is for each of us. It was spoken to the nation corporately but is phrases in the singular. May YHWH bless YOU.

The benefits of this blessing are abundant. We can have physical abundance, spiritual growth, and shalom forevermore. The price has been paid and our ticket to YHWH's goodness waits for us. WE must choose to walk in His blessing. We must recognize that we are truly "too blessed to be depressed." This Christian cliché is absolute truth. This is how YHWH sees us!

Let us now forget the additional commandment at the end of this verse. "They shall invoke / put My name on the sons of Israel, and I then will bless them," Numbers 6:27. The priests were called to put the name of YHWH upon the people. ONE way they could do this was through reciting this blessing during times of worship. Sadly both Judaism and Christianity have failed at this precept.

The Jewish priests and religious leaders shrouded the name in mystery and forbid its use. Some insist that the name was ONLY spoken on Yom Kippur and only during this blessing. Christianity has inherited the same lies and calls upon “god” or “lord” without any distinction being made of any certain “god” or “lord.” Jeremiah 16:19, “Our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit.”

Psalms 135:13, “Your Name, O YHWH, endures forever, Your fame, O YHWH, throughout all generations.”

Exodus 3:15, “And Elohim said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, YHWH Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My Name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.”

Hosea 12:5, “Even YHWH Elohim of hosts, YHWH is His memorial.”

The correct Name is very important to YHWH, it is Who He Is.

Isaiah 42:8, “I am YHWH: that is My Name: and My honor I will not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Remember that the Aharonic B'racha was to be spoken by the priests. Their mouths would pronounce this blessing. A priest's mouth is to be surrounded by a beard as Yisraelites are commanded not to shave their facial hair. It is from the mouth that the priest commands the blessing from YHWH.

With this verse in mind, let's turn to the Psalms to grasp another meaning of the b'racha. Psalm 133:1-3, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon Coming down upon the mountains of Zion; For there the YHWH commanded the blessing-- life forever.”

Here we see that unity is like the precious anointing oil used to set Aharon apart.

Unity is key to this walk of faith. We must decide to meet and agree with one another in unity. At the congregation we should put personal differences and personal convictions aside and come together in unity. We should submit to

leadership, support leadership, and work with leadership to accomplish YHWH's will. There is no such thing as the perfect congregation or the perfect rabbi or teacher. You will never find a group that has it "all together" or a teacher who is 100% doctrinally correct. Instead of seeking perfection we should seek unity and a leader with a heart that longs after YHWH. With unity comes trust. Trust is NOT supporting the leader when you agree with him. Trust is supporting the leader when you DON'T agree with him. Y'shua prayed for this type of relationship in John 17. This is the real Master's prayer – he wanted us to be unified! Do you trust your leadership? Have you submitted yourself to a local congregation? Unity is like the oil of anointing that fell from Aharon's beard.

This unity is exactly what the Messiah prayed for in John 17. "I do not pray for those alone [meaning His disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me," ~ John 17:20-23 (NKJ).

What else came from the priest's beard? This blessing of YHWH and the name of YHWH! We see another connection in Song of Solomon 1:3, "Your Name is as anointing oil poured forth." YHWH's name is like the anointing oil. His name is power. His name is powerful. His name and His blessing is what changes us to be made in His image. We learn in Isaiah 10:27, that the "anointing breaks every yoke."

Whatever is holding you back or causing you pain is broken by the anointing / by the name of YHWH! We should take hold of this blessing and His name and begin to expect! We should start expecting good things to happen! We should see ourselves as blessed and lay hold of the promises that YHWH has set before us. Romans 4:21 states that Avinu Avraham was fully persuaded that what YHWH had promised, YHWH was fully able to accomplish. We too must be determined to believe YHWH and recognize our lives as blessed beyond all measure.

The many aspects of the priestly blessing are indeed reminders of our great High Priest / Kohen HaGadol Y'shua. These blessings flow from the very mouth of Y'shua! "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the

heavens, Y'shua the Son of YHWH, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need,” Hebrews 4:14-16.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

A little boy walked up to his pastor and asked sheepishly, “Why do we say ‘amen’ instead of ‘awoman’ after prayers?” The preacher scratched his head as he thought. He finally responded, “I guess for the same reason that we sing ‘hymns’ and not ‘hers.’”

Realistically, the reason why people say ‘amen’ after prayer is much deeper than this preacher’s smart retort. The concept of the ending affirmation of ‘amen’ has its origin in this week’s Torah reading. Titled Nasso, our weekly parasha comes from Bamidbar (Numbers) 4:21-7:89. During this sidrah the Torah teaches about the Nazarite vows, the priestly blessing, the ordeal of adultery and jealousy, and final preparation for use of the tabernacle. It is here that the first mention of the word “amen” is found in the King James Version and other Bibles.

Bible teachers place much importance on the first time a word or phrase appears in the original text. This is called the “rule of first occurrence.” The idea is that the initial mentioning of an expression explains its future meaning and gives understanding into the phrase’s significance. A sort of precedence is set when ‘amen’ is first used in Bamidbar 5:22. (Beware: Continued reading of this teaching might tip over one of your sacred cows!)

Bamidbar 5 is the chapter about the “sotah” or “suspected wife.” This chapter teaches that if a woman is suspected of adultery and cannot be legally proved, then she is to be taken before the priests. The Cohanim are to perform an odd ceremony of events that will prove her loyalty or prove her adultery. During this ritual the Cohen mixes set apart water, ink, the meal offering given by the husband, and dust from the sanctuary floor. This mixture is then drunk by the sotah. If she is guilty she will be cursed, if she is innocent a curse will not be upon her. She agrees to this rite by drinking the mixture. The Torah says that at this drinking point “the woman shall say, ‘amen, amen!’”

Notice that when the woman says “amen” she is not concluding a prayer. No - she did not say “in Jesus’ name amen.” Instead of finishing a prayer, the woman is accepting a type of oath/covenant/curse. Notice also that she really did NOT say “amen.” Yes, your Bible says she said “amen” but...the term “amen” is a transliteration of the Hebrew letters aleph-mem-nun, pronounced “omein” or “ah-main” She said “omein, omein” and not “amen, amen.”

Omein or Amein communicates confirmation, hope, endorsement, and approval. It also is a saying that means “let it be so.” Strong’s Exhaustive Dictionary defines Amein as “sure; abstract faithfulness; adverbially truly:-amen, so be it, truth, firm or faithful, to trust or believe, to be.”

When a person says “Amein” they are literally saying “I agree that what was spoken is truth and let it be.” When a person says “amen,” they are saying something totally different. (more on this to follow!)

Omein is used throughout the Tanakh as “to show the acceptance of the validity of a curse or an oath as in Numbers 5:22; Deuteronomy 27:15-26; Jeremiah 11:5. It is used to indicate acceptance of a good message in Jeremiah 28:6,” says the Holman Bible Dictionary. Evidently those near the mishkan would respond ‘Amein’ to the songs chanted by the Levites as found in Tehillim 41:14; 72:19; 89:53; 106:48; and 1 Chronicles 16:36. These people were saying, “we agree and testify to what the priests are chanting! It is truth and let it be!” Indeed, Rabbi Sha’ul wrote “For all the promises of Elohim in Him are yea, and in Him Amein, unto the glory of Elohim by us,” 2 Corinthians 1:20.

The Talmud states that saying omein after a blessing is equivalent to reciting the B’racha itself. Yet, a person should not say Amein to every blessing that is spoken nor to every prayer that is uttered. “A person should not usually respond with “Amein” to a blessing he himself has recited, the only exception now being the third blessing of the Grace after Meals. This prohibition may be a reaction to the Christian custom to conclude every prayer with ‘Amen.’ The early church borrowed the use of ‘Amen’ together with most of the liturgy, and it is found in the New Testament 119 times,” says the Encyclopedia Judaica.

Christianity teaches it is proper to end every prayer with ‘amen.’ While Judaism teaches it is proper to say ‘Amein’ only after certain blessings. “Whenever one hears another recite a blessing, he should answer ‘Amein’ at its conclusion. The ‘Amein’ constitutes an endorsement and affirmation that the blessing is true, that

I believe it, or that “it should come to pass” where the blessing is in the form of a prayer petition. A person does not say ‘omein’ after a blessing he recites himself,” says Rabbi Donin in his book *To Be a Jew*.

Bible believers are permitted to say omein. Making this statement of faith is validated throughout the Scriptures, including this week’s Torah reading. But, devotees are never told in the Scriptures to say “amen.” There is a difference between ‘amen’ and the Hebrew ‘omein’ just like there is a difference between ‘Amein’ and ‘oh my!’

Christians and Muslims use the word ‘amen.’ And regardless of language, various religions around the world end their prayer by saying Amen. The term ‘amen’ comes from ancient Egypt. There is no linguistic translation for the Egyptian word ‘Amen,’ because it is a name and not a word. The origin of “Amen” is Egyptian, for Amen is the name the pagan sun god Aman-ra, also known simply as Ra or Aman. According to a web site on Egyptology, the name Amen means the, “hidden one of Egypt who lives on.” Perhaps this pagan deity lives on through his name being repeated by millions of people every day.

The Hebrews learned about the god ‘amen’ during their sojourn in Egypt, which lasted for four generations. Yes, the Yisraelites were no doubt familiar with this pagan deity. It is to this subject that the Torah gives a prohibition for saying the name amen and other false idol names. “Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips,” Shemot 23:13. This is very simple. Say “ah-mein.” When you hear something that ministers to your nefesh (soul) shout “omein!” But don’t say ‘amen.’ “Don’t do as the pagans do,” says the book of Yermi’yahu (Jeremiah).

Finally, notice that when you use the correct Hebrew word “Amein” you are actually referring to YHWH Y’shua Himself. The Talmud teaches that the etymology of ‘Amein’ can be explained as being made up of the initial letters of El Melekh Ne’eman, meaning “Elohim, faithful King.” So, any reference to ‘Amein’ is actually a reference to Elohim.

Y’shua also taught His talmidim and used this word to validate His own Torah interpretations. In the gospels, Amein is also found over 100 times, always spoken by Y’shua. Y’shua however only used this term to preface his own teachings with the expression, “Amein I say to you,” a phrase apparently intended to emphasize the truth and the importance of the words he was preparing to

speak. He would also say, “omein, omein” which is many times translated “verily, verily.”

YHWH is called the Elohim of Amein or Elohim of Truth in the scroll of Yesha’yahu. This passage from Isaiah is an appropriate selection to meditate upon when considering this important subject because of the light it shares. You see, saying “amen” verses omein” is no laughing matter. You are either talking about the real Elohim, the Elohim Amein or you are talking about a false Elohim.

Please consider this. Study this subject some more. Pray about this issue. And perhaps end your prayer a little differently – with ‘omein.’ “Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by Elohim Amein, the Elohim of truth; he who takes an oath in the land will swear by the Elohim Amein, the Elohim of truth. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from my eyes. “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy,” Yesha’yahu/Isaiah 95.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is “Nasso.” What does this mean?
2. Read Judges 13:2-25. How does these relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in John 12:20-36. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
6. How would you describe the characters in the story? Who do you know who's like them?
7. What is the Nazarite vow? Is a Nazarite and a Nazarene the same thing?
8. Although we are not subject to the same duties and tasks as were assigned to the families of the Levites, what tasks has YHWH given us? Do you see the responsibilities that YHWH gave us as a burden, a discipline, or as a gift? Can a responsibility or task be a burden and a gift at the same time? Explain.

9. Jewish tradition remains deeply divided over whether to praise or condemn the nazir. After reading the opinions of the commentators and studying this idea, what do you think?
10. One Jewish commentary tells us that an individual takes a Nazarite vow because of a "holy resolve to escape temptation and sin." Think about some of the problems that exist in our society. Drug abuse and alcoholism are two examples. Imagine how difficult some people find it to resist such temptations. What lesson can we learn about these challenges from the nazir?
11. In addition to abstaining from wine and from contact with the dead, the nazir also had to let his hair grow in order to fulfill his vow. His long hair, therefore, was a constant reminder, both to him and to those around him, of his special status as a nazir. Why do you think it was important for there to be a distinguishing sign on the nazir which everyone could recognize?
12. Name two well known Biblical people who took Nazarite vows?
13. In Birkat Kohanim the blessing for peace is considered to be the most important. Imagine a world at peace, what would it be like? If the world was at peace do you think the other blessings of Birkat Kohanim would be fulfilled? In what ways? What role and responsibility do we have in fulfilling this blessing? In what ways can you contribute to the blessing of peace in your family, in your school, in your community? Sometimes we are overwhelmed with media descriptions of violence. With your family, examine a newspaper and find examples of the blessing of peace. Can you find instances where there was strife and people are working to replace it with peace?
14. The Torah's description of the ordeal for the woman suspected of cheating on her husband seems to be very one-sided. Why ?
15. Parsha Naso begins with a command to count the children of Gershon and the children of Merari and instruct them regarding their service / avodah. Why is this not placed in Bamidbar, where the command about the children of Kehat is given?
16. Numbers 5:7, "They shall confess the sin that they committed. He shall make restitution for his guilt in its principal amount and add its fifth to it, and give it to the one to whom he is indebted," Since only one person dealt dishonestly, why does the verse say "they shall confess" -- in the plural, and not "he shall confess" -- in the singular?
17. Numbers 6:23, Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying: "So shall you bless the Children of Israel." When the Kohen recites the Priestly Blessing why is it tradition for him to remove his shoes? Why?

18. Numbers 6:26, "And establish peace for you." When the kohanim conclude their blessing, it is customary for people in a synagogue to thank them by saying "yasher ko'ach" -- thank you. Why?
19. Numbers 7:12-13, "The one who brought his offering on the first day was Nachshon the son of Aminadav... and his offering..." Why is it written "and his offering" regarding Nachshon the son of Aminadav?
20. In Parsha Naso, we find the famous priestly blessing sandwiched' between the laws of Nazir (chapter 6) and the story of the dedication of the Mishkan / Tabernacle(chapter 7). Can you suggest a thematic reason for the juxtaposition of these three stories?
What is the significance of the number 8,580 in this week's Parsha?
21. Besides transporting the Mishkan, what other service performed by the levi'im is referred to in this Parsha?
22. On which day did Moshe teach the command to send those who are temeim (ritually impure) out of the camp?
23. Name the three camps in the desert.
24. Who was sent out of each of the camps?
25. A person stole from another and swore that he was innocent. If he later confesses his guilt, what are his obligations?
26. Who determines which Kohen receives the gifts that must be given to the kohanim?
27. When a person who is guilty of adultery drinks the water, she dies in a very specific fashion. What happens to the adulterer?
28. Before the name of YHWH is erased, the adulterer has the option either to admit guilt or to drink the water. Does she have a third option?
29. What sin does a nazir commit against himself?
30. Where was the cut hair of a nazir placed?
31. What is the meaning of the blessing "May YHWH bless you and guard you?"
32. What is the meaning of the blessing "May YHWH lift up His countenance upon you?"
33. The tribe of Yissakhar was the second tribe to offer their gifts. Why did they merit this position?
34. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Behaalotecha

- Numbers 8:1-12:16
- Zechariah 2:10-4:7
- Revelation 11:1-19

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Aaron is commanded to raise light in the lamps of the menorah, and the tribe of Levi is initiated into the service in the Sanctuary.

A "Second Passover" is instituted in response to the petition "Why should we be deprived?" by a group of Jews who were unable to bring the Passover offering in its appointed time because they were ritually impure. YHWH instructs Moses on the procedures for Israel's journeys and encampments in the desert, and the people journey in formation from Mount Sinai, where they had been camped for nearly a year.

The people are dissatisfied with their "bread from heaven" (the manna) and demand that Moses supply them with meat. Moses appoints 70 elders, to whom he emanates of his spirit, to assist him in the burden of governing the people. Miriam speaks negatively of Moses and is punished with leprosy; Moses prays for her healing and the entire community waits seven days for her recovery.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

A believer can mature to great spiritual levels by grasping this simple message that what happened to the people of Israel in Biblical times is a picture of what happens to people today. History repeats itself. The times may have changed but the scenarios are still the same. Everything – everything – that occurs in your life is a message from the supernatural side. YHWH is speaking behind the details of the day. In every way the Creator is calling us closer.

Yisrael had forty years to work out their personal issues before they inherited the Promised Land. Can you imagine waiting through 40 years of tests and trials? Does it sometimes feel like you are in the middle of 40 years worth of wandering?

It took one night, the night of Passover, for YHWH to bring Israel out of Egypt. Yet, it took 40 years for YHWH to bring Egypt out of Israel. Let's not repeat the

sins of the wilderness. Rather, let's learn from them and run towards the Promised Land. On the way, we'll no doubt see our fair share of trials and miracles.

One such miracle is the manna that fell from Heaven. This miracle type signifies the crux of the wilderness journey. YHWH was teaching His young nation to trust him for anything and everything. Call it "heavenly meals on wheels." Each day the people would rise from their sleep and find the ground wet with dew and covered with food.

"And when the dew that lay was gone up, see, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the frost on the ground. And when the children of Yisrael saw it, they said to one another, It is manna: for they did not know what it was. And Moshe said, "This is the lechem (bread) that YHWH has given you to eat," Exodus / Shemot 16:14, 15.

As the sun rose, the Hebrews would gather their daily bread. A person could only get enough to last one day. If one was greedy and gathered too much, the manna would spoil. Yet on Friday the manna miraculously lasted for two days. The Israelites would not have to pick up manna on the Sabbath. YHWH blessed the Sabbath keepers by allowing them to rest. They did not have to worry about preparing food on this day. This was another test.

In Hebrew the word "mawn" is translated "manna." This word literally means "what is it?" Upon first seeing this flaky bread the people wondered "mawn?" or "what is it?" The Rabbis teach that they soon found the bread to taste like anything they imagined. Whatever they needed the manna was.

We see in Exodus 16:33 that a portion of manna was also to be stored as a memorial. This jar of heavenly bread was to be kept in the Tabernacle as a testimony and witness of YHWH's faithfulness. 1 Corinthians 3:9 says, "you are YHWH's tabernacle." In the same chapter, in verse 15, the Scriptures state "know you not that you are the beit hamikdash (temple) of YHWH and that the Ruach (Spirit) dwells in you." Today, the believer is the dwelling place of YHWH. You are the temple of YHWH and like the tabernacle, the manna from heaven should dwell inside you.

In John 6:51 Y'shua the Messiah said "I am the bread from Heaven." He wasn't comparing Himself to communion wafers or saltine crackers. He was equating Himself to the manna from Heaven that sustained the nation of Yisrael for forty

long years. Manna means "what is it?" Y'shua said "I am it." Whatever we need He is. He is the bread from heaven. He is whatever we need. We are the children of Israel who should seek Him daily.

YHWH has promised to meet all of our needs. He took care of the nation of Yisrael in the dessert. Even though they caravanned in tents they were ok. He gave them food, water, protection, and military victories. Their shoes did not even wear out. These miracles are types for us today. Whatever we need, Y'shua is. Remember that he is the "lechem ha chayim" - the 'bread of life.' YHWH will provide for His people. Will His people trust Him? Or will we focus on the wilderness journey and problems we face along the way to the Promised Land? Remember that man does not live by bread alone (the physical manifestation of our needs) but by the word of YHWH (the Son of YHWH Y'shua) who has come to supply all of our needs.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Flick on the television or cut up the radio and you'll hear about wars. The newspaper columns, the TV talking heads, and the radio news broadcasts are all obsessed with the battles of the nations. Wars are raging around the world. Good fights with evil, and patriots clash with terrorists.

WAR – it is an ugly word. Just the mention of this term brings to mind scenes of battlefields, weapons, and flag draped coffins. The worst of human behavior and sometimes the most heroic of human behavior exhibit themselves during times of combat. To win a conflict there must be a strategy or a plan for success. Victory does not happen by accident. Victory in a war zone occurs when one group overtakes another through struggle. "We struggle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms," says Ephesians 6:12.

As Bible believers our primary battle is not against terrorists in the flesh but against terrorist in the spirit. We battle against agents of darkness that oppress and intimidate the soul. Though we struggle, we are victorious through YHWH the mighty Man of War, when we follow His plans of action. One part of this plan is found in the Torah portion entitled "Be'ha'alotekha." This weekly reading segment takes up chapters 8-12 in the book of Bamidbar (Numbers). Chapter 10

is key if you are looking for a breakthrough in your spiritual life. Victory is yours...just keep reading!

Chapter 10 of Bamidbar begins with the mitzvot of the trumpets. Yisra'el is called to manufacture silver trumpets to "serve you to summon the community and to set the divisions in motion," 10:2. These metal musical instruments, used interchangeably with shofars or ram's horns, produce loud vibrating noises when blown. The sound of these instruments call Yisra'el to worship and to war. Furthermore, the wail of the shofar and the shrill of a shout are powerful tools when battling spiritual foes. Notice the order of chapter ten:

First, Yisra'el is commanded to make trumpets.

Second, Yisra'el is told that victory is theirs when they blow the shofars .

Third, the camp of Yisra'el sets out with the tribe of Judah/Yah'huda leading the way.

Fourth, when Yisra'el would move so would the Shekinah of YHWH.

Fifth, as YHWH would rise up the enemy would be scattered.

Let's look a little closer on how the experiences of Yisra'el parallel your walk today...

Yisra'el is commanded to make trumpets.

These musical instruments are more than just horns; they are visible signs of obedience. Yisra'el is told to make silver trumpets and so they obey. This is the only section of Torah where trumps are made of silver. "And YHWH spoke unto Moshe, saying, make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation," 10:1-3. In Biblical times the "horn" was a symbol of power and majesty. So through a simple act of obedience, like fashioning these instruments or shouting out loud, the power of YHWH moves in majesty.

Yisra'el is told that victory is theirs when they blow the shofars.

This could be one of the most important phrases spoken to the nation – "And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before YHWH your Elohim, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye

shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your Elohim: I am YHWH your Elohim,” 10:9-1. Not only is the sound of the shofar a wake-up call to mankind, it is also a reminder to the Creator of the Universe. YHWH takes note when His people toot their own horns. Victory is promised when reliance is solely upon Elohim.

The sound of the trumpet does not itself defeat the enemy, but it calls to action the defeater of the enemy – YHWH Himself. The purpose of the horns is for Yisra’el told to blow an alarm or “ruwa.” This word “ruwa” means “to split the ears (with sound), i.e. shout (for alarm or joy):--blow an alarm, cry (alarm, aloud, out), destroy, make a joyful noise, smart, shout (for joy), sound an alarm, triumph.” According to its definition a ruwa can be an alarm of the shofar or the vocal chords. It is a high-pitched shrill that shakes the heavenlies and brings victory. It is the sound of a shout of faith that calls out to YHWH. A ruwa transcends the situation, penetrates the darkness, and enters the heavenlies to summon the attention of YHWH. No matter how dark the situation, no matter how dim the battle looms, victory is certain when Yisra’el praises. “Elohim has ascended amid shouts of joy, YHWH amid the sounding of trumpets,” Psalm / Tehillim 47.

The camp of Yisra’el sets out with Yah’huda leading the way. When Yisra’el is to travel, the tribe of Judah/Yah’huda is to go first. This is important because Yah’huda is not just the preeminent family group of the nation; Yah’huda is also the name of praise. The Hebrew term “Yah’huda” means literally “praise YHWH.” If Yisra’el wants victory then they are to first sound a ruwa of shofars or voices. Then praise of YHWH, or Yah’huda, should lead their procession into battle. Praise precedes victory when it comes to spiritual battles.

When Yisra’el would move so would the Shekinah of YHWH. “So they set out from the mountain of YHWH and traveled for three days. The ark of the covenant of YHWH went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest. The cloud of YHWH was over them by day when they set out from the camp,” Bamidbar 10:33-34. When Yisra’el shouts, YHWH hears the high shrill and moves on their behalf. It is the cry of the ruwa that brings the Ruach! “But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Yisra’el. Our: fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded,” Psalm 22:3-

5. Notice here that deliverance comes after they “cried unto thee.” YHWH is moved when His people move in faith.

Surely you remember the march around Jericho and how the walls of that city fell through shouting and shofars. YHWH arises at the shout and His enemies are scattered! “Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead...see, YHWH is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer,” Yesha’yahu (Isaiah) 26:19-22.

As YHWH would rise up the enemy would be scattered.

Just like mother bear that is shaken by the cry of baby bear, YHWH moves when His children praise. “Whenever the ark set out, Moshe said, “Rise up, YHWH! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you.” Whenever it came to rest, he said, “Return, O YHWH, to the countless thousands of Yisra’el,” Bamidbar / Numbers 10:35-36.

The praise of YHWH enthrones Him in the midst of Yisra’el. Isaiah chapter twelve verse six says, that we should “Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Yisra’el among you.” At the shout, YHWH arises and splatters His enemies.

For your spiritual breakthrough notice this pattern found in Tehillim / Psalm 47: “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to YHWH with cries of joy. How awesome is YHWH Most High, the great King over all the earth! He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Ya’acov, whom he loved. Selah. Elohim has ascended amid shouts of joy, YHWH amid the sounding of trumpets. Sing praises to Elohim, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For Elohim is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. Elohim reigns over the nations; Elohim is seated on his holy throne.”

The shout of the believer grabs the Almighty’s attention. It reminds Him of His covenant with Yisra’el. “Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. For the word of YHWH is right and true; he is faithful in all he does,” Tehillim (Psalm) 33:3-4. As YHWH rises from His resting place the enemies scatter in fear.

There is a war being waged. The battleground is your life and your weapon of mass destruction is your ruwa – your shout and your shofar. Death has no more victory. Oppression must end. Confusion and disorder will disappear. Sicknesses can be healed. “He began to shout, ‘Y’shua Ben-David, have mercy on me!’ Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, ‘Moshiach Ben-David, have mercy on me!’ And Y’shua stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So they called to the blind man, ‘Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.’ Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Y’shua. ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ Y’shua asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ The Messiah Y’shua said, ‘Go, your faith has healed you.’ Immediately he received his sight and followed Y’shua along the road,” Mark 10:47-50.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is Behaalotecha. What does this mean?
2. Read Zechariah 2:10-4:7. How does these relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in Revelation 11:1-19. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y’shua?
5. “And Aaron did so; toward the face of the menorah he kindled its lamps, as YHWH had commanded Moses,” Numbers 8:3. Would anyone suspect that Aaron would deviate from YHWH's command?
6. “According to the word of YHWH the Children of Israel would journey, and according to the word of the YHWH they would encamp,” Numbers 9:18. Why are the words "according to the word of YHWH" repeated six times over a span of five verses which discuss the journeying and encampment of the Hebrew people?
7. “He said, "Please do not forsake us... and you will be to us for eyes,” Numbers 10:31. How would Yitro become "eyes" to all the Israelites?
8. “But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have nothing but the manna to look to,” Numbers 11:6. It is said that the manna tasted like cake fried in honey, and one could experience any taste his palate desired. If that is true then why did they complain?
9. Numbers 8:2, "Speak to Aaron and say to him, 'When you set up the seven lamps, they are to light the area in front of the lampstand.'" The phrase toward the face of the Menorah is an interesting one. The rabbis teach that the three wicks on the right and the three on the left were all directed

toward the Menorah's central stem, thus concentrating light toward the center. The Menorah symbolized that YHVH is the Source of all light (ArtScroll Stone Edition Chumash, p. 775). What are the connotations of this for a believer in Y'shua? How did Y'shua describe himself? (See John 8:12; 9:5.) What did he mean when he said that "I am the vine and you are the branches?" (John 15:5) What does this mean and how is this pointing to a type of human menorah? Relate this to the seven Messianic assemblies of Revelation 2 and 3 being likened to menorahs (Rev 1:13, 20). Is Y'shua the center of all that we do? Do we place all of our focus on him? Can we say, as the Apostle Paul did, that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28)? Does the power of his resurrected life and anointing flow through you even as oil was in the Menorah and sap flows through a tree to its branches?

10. Numbers 9:2, "Have the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time." In its appointed time [season]/moed. The word moed (Strong's H4150; TWOT 878b) primarily means "an appointment, a fixed time or season, a festival, an assembly, the congregation, the place of meeting." The question that is begged in these definitions is this: Who is making the appointment? Who is calling the assembly together? Is there any man (or group of men) that has the authority and power to call all believers together at a fixed and seasonal time for an appointment, assembly or festival? Torah is clear that YHVH is the one who determines these times. In this passage, the subject is Passover, which is but one of seven annual appointed times or moadim that he commanded Israel to keep. Who is the Author of these days—the one who made the appointment for all Israel to meet with him at certain times and seasons? Now who is the author of Christmas, Easter, and the myriad other man-made church festivals? Who are you going to obey? Whose appointments are you going to keep?
11. Numbers 9:13, "But if a man who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, that person must be cut off from his people because he did not present the LORD's offering at the appointed time. That man will bear the consequences of his sin." The term cut off (also meaning "expelled or killed") is used in the Torah about 34 times and is usually referring to Israelites being cut off (expelled) from the camp of Israel for rebellion and disobedience against YHVH's commands. Is this a spiritual principle that applies to us today with regard to the congregation of the believers? Should leaders expel someone from the congregation for disobedience and rebellion against YHVH's commandments? (See Rom 16:17; Tit 3:10; 2 Thess 3:6; 2 Tim 3:5; 1 Cor 5:5.)

12. Why did YHWH lead The Children of Yisrael to mount Sinai before leading them to the promised land?
13. What are two of the most important aspects of faith YHWH the Children of Yisrael in the wilderness of Sinai?
14. How does remembering YHWH's past miracles help build our faith?
15. What is the first feast of the second year after leaving Egypt, which YHWH commands The Children of Yisrael to keep?
16. How does contentment strengthen our faith?
17. What does Rav Shaul say about contentment in Philippians 4:11?
18. How do we learn to remain faithful despite our circumstances?
19. Toward which direction did the wicks of the menorah burn, and why?
20. From what material and in what manner was the menorah made?
21. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the levi'im by sprinkling on them "mei chatat." What is "mei chatat"?
22. Which three "t'nufot" (wavings) are in the Parsha?
23. Why did YHWH claim the first-born of the Hebrew People as His possession?
24. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
25. When a Levi reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
26. Why was the mitzvah of the second Passover / Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
27. What similarity is there between the menorah and the trumpets?
28. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
29. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
30. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
31. When the Hebrew People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
32. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
33. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the Parsha?
34. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Hebrew People. What happened to the elders who led the Hebrew People in Egypt?
35. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
36. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
37. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?
38. In the Parsha, we find this command given: Speak to Aaron, and say to him, When you light the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light in front of the lamp stand. (Numbers 8:2) The phrase "when you light the

- lamps,"(Behaalos'cha es haneiros), literally means, "When you raise up the lamps." How are we "raised up" in service to YHWH?
39. The Menorah was a light to the world, and thus also represent YHWH's Torah. Note that even a person who was not a priest could light the lamps. What does this tell us about whose job it is to spread the light of Torah? (Compare to Matthew 5:13-16)
40. Numbers 9:6-11 tells of a "second Passover" being added (a month later) for those who were defiled by a dead body and could not keep the usual Feast. What does this allowance for these men teach us about it being "never too late" with YHWH and being able to rectify your past?
41. In Numbers 9:14, YHWH states that those gentiles who associate themselves with Israel were to follow the same Torah ordinances as Israel did: "...you shall have one ordinance, for the stranger, and for him who was born in the land." Compare this to Ephesians 2:11-13, where Paul tells gentiles who come to Y'shua that they were no longer to be strangers to the Torah ordinances of Israel as they were now one with them. What implications does this have for those who say they follow Y'shua, but need not be concerned with the Torah? (Compare Y'shua's comments at the beginning of his midrash on Torah observance in Matthew 5:17-21 to his concluding ones in Matthew 7:21-23.)
42. The Manna in the desert had to be gathered every day and would last only until the next day. How can such a day to day situation be seen as true "freedom?" Compare this to Y'shua's words: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." (Matthew 6:34) How did the complaining of the Israelites indicate a confused view of what a true freedom is? How is the reflective of a lack of faith? (See Hebrews 4:2.)
43. Miriam, the sister of Moses, was afflicted with Tzaraat, the punishment for speaking evil against someone (lashon hara.) How does Miriam's quick and stern punishment indicate the seriousness of lashon hara, as well the principle of teachers being held to a higher standard by YHWH?
44. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Sh'lach Lecha

- Numbers 13:1-15:41
- Joshua 2:1-24
- Hebrews 3:7-4:11

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses sends twelve spies to the Land of Canaan. Forty days later they return, carrying a huge cluster of grapes, a pomegranate and a fig, to report on a lush and bountiful land. But ten of the spies warn that the inhabitants of the land are giants and warriors "more powerful than we" and only Caleb and Joshua insist that the land can be conquered, as YHWH has commanded.

The people weep that they'd rather return to Egypt. YHWH decrees that Israel's entry into the Land shall be delayed forty years, during which time that entire generation will die out in the desert. A group of remorseful Hebrews storm the mountain on the border of Land and are routed by the Amelekites and Canaanites.

The laws of the menachot (meal, wine and oil offerings) are given, as well as the mitzvah to consecrate a portion of the dough (challah) to YHWH when making bread. A man violates the Shabbat by gathering sticks and is put to death. YHWH instructs to place fringes (tzitzit) on the four corners of our garments so that we should remember to fulfill the mitzvot (Divine commandments).

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

From 'buy now and pay later programs' to the morning after pill, the world is full of ways to shun commitment. "Just confess your sins to me and you'll be forgiven," says the priest. And the mailbox is full of ways to get rich quick or acquire a new credit card for an easier lifestyle. These concepts are quite opposite to the Bible, which teaches a life of obedience in which strings ARE attached. "Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels ('Tzitzit' in Hebrew) on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at so you will remember all the commands of the Almighty, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and

will be consecrated to your Elohim," Numbers 15:38-40.

This section of Scripture is not alone when it comes to speaking of the tassels or fringes that are to be worn by all Bible believers. The Israelites and even the Messiah were clothed with these bands of blue. Remember the woman who was suffering from chronic bleeding? Mark 5:25-34 records that she was healed when she touched the "hem of the garment" that Y'shua was wearing. The original word for "hem" indicates that she touched a specific fringed corner of his garment that held his Tzitzit. Mark 6:56 states that wherever the Messiah went, "they laid the sick in the marketplaces and begged Him that they might just touch the border of His garment and the many that touched Him were made well."

"The Messiah observed this Old Testament requirement," says the Holman Bible Dictionary, a Baptist publication. Many people wear modern WWJD bracelets, but the tzitzit is the original spiritual reminder. The Hebrew term "tzitzit" means to "appear in visible form." Luke 9:26, "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and in His Father's glory." These twisted cords are to be a constant reminder of the Almighty and His promises. They serve as an outward sign of the covenant much like a wedding band. Tzitzit speak to the believer, and the world, that YHWH's word is still valid today.

Nowhere in the Bible is the command to wear fringes rescinded. In fact the Scriptures say just the opposite; they are to be worn "throughout the generations to come." Saints should follow the Messiah's example and dress with strings attached to their outer garments. The Bible doesn't specifically say how these strings are to look, except they must contain a cord of blue and be visible. "Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear," says Deuteronomy 22:12. There is much freedom when it comes to the design and the look of tassels, yet they must include a cord of blue. One Rabbi once said the color blue was chosen because "blue resembles the sea, the sea resembles the sky, and the sky resembles the throne of YHWH.

There is little evidence that this commandment is gender specific. Surely men and women, girls and boys both need to be reminded of YHWH's word! (In other words it can't hurt) The command in Numbers 15:38 is to "Bnai Yisra'el," which is usually translated "children of Israel. This is the exact same phrase that is given with many commandments in the Scriptures like the verses against unclean meats, incest, and idolatry.

The sacred Name of YHWH can also be found in the tzitzit. This is through the Hebrew numbering system gematria. Gematria is Jewish numerology, which assigns to each Hebrew letter a numeric value: aleph is 1, bet is 2, gimmel is 3, and so on.

Hebrew reads from right to left and therefore the Sacred Name is spelled Yod Heh Waw Heh. There are 10 wraps in the first section which corresponds to the Hebrew letter Yod. The second section has 5 wraps, which is Heh. The third section, 6 wraps is Waw. And the fourth section is Heh, once again with 5 wraps. This gives us the Tetragrammaton, YHWH's name.

Also, the Gematria value of the word "Tzitzit" (trade-yod-tzitzit-yod-tab) is 600. To this add the eight strands plus the five knots, totaling 613 in all. According to tradition, YHWH gave us 613 mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah. Just looking at the Tzitzit, therefore, reminds us of the commandments, as the Torah says, "You should see them and remember all YHWH's commandments and do them." The Messiah is the Torah / Word made flesh so therefore to look at the tassels is to look at Y'shua!

Tzitzit are often worn by people on the ends of a four-corned shawl called a "tallit." The tallit is an ancient outer garment that was worn daily by people during Bible times. Today, the tallit is often worn by Jewish people only during prayer time. A "tallit-katan" or "mini-tallit" is used by observant Jewish men to allow them to wear the tzitzit daily. The fringes can also be attached to belt loops, t-shirts, or any other garment. A common thread is for the Tzitzit to be tied with white string to make the blue stand out. The point is that the Tzitzit are worn, and that the commandments of the Bible are remembered. The Messiah wore tzitzit and so should believers today.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

What can be found more at the table of the rich yet it is at the table of the poor? It goes well with any meal and doesn't cost a great deal. Do you know what this surprise that rises is?
The answer is bread.

Bread is a staple of civilization found all over the world. Presidents and prisoners chew on this food daily. Everyone eats it (unless you're on that no carb diet

craze). Where would the world be without bread on the menu? Can you imagine your life without it? No peanut butter and jelly sandwiches? No blueberry muffins? No dinner rolls? No hamburger buns? No homemade biscuits? No challah?

Bread is a fact of life. It was even so for our ancestors as they approached the Eretz Yisra'el. In Bamidbar (Numbers) Chapter 15 the Yisraelites are told that when they enter the Land of Promise that they are to dedicate a portion of the bread they make as unto YHWH. The Creator understood that the people would produce bread from the earth, and when they did they were to offer some of it back to YHWH as an expression of gratitude. YHWH didn't eat the bread offered to Him, so actually the bread offering wasn't really for Him but for them. This sacrifice was just another reminder for the Hebrew people that YHWH is the true source of every "good and perfect gift."

"YHWH spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the children of Yisra'el and you shall say to them, When you arrive in the Land to which I am bringing you, and you eat from the bread of the Land, you shall set aside a gift for YHWH. The first portion of your dough, you shall separate a loaf for a gift; as in the case of the gift of the threshing floor, so shall you separate it. From the first portion of your dough you shall give a gift to YHWH in all your generations," Bamidbar / Numbers 15:17-21.

The priesthood would receive this offering of bread called "challah." Challah is the term used to refer to bread that has undergone separation from the whole. The term literally means "dough" and has become over the years the name of a great tasting egg bread eaten on Feast Days and Shabbat. It is not clear how Challah has changed from being the name of a portion of bread offered to YHWH to the name of festive bread eaten on Feast days but it has. So please, please don't just dismiss Challah as a set apart day delicacy. There are many truths we can learn from Challah and its spiritual significance.

First, there is an actual mitzvot in the Torah concerning bread baking. As quoted above, whenever Yisra'el bakes bread they were to take a portion of it and dedicate it to YHWH. Since the destruction of the Temple, this mitzvah has been fulfilled by: the cook separating a portion of bread (about the size of an olive) and burning it in the oven. The burning represents the destruction of the Temple. Moreover, some say to separate the dough before baking but it may be done after. The important point is that this burning of the separated piece is a

symbolic sacrifice. Jewish Rabbis teach that this mitzvot is still binding regardless of where you live. So technically, Challah is not just the name of the bread eaten on a Yom Tov, but actually the process of setting apart any bread to the Creator. For Challah to truly be Challah a portion of the original must be offered to YHWH.

This setting apart of a little portion is just another reminder of the set apart lifestyle of Bible believers. Just think, if we are to set aside even a portion of the bread that we make how much more then should we set aside all of our life. "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says YHWH," 2 Corinthians 6:17. Challah is really the remnant that belongs to YHWH just as returning Yisra'el is a remnant of the original.

In the Hebrew language there are many different terms for "bread." While "lechem" is the usual bread eaten daily, Challah is the special food saved for special days. Traditional meals begin with the breaking of bread and a blessing of YHWH for His "bringing forth the bread from the earth." While it is usually the word "lechem" spoken during the blessing, it is usually Challah that is eaten after the blessing. This is to show that the simplest of blessings touch the most extraordinary aspects of life.

There are traditionally two loaves of Challah served at the Shabbat dinner table. The two loaves that are weekly baked are symbolic of many things including the showbread of the temple and the double portion of the manna received in the Wilderness before Shabbat. They can also represent the: two tablets of Torah, the two witnesses, the two people - Ephraim and Judah, the two commands to "remember" and "keep" the Shabbat.

The dough of Challah is traditionally twisted with three braids and these braids are even meaningful of the mitzvot. The Rabbis teach that the "three braids are symbolic of the commands to observe Shabbat that appear in the Ten Commandments One braid represents the word 'Zachor' - 'Remember.' A second braid represents the word 'Shamor' - 'Guard.' The third braid is for 'b'Dibbur Echad' - that these commands of 'Remember' and 'Guard' were said by Elohim simultaneously and as one unit," says one source. The three rows can also point to the Creation, the Exodus, and the Messianic Era.

Even the way Challah is cut is a visible teacher for the Yisraelite. Most people serve Challah with a knife present but never use the knife at all! Just as the

Torah recounts that the patriarch Avraham, was tested by YHWH, and did not use the knife on his son Yitz'chak. The bread is to be torn from the loaf, first by the priest or head of the household and then by everyone else.

Challah can have special ingredients added to it that add to the imagery. Sesame or poppy seeds can be sprinkled on top before baking to represent manna and raisins can be baked in to speak to the sweetness of Shabbat.

Below is a challah recipe from April Rendelman. Try this to make your own bread. Just don't forget step number 9 when you make it. Whenever you bake bread set apart a small piece to YHWH and say a short prayer thanking Him for opening your eyes to His Torah and Truth, and ask Him to set you apart more just like that little ball of dough.

April's Challah

Makes 3 Loaves

- 1 teaspoon of sugar
- 3 eggs
- ½ cup of honey
- ½ cup of vegetable oil
- 1½ cups of warm water
- 1½ teaspoons of salt
- 7-8 cups of all-purpose flour
- 2 packets of active dry yeast

Optional:

- 3 cups of sharp cheddar cheese
- 1 cup of Parmesan cheese
- 1 cup of chopped walnuts
- 1 cup of chopped dates
- 2 cups of raisins
- 1 cup of pecans
- 2 teaspoons of ground cinnamon
- ½ cup of sugar

(Cinnamon and sugar can be sprinkled on top just before baking as well..

top with sesame seeds or poppy seeds or anything else that sounds good to you, get creative!)

1. Add 2 packs of yeast, and 1 teaspoon of sugar to 1 cup of warm water. Set aside for 10 minutes to let proof.
2. Beat 3 eggs with honey.
3. Add vegetable oil, the remaining ½ cup of warm water, salt, and the yeast mixture and mix well.
4. Add 5 cups of flour one at a time and mix well with a wooden spoon.
5. Add in any of the optional ingredients here.
6. Add 2 more cups of flour and knead well until all mixed together and a ball of dough forms. If needed add one more cup of flour.
7. Let dough rise in a warm place until doubled in size.
8. Punch down and flatten out on waxed paper or floured surface.
9. Divide dough into nine strips of roughly the same size, and braid 3 strips together at a time, making three loaves.
10. Break off a small Challah offering. This can be a part of the bread about the size of an olive. You can take one bit for the whole batch or one piece from each loaf. Instead of baking the bread now, you may wrap the dough in aluminum foil and freeze it for later. if you choose to freeze it here, just unthaw by placing on a baking sheet in a warm place with a damp towel covering it, and let it rise until doubled in size then bake.
11. When ready to cook, place braided bread on baking sheet and let it sit for at least thirty minutes while the oven preheats to 350 degrees.
12. Bake for 25-30 minutes or until golden brown.
13. Rub butter on top of loaves as soon as it is removed from the oven. Let the bread cool for at least 10 minutes.
14. Enjoy!

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is Sh'lach Lecha. What does this mean?
2. Read Joshua 2:1-24. How does these relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in Hebrews 3:7-4:11. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. "They went and came to Moses," Numbers 13:26. On these words the sages comment that just as they came back to Moses with bad advice, they left originally with bad intentions.

6. "They brought forth to the Children of Israel an evil report on the land that they had spied out, saying..." Numbers 13:32. When Moses sent spies to Israel they were all honorable and righteous. Why didn't they want the Jewish people to enter the land?
7. "They brought forth to the Children of Israel an evil report on the land that they had spied out, saying..." Numbers 13:32. When Moses sent the spies to Canaan, he told them to bring back a report about the land, the people, and the fruit. This is exactly what they did. What crime did they commit?
8. Why is the portion about the spies written immediately after the portion about Miriam's tzara'at?
9. To what was Moshe referring when he asked the spies "Are there trees in the land"?
10. Who built Hebron?
11. Which fruits did the meraglim bring back?
12. How many people carried the grape cluster?
13. Why did YHWH shorten the meraglim's journey?
14. Why did the meraglim begin by saying the land is "flowing with milk and honey"?
15. Why did the meraglim list Amalek first among the hostile nations they encountered?
16. How did Calev quiet the people?
17. Why did the Land appear to "eat its inhabitants"?
18. Besides the incident of the meraglim, what other sin led to the decree of 40 years in the desert?
19. On what day did Bnei Yisrael cry due to the meraglim's report? How did this affect future generations?
20. "Don't fear the people of the land...their defense is departed." (14:9) Who was their chief "defender"?
21. Calev and Y'hoshua praised Eretz Canaan and tried to assure the people that they could be victorious. How did the people respond?
22. "How long shall I bear this evil congregation?" YHWH is referring to the 10 meraglim who slandered the Land. What halakhah do we learn from this verse?
23. How is the mitzvah of challah different from other mitzvot associated with Eretz Yisrael?
24. What is the minimum amount of challah to be given to a Kohen according to Torah Law? Rabbinic Law?
25. Verse 15:22 refers to what sin? How does the text indicate this?

26. Moshe's doubt regarding the punishment of the mekoshesh etzim (wood-gatherer) was different than his doubt regarding the punishment of the blasphemer. How did it differ?
27. How do the tzitzit remind us of the 613 commandments?
28. What was the status of each of the 12 men sent out as spies?
29. Since spies were sent from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, sons of Joseph, why were there not 13 spies?
30. Moshe changed the name of one of the spies from what to what? What is the difference?
31. Name four things the spies were to look for.
32. They were told to bring back which fruit of the land, telling us that it was which month of the year?
33. From what place did they bring a large cluster of grapes? What other fruits did they bring?
34. How did they describe the people they saw, particularly the sons of Anak? And how did the Jews feel they appeared to the "giants"?
35. When the people heard the report of the spies, what was their reaction?
36. Two of the spies dissented from the majority report. What were their full names?
37. What was YHWH's reaction to the actions of the people and what did he say he was going to do; what did Moshe reply?
38. How then did YHWH determine to punish the people?
39. What was the punishment for those spies who brought the evil report?
40. The section of the Torah dealing with sending the spies to the land of Canaan is next to the section of Miriam's speaking evil (lashon hara) about Moshe. How may the spies comments about the land be considered a type of lashon hara?
41. As YHWH had already proclaimed that the Israelites would take the land, there was no real need for "spies" to be sent - yet He allows this, using the phrase, "Send for YOURSELF," as if distancing Himself from this command. Does this phrase indicate YHWH's disappointment with them? What does this tell us about the spiritual level of the people at that time, as compare to when they stood at Mount Sinai? Was it therefore appropriate for them (in this lower spiritual status) to send the spies? Could things have still "worked out" had the people listened to Joshua and Caleb?
42. After the sin of believing the report of the 10 spies, the people are told they will not enter the land. Following this, some of them decided to "repent." They then decided to go up to the land even though YHWH did not tell them too. They were attacked and killed by the Amelekites and

Canaanites. What does this tell us about the role of humility and seeking YHWH's will in true repentance?

43. After this tragedy, the people were very depressed about the thought of not entering the Land of Israel. At this time YHWH tells Moses to teach the Jewish People the commandment of "Challah" -- the separation of a portion of dough, which is then given as a gift to the Priests. How was the giving of this command an inspiration to the people?
44. Rather than viewing the physical greatness of the land's inhabitants as something that spiritual greatness could conquer, the spies stated that, "We were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes!" How did their view of themselves (as grasshoppers) make them as fragile as the "mirror" they were looking into? How did their (lack of) action cause them to fail to sanctify the name of YHWH?
45. The spies correctly reported that, "The land is flowing with milk and honey and this is its fruit." How does this portion of truth actually contribute to the false report that was given and believed by the people?
46. Consider this concept: How serious a sin was this episode of the spies? The night that the people chose to follow their false report was the Ninth of Av. This date has become a terrible night in Jewish history. Both Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed on the Ninth of Av. In 1492, the Jews were expelled from Spain on this date. War I also broke out on the Ninth of Av. World War II (with the Holocaust) was very much a continuation of the First World War. Is there something to the Ninth of Av?
47. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Korach

- Numbers 16:1-18:32
- 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22
- Acts 5:1-11

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Korach incites a mutiny challenging Moses' leadership and the granting of the kehunah ("priesthood") to Aaron, accompanied by Moses' erstwhile foes, Dathan and Avram. Joining them are 250 distinguished members of the community, who offer the sacrosanct ketoret (incense) to prove their worthiness for the priesthood. The earth opens up and swallows the mutineers, and a fire consumes the ketoret-officers.

A subsequent plague is stopped by Aaron's offering of ketoret sacrifice. Aaron's staff miraculously blossoms and brings forth almonds to prove that his designation as High Priest is Divinely ordained.

YHWH commands that a terumah ("uplifting") from each crop of grain, wine and oil, all firstborn sheep and cattle, and other specified gifts be given to the Kohanim.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Anger seems to be a prevailing theme in this week's Torah portion. Korach is angry and wants the seat of Moses. Numbers 16:15 states, "Moses became very angry and said to YHWH, 'Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.'" Later in the portion the Torah states that "anger has come forth from before YHWH; the plague has commenced." Was YHWH really angry? Is anger an attribute of Elohim and a fruit of the Spirit?

There are a few times that the Scriptures state "god is angry." This is a horrible translation. The Hebrew word used throughout the Bible that expresses YHWH's anger is "anaph." This term describes "a turning of the nose and face away in disgust and displeasure" and does not necessarily mean that YHWH is controlled

by anger. Throughout the Bible, anger is portrayed as a negative emotion that does not accomplish the will of YHWH. Anger is a fruit of the flesh and a feeling that YHWH Y'shua never had. No, YHWH was not angry with Korach and the rebellion. He knew what was going to happen and was totally in control of his emotions as he dealt with the rebellious Israelites. Anger is a sin that leads to sin.

1 John 3:15 says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." This means that anger, left unchecked and unbridled, is equal to the heinous murder and abuse of another person.

The Ten Commandments clearly state "thou shalt not murder." Most people would never willingly take the life of another. However, the Messiah made it clear that wishing someone dead is as bad as physically killing them. This was the original intention of the command to not murder. "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother without cause will be subject to judgment," Matthew 5:22. This comment by the Savior expounds upon the true heart of the Law of Moses that goes way beyond the letter of the Law. There is a depth of application below even the most basic commandment in the Bible.

Anger is a sin that takes control until more pain occurs. Genesis 4:5-8 shows how Adam's son "Cain became very angry and rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." Anger causes families to divorce, churches to split, and people to have high blood pressure. The Journal of the American Heart Association has said that "anger-prone people are more likely to have heart attacks." Man's anger works in rebellion to the Holy Spirit. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice," Ephesians 4:31.

It has been taught from the pulpits that "holy anger" is an acceptable way to deal with spiritual problems. This is a lie. "The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of Elohim," James 1:20. The Bible never uses the phrase "righteous indignation." Nor is anger justified by the account of an upset Jesus turning the tables on the unfair money-changers in the Temple. A careful reading of Matthew 21 shows that Y'shua was never angry. Instead, he was full of "zeal for the house of god." Y'shua never let anger take control as His actions were motivated by love. Everything the Savior did showed that he was gentle and humble of heart. The Gospel of Luke records that "the chief priests and the scribes and the

leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging upon His words." The actions of Y'shua in the Temple show us that zeal and passion for righteousness is perfectly ok but all anger is wrong.

Ephesians 4:26-27 in the New Living Translation says: "And don't sin by letting anger gain control over you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil." The Greek word for "anger" in this verse literally means "impulse." So, how does a person deal with this deadly emotion? "The best way of dealing with the anger habit is to prevent it occurring in the first place. This means getting to know the triggers that evoke angry feelings and systematically defusing each trigger situation's ability to affect you," wrote Ernest H. Johnson in the book *The Deadly Emotions*. Anger must be avoided and prevented before it leads to pain or even death. Proverbs 29:11, "A fool vents his feelings, but a wise man holds them back." YHWH was never angry and we shouldn't be either.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

In this portion Korach, a Levite, starts a small rebellion against Moshe and Aharon. The complaining and defiance swells to include the community at large. In doubt are Moshe's authority and the establishment of the Aharonic priesthood. Korach argues that anyone should be able to perform priestly rituals. Well, Korach is soon rebuked by Moshe who decides to put the issue to a test. The prideful Korach and his cohorts are proven wrong. "Moshe said, "With this you shall know that YHWH sent me to do all these deeds, for I did not devise them myself. If these men die as all men die and the fate of all men will be visited upon them, then YHWH has not sent me. But if YHWH creates a creation, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them and all that is theirs, and they descend alive into Sheol, you will know that these men have provoked YHWH." As soon as he finished speaking all these words, the earth beneath them split open. The earth beneath them opened its mouth and swallowed them and their houses, and all the men who were with Korach and all the property. They, and all they possessed, descended alive into Sheol; the earth covered them up, and they were lost to the assembly. All the Yisraelites who were around them fled from their cries, for they said, "Lest the earth swallow us up too," Bamidbar / Numbers 16:28-34.

The mystery here is not how Korach can rebel against Moshe and

YHWH. Rebellion and ego are just part of humanity. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory," says the Brit Chadasha. The real baffling issue is that of Korah's fate and specifically the place of "Sheol." Chapter 16:33 says, "They went down alive into Sheol with all that belonged to them; the earth closed in on them and they vanished from the midst of the congregation," Complete Jewish Bible.

The King James Version says they "went down alive into the pit." While the NIV says they "went down alive into the grave." Why do some translations use "Sheol" while others use "grave" or "pit"? What is Sheol? These are mysteries that need to be solved.

The Ancient Hebrew word "Sheol" literally means the "underworld of the dead." The term speaks of an abode, thought to be deep within the earth (Psalms 88:6, Amos 9:2). Strong's Exhaustive Dictionary calls it a "subterranean retreat, grave, hell, or pit." Within the oldest Hebrew thought, Sheol is a place of levels in which the dead inhabit.

Many modern Jewish teachers insist that Sheol does not exist and therefore, there is no need for personal salvation. This is contrary to many verses found through the Scriptures and runs contrary to many Talmudic writings. Even the Sages like Hillel and Gimmel taught about Sheol and the afterlife (Beware of this anti-missionary teaching lest you fall prey to it.)

To be accurate, the word "Sheol" appears 65 times in the Tanakh, often translated as "pit" or "grave." Some Bible translations do not translate the Hebrew term at all and include it in their text. It very rarely is used in context of a physical burial site. On the contrary, the Biblical picture of Sheol is a spiritual gathering place for dead spirits. "Sheol is pictured as a city with gates in Yesha'yahu 38:10 and was regarded as the abode of all the dead, both the righteous and the wicked in Job 30:23," says the Holman Bible Dictionary.

The Brit Chadasha / New Testament says that the "wages of sin is death" in Romans 6:23. Spiritual death is separation from YHWH, which comes as a result of a lifestyle of sin. 1 John 3:4 defines sin as breaking the Laws of Moshe/Torah. When man does not obey the Torah through trusting faith then man sins. And when man sins fellowship with the Holy Elohim is broken. "Your sins have separated you from your Elohim, your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear," Yesha'yahu / Isaiah 59:2. Adam sinned and was cast out of YHWH's presence, out of the Gan Eden. Korach rebelled and was

swallowed alive by Sheol. He, his family, and his followers were separated from YHWH's presence through being taken to a low part of Sheol itself.

In Tanakh times Sheol contained basically three divisions parted by a huge gulf. The spirit of the tzedek or righteous would descend into Sheol at death and take up residence in Avraham's bosom. Ya'acov, David, Jonah, Ezeki'el, and others all speak of personally going down to Sheol. This place is also called "Paradise."

At their death, the wicked would be taken to the lower part of Sheol called in Hebrew "GeHinnom." In most English Bibles this word is translated as "Hell" and is derived from three Greek words: hades, tartaroo, and gehenna. Y'shua spoke of this department of Sheol where there is gnashing of teeth and weeping. He said in Mark 9:47 that here the "worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." GeHinnom is literally the "valley of Hinnom, translated into Greek as "Gehenna." GeHinnom was the trash disposal place during Biblical times. Here there was constant burning and it was here that children were offered to the pagan god Molech. GeHinnom is a picturesque term used to describe the harshest of conditions.

Below Ge Hinnom is another level of Sheol. The Sages of Judaism say that the lowest part of Sheol is the lowest point in the universe. This level is called the "lake of fire" in some places of the Bible. The Hebrew term for the lowest part of Sheol is "abaddon" with literally means destroyer. Revelation 9:11 speaks of this abyss and names the being in charge of this section Abaddon. Abaddon is also spoken of in historical and mystical accounts as the "Netherlands." This is the bottom place of torment prepared for the adversary and his demons. Just as smoke and flames rise, it seems that the fires of Sheol are located here and torment those above in the other level.

Moshiach Y'shua taught that a huge gulf in Sheol separated those in Avraham's bosom or Paradise from those in the depth of torment. Much can be learned about Sheol from the Messiah. "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell (Sheol), where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Avraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Avraham, have

pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' "But Avraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us," Luke 16:19-26.

One Rabbi has said that in Sheol what happens everyday and all day is the teaching of Torah. This Rebbe says that for the wicked the teaching of Torah is torment and hell, but for the righteous the teaching of Torah is joy and heaven.

To recap, Sheol was the underworld place of the dead that was made up of several levels. The bottom of Sheol was the lake of fire called Abaddon. The level above the bottom was the place of torment for the unredeemed where there was destruction and hopelessness (Yesha'yahu / Isaiah 38.) A gulf separated the wicked from the righteous who were held prisoner in Paradise until Y'shua's death. Interestingly, people could be rescued from Sheol and in fact many were.

One example of a deliverance from the dead is the prophet Jonah / Jonah. Contrary to many teachings, evidently Jonah died and went to Sheol during the three days and nights that he was in the belly of the whale. Sure, YHWH could have kept him Jonah alive in the fish, but the Bible never points to that. What the Tanakh does say is that Jonah became unconscious and actually entered the depths of Sheol. "Jonah said, 'in my distress I called to YHWH and he answered me. From the depths of Sheol I called for help, and you listened to my cry," Jonah 2:2. (also reference 2:5-7 for more on this). Didn't Y'shua say that Jonah was a sign of His own death, burial, and resurrection? Just like Jonah, Y'shua Himself died and went down into Sheol, and came back alive.

The deliverance from Sheol is more proof of the words found in 1 Samuel 2:6 that says, "YHWH brings death and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up."

Other saints were also rescued from Sheol as recorded in the Brit Chadasha. At Messiah's death the prisoners of Sheol were released and Sheol itself went through a transformation. "At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They

came out of the tombs, and after Y'shua's resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people," Mattitياهو / Matthew 27:51-53.

After Y'shua's crucifixion on the tree He descended into Sheol and freed the redeemed captives. He brought them closer to YHWH and into the Shamayim (Heavens.) "But to each one of us grace has been given as Messiah apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men," Ephesians 4:7-8. Just like Jonah, Y'shua died was three days in the tomb, descended into Sheol and then ascended back to life. And now, according to Revelation 1:18 Y'shua holds the keys to Sheol, death, and the grave. Since this time Sheol only contains Ge Hinnom and the Lake of Fire.

An interesting verse can be found in the book of Yesha'yahoo that points to the idea that after Moshiach's redemptive sacrifice, the lower levels of Sheol expanded to encompass all of Avraham's bosom. Sheol, the abode of the dead, has now become Sheol (Hell in English) the place of torment for the wicked. "Therefore Sheol hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it," Yesha'yahoo / Isaiah 5:14.

Sheol is now "hell" - a place of torment for the unredeemed. And now, when believers die their spirits immediately leave their bodies and are not held captive in Sheol anymore. The spirit of the saved ascends back to YHWH from Whom it has come, Ecclesiastes 12:3.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Korach." What does these mean?
2. Read 1 Samuel 11:14-12:22. How does this relate to the story of Numbers week?
3. Consider the words found in Acts 5:1-11. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. At what point in history does this parasha unfold?
7. Where does this parasha take place geographically? What are the setting and environment?

8. Who are the primary actors in the parasha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
9. What is the overall theme of this parasha? What are the subdivisions, if any?
10. Why did Datan and Aviram join Korach?
11. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy?
12. What motivated Korach to rebel?
13. What did Korach and company do when Moshe said that a techelet garment needs tzitzit?
14. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
15. Did Moshe want to be the Kohen gadol?
16. What event did Korach not foresee?
17. What does the phrase rav lachem mean in this week's Parsha? (Give two answers.)
18. What lands are described in this week's Parsha as "flowing with milk and honey"?
19. When did Moshe have the right to take a donkey from the Jewish Community?
20. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
21. What sin did Datan and Aviram have in common specifically with Goliath?
22. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Court for his sins?
23. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of kehunah? Who suffered such a fate?
24. Why specifically was incense used to stop the plague?
25. Why was Aharon's staff placed in the middle of the other 11 staffs?
26. Aharon's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
27. Why are the 24 gifts for the kohanim taught in this week's Parsha?
28. Why is YHWH's covenant with the kohanim called "a covenant of salt"? Pinchas is one of the few Parashot named after an individual Jew. To appreciate the significance of this, not there is no Parsha named Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Joseph, Moses, Aaron or David.
29. The Parsha makes a point to mention the lineage of Pinchas, tracing it back to Aaron, of whom it is said, "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace

and pursuing peace, loving people, and bringing them closer to the Torah" (Pirkei Avot 1:12).

30. Although Pinchas was the grandson of Aaron, he was not a Priest. This is due to the fact that Pinchas was born before the Priestly assignment took effect. As he was not "born to a Priest," he could not be considered one. However, YHWH gave Pinchas the "covenant of peace" and brought him and his descendents into the priesthood forever. Pinchas eventually became the high priest. How does YHWH's action in this case relate to the written Torah?

Pinchas was zealous in his actions. His intentions were only "for the honor of Heaven" as YHWH says it was "My vengeance." Pinchas did not fear doing this in the public view. It would appear he "judged" the situation correctly, and placed his own spiritual and material welfare to the side in order to carry out YHWH's will -- His Torah.

31. Compare Pinchas' "judging correctly" with Y'shua's teachings from the Gospels, who says, "By which you judge, you will be judged." YHWH is said to both punish and reward people, "measure for measure" (midah k'neged midah). Pinchas' judgment and actions result in his being given "The Covenant of Peace" by YHWH. How is this "measure for measure?" Compare Pinchas' actions to those of Shimon and Levi when they killed the men of Shechem after their sister, Dinah had been violated (Genesis 34:1). Shimon and Levi are criticized by Jacob for this. Why is Pinchas praised for killing and Shimon and Levi criticized?

32. Later in this Torah portion comes another story with "motive" at its center. The daughters of Tzelofchad seemingly requested something physical (a share in the Land of Israel). On the other hand, in a previous Parsha, we saw how Korach requested something spiritual. The outcome of these was that Korach was killed and the daughters of Tzelofchad were praised by YHWH. Why?

33. What do the stories of Shimon & Levi, Korach, Pinchas, and the daughters of Tzelofchad teach us about examining our motives according to YHWH's Torah? Compare this to the words from the "New Testament" found in Ya'acov ("James") 1:25.

34. In Hebrew, the word for peace, (shalom), is derived from the root "shalem," meaning "whole" or "complete." To have "wholeness" (i.e., true shalom) that which divides must be removed. Thus peace is an active state and not passive. Sometimes it requires an act of violence to achieve this. In this Parsha, YHWH sends a plague which claims the lives of 24,000 of His people who were sinning. After this, a final census is taken, and

those remaining enter the land. Compare this entire historical scenario to the judgments found in the book of Revelation, which at the end bring YHWH's great and final shalom.

35. Why does Korach episode in the Torah start with the word "and he took"?
36. Why did Korach separated himself... with Datan and Aviram... with two hundred and fifty men from the Children of Israel... they gathered together against Moses and Aharon. (16:1-3)
37. Everything that is separated from the holy things... have I given to you and your sons... it is an eternal covenant of salt. (18:19) What is the connection between salt and the priestly gifts?
38. In order to prove that Moshe is indeed the divinely chosen leader, it is necessary for YHWH to make a "beriyah" - i.e. a 'creation' (see 16:30).
39. In 16:22, Moshe asks a very difficult question: Should one man's sin cause punishment for an entire group? Does YHWH answer Moshe's question? If so, what is that answer? If not, why not?
40. As you read 16:1-35, carefully note where (and when) each conversation and/or event is taking place. Is the narrative continuous or do you find certain 'jumps' within it? If so, explain where. What details are missing?
41. How was the message of Korach saying "you take too much upon yourself" similar to that of Yitro in Exodus 18? In what ways are these two discussions different?
42. What was Moses' response to Korach and the rebellion?
43. Did Korach and the rebels offer strange fire?
44. Was YHWH going to destroy the entire nation of Israel because of the sin of a few people or was the entire nation evil hearted?
45. Where did Korach and his followers go in Numbers 16:33? Was this sheol, hell, the grave or something different?
46. How did Aharon stand "between the dead and the living?"
47. What did the rods in this portion symbolize? Why was this sign necessary? What do almonds symbolize?
48. Was YHWH quick to wrath in this Torah portion or did these sins merit such a response? How many people died in the plague of Korach?
49. Didn't YHWH want the entire nation to be priests? Why did YHWH choose Aharon and his sons?
50. Explain the importance of the firstborn in this Torah portion.
51. According to Numbers 18:21, who gets the tithe?
52. What did you learn from this Open Bible study?

Parasha Chukat

- Numbers 19:1-22:1
- Judges 11:1-33
- John 3:10-21

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses is taught the laws of the Red Heifer, whose ashes purify a person who has been contaminated by contact with a dead body.

After 40 years of journeying through the desert, the people of Israel arrive in the wilderness of Zin. Miriam dies and the people thirst for water. YHWH tells Moses to speak to a rock and command it to give water. Moses gets angry at the rebellious Israelites and strikes the stone. Water issues forth, but Moses is told by YHWH that neither he nor Aaron will enter the Promised Land.

Aaron dies at Har Hahar and is succeeded in the High Priesthood by his son Elazar. Venomous snakes attack the Israelite camp after yet another eruption of discontent in which the people "speak against YHWH and Moses"; YHWH tells Moses to place a brass serpent upon a high pole, and all who will gaze heavenward will be healed. The people sing a song in honor of the miraculous well that provided the water in the desert.

Moses leads the people in battles against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og (who seek to prevent Israel's passage through their territory) and conquers their lands, which lie east of the Jordan.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

"Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect and on which a yoke has never come. You shall give it to Eleazar the priest, that he may take it outside the camp, and it shall be slaughtered before him....Then the heifer shall be burned in his sight....And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet and cast them into the midst of the fire burning the heifer....Then a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and store them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for the water of purification; it is for purifying from sin." (excerpts from Numbers 19:2-9)

One mystery in this Torah portion is the selection about the “parah adumah” or “red heifer.” This holy cow was commanded to be used as a special offering. The parah adumah had the power to purify the uncleanness of death. “Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke,” Numbers 19:2. The Messiah Y’shua was a fulfillment of YHWH’s parah adumah as He was without spot of sin.

The book of Hebrews explains how the parah adumah pictured the Moshiach. The red cow was slain outside the gate like Y’shua, Hebrews 13:12. The entire heifer was to be consumed just as Y’shua gave his entire life for the Father’s Kingdom. The ashes of the red cow were to be collected and stored in a clean place. The body of Y’shua was placed in a perfectly new tomb. Those same ashes were to be stored outside the city, just as the body of Y’shua lay in a tomb outside the city.

When the heifer was sacrificed there was hyssop, cedar and scarlet added. Y’shua was clothed in a scarlet robe and vinegar was given to him as he was crucified. The heifer was red – the color of blood that Y’shua shed for all mankind. The third day and the seventh day were days of purification after the parah adumah water was used. Y’shua rose on the third day and will return at the completion of the seventh day.

The sacrificial cow’s ashes cleansed and purified all that touched it. “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Y’shua, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of YHWH, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water,” Hebrews 19:22.

In Hebrews 9:13-14 it says: "For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered Himself without spot to YHWH, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living YHWH?"

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Mark Twain once said, “Don’t complain and talk about all your problems – 80 percent of people don’t care; the other 20 percent will think you deserve them.”

There is a great deal of truth in Twain’s words. Unfortunately Twain wasn’t around to share this timeless wisdom with Beit Yisra’el during their wilderness wanderings. For forty years complaining and murmuring seemed to be an area that Yisra’el excelled in. They were always fussing about something. In fact, the majority of the book of Bamidbar (Numbers) is devoted to the reporting of the many rebellions of Yisra’el and their consequences. Not perfect conditions and not perfect people led to complaining and rebellion.

Here’s a short list of just a few of the times Yisra’el complained and got into trouble:

In Chapter 11 the Yisraelites complain about their "misfortunes;" YHWH sends fire and consumes some outlying parts of the camp. No deaths occurred yet the Yisraelites continued to fuss about eating manna, and long for meat. Moshe asks for help from YHWH to deal with the people and is given 70 elders; YHWH then provides quail but many overeat and die of a plague. Miryam and Aharon speak against Moshe in Chapter 12. YHWH tells them that he speaks to Moshe directly, not in dreams as he does to prophets; Elohim then strikes Miryam with a leprosy-like disease.

After accepting the report from 10 of the 12 spies that went into Canaan that the people of that land cannot be defeated, the unfaithful Yisraelites are sentenced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years; the 10 spies die in a plague. Then the Hebrews try to enter the land without YHWH’s blessing, and they are soundly defeated by the Canaanites and Amelekites in Chapter 14. The rebellions of Korach, Dathan, Aviram, On, and 250 chosen men bring a terrible earthquake that swallows them up with their families in Chapter 16. Yisrael continues to complain against Moshe and a plague is sent by Elohim, which kills over 14,000 people. Moshe graciously intercedes and YHWH stops the plague. To stop the continuous rebellions by Yisrael and to prove through whom Elohim speaks, a rod is taken from each of the 12 tribes and placed in the tent of meeting; Aharon’s is the only rod that buds (chapter 17). Again in chapter 21, complaints by the Yisraelites are made against Moshe and Aharon. This time about a water shortage; Moshe strikes the rock twice and water comes forward.

In chapter 25 the Yisraelite will mix with the "daughters of Moab" and be lured into idolatry. As a result of this rebellion over 24,000 are killed by Elohim

Another time of uprising against YHWH and His leadership occurs in the Torah parasha for this week. The reader of "Chukat" quickly understands the power of the tongue. In Chapter 21 verse 5 of Bamidbar the Beit Yisra'el spoke against Moshe's leadership and YHWH's leading. There is no doubt they were discouraged, but they handled their frustration the wrong way.

You see, the Hebrews were irritated because the way was harsh. The food of heaven-supplied manna had become bland and boring. And they were tired. The comforts of Mitzrayim, little as they were, seemed better than living life as a nomad in search of a homeland. They spoke harshly against Moshe AND YHWH when bypassing the land of Edom. The Talmud says, "whoever speaks against the shepherd of Israel, it is as though he spoke against Elohim."

"They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; they spoke against Elohim and against Moshe, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food," Bamidbar 21:4-5.

The result of this complaining was discipline from YHWH Himself in the form of the removal of His protection. YHWH lifted his protective covering and allowed fiery serpents to plague the people. Many are bitten and die until Moshe prays to YHWH on behalf of the people; a bronze serpent is made and placed on a pole—the people that were bitten look on it and are saved. The people had stepped into the realm of the serpent and now had to face the consequences. You see, when a person gives into murmuring and complaining then that person is stepping out of the realm of the Spirit and into the realm of the flesh. You will be disciplined if you rise up against spiritual leadership. Again, this isn't the first time Yisra'el has rebelled. Before they have faced earthquakes, stomach aches, fire from heaven, and military defeats as their punishment. Now they must see the error of their ways or die.

"The power of life and death is in the tongue," says Mishlei (Proverbs) 18:21. Yisra'el could have spoken blessings to YHWH and supported Moshe's leadership but they did not. No, their words were rebellious, and brought death. This is a prime example on how words can either bring chayim and shalom or bickering

and destruction. Just think of how different history would read if Yisra'el supported Moshe, Aharon, and YHWH's leading instead of rebelling against it. How soon would have the nation reached the Promised Land? How many lives would have been spared if they would have just listened and obeyed? Wouldn't life have been better for the nation if they could have just learned from their mistakes?

Sadly, Yisra'el didn't learn from their mistakes, so the nation repeated them. Over and over again the Torah records the people fussing and defying YHWH. And over and over again the nation faces discipline. Just because you can learn from your mistakes doesn't mean you have to make them all yourself. There are many things that can be realized from the errors of others. For just a moment put yourself in Israel's shoes (or sandals).

Step out of your comforts of life in the fast lane of 2004 and imagine you are part of the mixed multitude being led by Moshe to the Promised Land. How easy would it be fuss and moan about manna, divine leadership, and no water? Could you hold your tongue day after day or would you honestly be as guilty as our ancestors for constantly complaining? How often do you complain about life now? It was wrong to argue and complain for Yisra'el then and it is still wrong for Yisra'el today.

Here are a few life lessons to reflect on about complaining. Don't fuss about it – just keep reading!

Talking about your ills just makes you more ill. Complaining never gets you anywhere but worse off. If all you do is talk about your problems then your problems will seem better. Sometimes it's best to remember that things are never as bad as they seem. Situations could always be worse and life is much better than it's opposite.

Complaining grieves the Ruach HaKodesh! When you bicker you enter the realm of the serpent and step out of the realm of the Spirit. Watch out or the snakes will bite you – “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of Elohim, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption,” Ephesians 4:29 & 30.

When in doubt don't. To be honest, sometimes it is hard to support spiritual leadership that seems to be going in a different direction or different pace than you would like. When in doubt of spiritual leadership don't complain – pray for your leaders and support them. Hear what they have to say and bite your tongue...“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and should not become angry easily,” says the book of Ya'acov.

It is the little things in life that often lead to murmuring...traffic jams, screaming kids, slow internet, old manna, and little water don't really matter. Before you fuss think about the subject of your mouth. Are you really making a point about your objections or are you just barking about wants, desires, and stuff? “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers,” Galatians 6:9-10.

Lastly - “Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of Elohim without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe,” Philippians 2:14-15 – what else needs to be said?

Portion Points to Ponder

1. What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?
2. Read the Haftarah portion of Judges 11:1-33. How does this relate to this week's Torah portion?
3. Read the Newer Testament sections of John 3:10-21. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week's reading? What did you learn from these words?
4. How does this portion speak of Messiah Y'shua?
5. "Take a perfect para adumah (red heifer)." What does the word "perfect" mean in this context?
6. How many non-red hairs disqualify a cow as a para adumah?
7. A man dies in a tent. What happens to the sealed metal and earthenware utensils in the tent?
8. What happens to the one who: a) sprinkles the water mixed with the ashes of the para adumah; b) touches the water; c) carries the water?
9. Why was the mitzvah / commandment of the para adumah entrusted to Elazar rather than to Aharon?

10. Why does the Torah stress that the entire congregation came to Midbar Tzin / the wilderness of Tzin?
11. Why is Miriam's death taught after the law of para adumah?
12. During their journey in the midbar, in whose merit did the Jewish People receive water?
13. Why did Moshe need to strike the rock a second time? What eventually happened because of this sin?
14. When Moshe told the King of Edom that the Hebrew People would not drink from the well-water, to which well did he refer? What do we learn from this?
15. We are told that the cloud that led the Hebrew People leveled all mountains in their path except three. Which three and why?
16. Why did the entire congregation mourn Aharon's death?
17. What disappeared when Aharon died?
18. Which "inhabitant of the South" (21:1) attacked the Israelites?
19. For what two reasons did YHWH punish the people with snakes specifically?
20. Why did the Israelite People camp in Arnon, rather than pass through Moav to enter Eretz Canaan?
21. What miracle took place at the valley of Arnon?
22. What was the "strength" of Amon that prevented the Hebrew People from entering into their Land?
23. Why was Moshe afraid of Og?
24. Who killed Og?
25. The Parsha title "Chukat" comes from a word for a Divine ordinance that has no "rational" explanation. (As opposed to Eidot/Testimonies and Mishpatim/Laws, that can be sensibly understood.) Within the category of Chukim (plural) are two levels; 1) those decrees that could in principle be understood by human intelligence, but details of which are beyond comprehension, and 2) those which are entirely beyond the scope of human understanding. Why is the law of the Red Heifer a chuk?
26. How does James 2:10 speak of the Torah being divided into commandments that can be understood and commandments that can not?
27. How would speaking to the rock teach the Jewish people to use their spiritual abilities to accomplish physical goals? What was the difference between striking and speaking to the rock, in terms of involvement at the physical level versus at the level of the soul? How would the latter be a greater miracle than the former?

28. How would the miracle of speaking to the rock have helped bring the people to a higher level of spirituality/holiness? How is this concept related to that of "sanctifying the Name of YHWH?" How might this be compare to us learning to speak to "THE ROCK?" How does "spiritual stagnation" in fact cause us to move "backward" spiritually? (See the book of Hebrews where this idea is eluded to several times.)
29. The Torah shows that when Miriam died, the well of water dried up. Miriam was what is known as a Tzaddik, "a righteous person" through whom other are blessed. Why might it benefit us to seek out such Tzaddikim and associate with them? Compare this to last week's Parsha, where those of the tribe of Reuben associated themselves with Korach.
30. The laws of the red heifer were never clearly understood, but such a law tested the obedience of the Israelites. Are there rules and laws which you must follow in your life (at home, at work or at school; as an American or as a Hebrew that don't seem to make sense? What are they? Discuss your family rules and the reasons that they are rules for your family. Do you think any of the rules your family has are to test the obedience of the children? Why or why not?
31. The ritual of the Red Heifer, of course, fell into disuse after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. What can we learn from this commandment today? How does the Red Heifer apply to life in this time?
32. The focus of the incident at the waters of Meribah is the divine decree that neither Moses nor Aaron shall live to enter the Promised Land. Striking a rock rather than speaking to it does not seem a justifiable reason for Moses to be excluded from the land. Yet, four times the Torah identifies this incident as the cause of Moses and Aaron's exclusion from the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12, 20:24, 27:14, and Deuteronomy 32:51). Was such a punishment against Moses fair?
33. Did Moses and Aaron sin by forgetting that they were to serve as role models for the Israelites when they exploded in anger at Meribah, and misled the people into believing that uncontrolled anger is allowed in a leader?
34. Does leadership demand a higher degree of righteousness and self-control than is required from the rest of society? What do you do when you get very angry? Can you think of some constructive ways to let people know what made/makes you angry?
35. How does the red heifer point to Y'shua?
36. Numbers 20:2-3 says, "There was no water ... the people chided with Moses." Do you suffer lack in your life? Scripture says that Y'shua will

supply all of our needs (Phil 4:19). Do you get angry with YHVH and murmur against him for your lot in life and for the bad things that happen to you? Or do you give thanks to him for all that happens (1 Thess 5:18) knowing that all things work to good for the benefit of our being conformed into the image of Y'shua (Rom 8:28–29)? If we keep fighting or resisting our trials in the wilderness instead of learning from them and overcoming them, then how will we be able to enter the Promised Land? It is about faith in the promises of YHVH. Do we truly believe his Word when he says he will supply all of our needs?

37. In Numbers 21:6 YHWH sent fiery serpents. YHVH judged Israel for murmuring by sending fiery serpents among them. How often do we lash out with our tongues to kill, steal and destroy, to sow discord among brethren (which YHWH hates and calls an abomination, Prov 6:16–19)?
38. In Numbers 21:7 the Torah says “We have sinned, for we have spoken against YHWH”. Why were the people punished?
39. Numbers 21:8–9 says that “Moses made a serpent of brass.” How is the serpent on the bronze pole is another prophetic picture of the redemptive work of Y'shua. What are the parallels? Why is the pole bronze? Why is it a snake and how does that picture Y'shua? Why a pole? (See John 3:14 and 12:32.)

Parasha Balak

- Numbers 22:2-25:9
- Micah 5:6-6:8
- Romans 11:25-32

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Balak, the King of Moab, summons the prophet Bilaam to curse the people of Israel. On the way, Bilaam is berated by his donkey, who sees the angel that YHWH sends to block their way before Bilaam does. Three times, from three different vantage points, Bilaam attempts to pronounce his curses; each time, blessings issue instead. Bilaam also prophecies on the end of days and the coming of Moshiach.

The people fall prey to the charms of the daughters of Moab and are enticed to worship the idol Peor. When a high-ranking Israelite official publicly takes a Midianite princess into a tent, Pinchas kills them both, stopping the plague raging among the people.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

This portion is named after the king Balak who does all he can to hurt the people of Israel. Part of his plan was to get the prophet Bilaam to curse the set apart ones. Little did he know it, but it is impossible to curse something that YHWH has blessed! The power of YHWH turned the curses of Balak into the blessings of Bilaam. The same is true for how Y'shua turned the curses of sin into the blessings of YHWH. What was meant for evil turned out for good at the high place of Bilaam and at the Messiah Y'shua's execution stake?

Bilaam was powerless to do harm to Israel as he said, "How shall I curse, whom Elohim hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom YHWH hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see Him, and from the hills I behold Him." Balak the king couldn't hurt Israel because they were in line with YHWH's will. "As the sparrow for flitting about, as the swallow for flying, so a curse undeserved shall not come," says Proverbs 26:2. This verse from the book of Mishlei explains that a curse undeserved shall absolutely, positively not have any affect. The curses spoken against a believer can actually become blessings, just as Y'shua became a

curse for us so that we might become righteous. Messiah “redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us,” Galatians 3:13.

YHWH turned the curses of the world into a blessing for Israel with Bilaam and he can do the same today with you! Nehemiah 13:2, “The Moabites did not meet the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Bilaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our Elohim turned the curse into a blessing.”

Applying the Portion to Life Today

The destruction of the nation of Israel was the desire of the evil King Balak, who went as far as using divination to curse the chosen people. Our Torah portion states that Balak and Bilaam ascended a high place so that Bilaam could pronounce a curse on Israel. The place where Bilaam spoke is just as important as what he said. Bilaam spoke from a high place, which is a hill, our mount from where pagans offered sacrifices. On a high place is where asherah poles were erected and where Molech offered human sacrifices. High places originate with the original rebellion of the satan and are still play today.

Isaiah 14:12-17, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of Elohim I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit. Those who see you will stare at you, and ponder over you: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world like a desert and overthrew its cities, who did not let his prisoners go home?’” This passage shows how the enemy tried to exalt himself into a high place. In the King James translation, verse 12 reads: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”

The enemy wanted to go up. He wanted the attention, the praise, the power and the place of the exalted one. This is the pattern the enemy started and millions follow everyday.

One prime example of high place worship occurred in 1 Kings 12 when the kingdom of Israel was torn in two. The wicked king Jeroboam encouraged the nation of Israel to ascend the high places of false worship. 1 Kings 12:27-33 relates how Jeroboam set up high places with false worship heights, including

false days, false places, and false ways. High place worship is a false system that rebels against the Almighty's call to go up to Jerusalem.

High place worship feels real, looks real, and tastes real but it is not the Biblical worship experience that is based on spirit and in truth.

Throughout the Older Testament, the people of Israel built more and more high places of rebellion. "And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the YHWH their Elohim, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city," 2 Kings 17:9. Even the people of Judah did the same as they "built high places, and images, and groves, and on every high hill, and under every green tree."

It is from a high place in Numbers 22:41 that Balak took Balaam to curse Israel. The same happens today. The enemy seeks to enthrone himself upon the high places of the world. The Hebrew word that is often used to describe a false place of worship and honor is very interesting. It is the same Hebrew term used in Isaiah to describe the heights from which Satan fell. This is the Hebrew term "bama." A "bama" is anything that exalts itself over the wisdom, power, or knowledge of YHWH.

Now, you might think that the high pagan places today do not apply to you. Well, think again. There are high places that work in each of our lives everyday in the way we think. A high place is anywhere that a thought or emotion exalts itself over the knowledge of YHWH. The spirit of Balak and Bilaam is alive today and operating behind the thoughts of the mind.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are worldly. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of Elohim, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete."

This section of Scripture from 2 Corinthians is key to understanding high places. These aren't just places of pagan idolatry worship BUT strongholds in our very thought patterns. There are high places everywhere! Ezekiel 16:24, "That thou hast also built unto thee an eminent place, and hast made thee a high place in every street."

Our thought life is the battle ground of worship and the place of high places. We must go up to the high places and tear down the devil's kingdom. The enemy is enthroned upon the feelings and emotions. High places include thoughts of selfishness, unloving spirits, ridicule, unforgiveness, impatience, jealousy, anger, doubt, and fear. These are high places in each of our lives that must be recognized, removed, repented for, and replaced with YHWH's truth. Ha Satan is enthroned upon high places of thought that exalt themselves over the knowledge of YHWH. The solution to such evil is recognizing that YHWH is enthroned upon the praises of his people. Strongholds may abound – high places are all around – yet they can be defeated!

We must tear down the devil's high places. We do this by going up to be with YHWH. Leviticus 26:30, "YHWH said, "I will destroy your high places, and cast down your images, and cast your carcasses upon the carcasses of your idols and my soul shall abhor you."

To defeat the high places, the strongholds that the enemy has in our lives, we must change the way we worship. We need to be like the angels in their worship of YHWH that circle the throne of YHWH twenty four hours a day and seven days a week proclaiming "holy, holy, holy." They don't worship YHWH because of what he has done. Instead, they worship YHWH for WHO he is! There is a difference in worship and praise when it comes to reflecting on just who YHWH is. Praise is thanking YHWH for what He has done in our lives and in the Scriptures. We should enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. Then as we ascend we are to begin changing our words and our thoughts to be totally directed to HIM. We need a few minutes each day to just reflect on YHWH's nature and character. This time of true worship can change the rest of our day and week as it empowers us to rely upon YHWH greater. "I will bless YHWH at all times, His praise will continually be on my mouth," Psalm 34:1.

Sometimes our high places are things that YHWH has done with Israel or in the Torah that we focus on MORE than Him! We must get to the place in our worship that its is about WHO YHWH IS and NOT just about what YHWH can do OR has done for us or Israel! This is intimacy.

Think about the plague of snakes and the pole that was lifted up in the desert to save the people from the sickness. This stake was to represent Y'shua as He was lifted up but it came to be a high place. 2 Kings 18:4 explains, "He removed the

high places, and break the images, and cut down the groves, and break in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.” The past moves of YHWH don’t matter if YHWH isn’t moving in your life today!

When was the last time you prayed and got an answer or saw miracles or witnessed and had someone accept the Messiah before your very eyes? So what if YHWH saved you when you were 12 – what are you doing now?

So what if the red sea parted if you don’t have victory in your life today?
So what if there are 613 commandments if you can’t get the unforgiveness and bitterness out of your life? So what if an image of a snake saved people if it was later going to be worshipped?

False high places are destroyed through coming closer to YHWH by ascending up to Jerusalem in intimacy. High places have no power if we listen to YHWH! Get that! Even Bilaam couldn’t curse Israel at a high place because Bilaam listened to YHWH.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of YHWH or shall stand in his holy place?” Psalm 24:3

An open heart will be acceptable to the call of YHWH to go UP to Jerusalem! An open heart will lead people to the top of His mountain and into intimacy with YHWH.

We must learn to go up to Jerusalem through praise and through prayer if we will overcome the strongholds in our lives and in the lives of others. The thought patterns of the world, of the satan, of evil need to be torn down through the spiritual weapons of warfare. Our weapons are mighty in Y’shua for the pulling down of high places as we go up to Jerusalem with YHWH.

Micah 4:2, “And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of YHWH, and to the house of the Elohim of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of YHWH from Jerusalem.”

Portion Points to Ponder

1. What does the Hebrew name of this Torah portion mean?

2. Read the Haftarah portion of Micah 5:6-6:8. How does this relate to this week's Torah portion?
3. Read the Newer Testament section of Romans 11:25-32. Why were these passages chosen to correspond to this week's reading? What did you learn from these words?
4. How does this portion speak of Messiah Y'shua?
5. Why does the Torah tell us this story?
6. How does Bilaam prophecy of the coming Messiah?
7. Give two reasons why Moab was so afraid of Israel.
8. What was Balak's tribe and with which other tribe did he align himself?
9. When he sent messengers to fetch Bilaam, what was Balak asking Bilaam to do?
10. When Elohim first came to Bilaam in the night, what did He tell him to do?
11. What did Balaam's donkey see as they rode along the way?
12. The donkey tried to get the message to Bilaam three different ways before she finally spoke. What were the three ways?
13. Bilaam had struck the donkey several times, and finally the donkey asked him why. What did Bilaam give as his reason?
14. At Balaam's instructions, Balak built altars for sacrifices. How many times did he do this and how many altars were there?
15. What did Balak sacrifice on each altar?
16. What did Bilaam say and do after each set of sacrifices?
17. When the Israelites began to live with the Midianites, they started taking on their evil ways. A Midianite woman and an Israelite man were cavorting in front of all. For this, and other gross sins committed by the people, many were put to death by a plague. Who saved them and how?
18. If YHWH gave Bilaam permission to go, saying to him, "If these men have come to invite you, you may go with them" (Num. 22:20), after he goes how can Scripture say, "But YHWH was incensed at his going; so an angel of YHWH placed himself in his way as an adversary" (Num. 22:22); for did he not go by YHWH's leave and at His word?
19. Regarding the words, "The donkey, seeing the angel of YHWH" (v. 25), how could it be that the donkey saw the spiritual angel of YHWH with her eyes, when Bilaam, the human and prophet, did not see him? And how could the donkey see him?
20. If seeing the angel of YHWH was a miracle, just as the donkey's speaking was a miracle, what was the purpose of this miracle? For YHWH does not work new wonders except when absolutely necessary, and we can find no

other purpose here except for the angel talking to Bilaam, and that could have been accomplished simply by his speaking to him; what need was there for the donkey to see the angel and to speak at all?

21. Regarding the angel's question to Bilaam, "Why have you beaten your donkey?" (v. 32), his response was clear, since she had swerved from the road, squeezed Balaam's foot against the wall, and lay down under him. Thus the angel should have asked him why he had gone to damn Israel and should not have taken him to task for beating the donkey, since that had been legitimate.
22. Regarding the angel saying, "Unless she had shied away from me, you are the one I should have killed, while sparing her" (v. 33), he should have said, "If she had not shied away from me." Furthermore, how could killing or sparing his life depend on swerving from the road; for if Bilaam deserved to die for going on the errand, then even if the donkey upon which he was riding were to swerve off the road that would not exonerate him. And if he did not deserve to die, why did the angel say, "you are the one I should have killed"? What had he done to deserve being put to death?
23. How was it that the Moabite dignitaries accompanying Bilaam, and his two servants alongside, did not see the angel? If the angel appeared in concrete form as a human being, as the mystics maintain, then they should have all seen him; and if the angel appeared in a prophetic vision, then how did the donkey apprehend him?
24. Why did the angel of YHWH set out to intercept Bilaam along the way? After all, he said no more to him than YHWH had already said; for He had said, "If these men have come to invite you, you may go with them. But whatever I command you, that you shall do" (v. 20), and the angel himself said likewise, "Go with the men. But you must say nothing except what I tell you" (v. 35). Thus, the angel's coming seems to have been to no purpose.
25. The elders of Mo'av and Midyan bring "kesamim" with them to Bilaam. What are they, and why are they brought? Where else in the parasha is this word mentioned, and how does that reflect back on the "kesamim" here?
26. When the elders come to Bilaam and solicit his sorcery, he invites them to stay the night so he can consult YHWH about the matter. YHWH asks him, "Who are these men with you?" Why does YHWH ask a question, since He certainly already knows the answer? Where else does YHWH ask questions like this, and what is the significance of the connection between this story and that story?

27. Our parasha is a great place to look at the ways in which people play “telephone” in real life. YHWH tells Bilaam one thing, but Bilaam reports something slightly (but significantly) different to the elders of Moav; they in turn report something slightly (but significantly) different to Balak. What are these subtle differences, and what accounts for them? Are they important to the theme of the parasha, or are they just an interesting side comment on the nature of communication? How is Balak’s understanding of Balaam’s response reflected in his comments to Bilaam in 22:37 and later in 24:11?
28. Bilaam responds to Balak’s second group of emissaries by consulting YHWH again about going with them. YHWH tells Bilaam to go (22:20). But, incredibly, just two pesukim later (22:22), YHWH “was angry because he was going.” Well, does YHWH really want him to go or not?
29. Next comes the story with Bilaam and the donkey. But what is the point? Why is this story in the Torah? What are we supposed to get out of it?
30. Why does the angel show up to threaten Bilaam at all, if in the end he is going to tell Bilaam to keep going with Balak’s men anyway? And what is the point of delivering to Bilaam again the same instructions YHWH had already given him in 22:20?
31. When Bilaam meets Balak, they embark on their joint effort to curse Bnei Yisrael. Why does Bilaam say nothing about himself in the first two “meshalim” he offers, but in the third and fourth “meshalim,” he prefaces his words with extensive self-description? And what is the significance of the content of the self-description?
32. Bilaam makes several theological statements in the course of the “meshalim” he delivers. How does this theological information contradict his own behavior?
33. Finally, a very basic question which should have been on our minds all this time: who is this Bilaam, anyway? Is he a close friend of YHWH’s who is believed to have power to bless and curse, or is he a sorcerer, a devotee of darker powers than YHWH? Or is he something else?
34. Bilaam was not able to curse Israel, but Israel did curse itself at the end of our Torah portion. How?
35. Who was Pinchas? What did he do? Why should this behavior be studied and applauded?

Parasha Pinchas

- Numbers 25:10-30:1
- 1 Kings 18:46-19:21
- John 2:13-25

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Aaron's grandson, Pinchas, is rewarded for his act of zealotry in killing the Shimonite prince Zimri and the Midianite princess: YHWH grants him a covenant of peace and the priesthood.

A census of the people counts 601,730 men between the ages of 20 and 60. Moses is instructed on how the Land is to be divided by lottery among the tribes and families of Israel. The five daughters of Zelophehad petition Moses that they be granted the portion of the land belonging to their father, who died without sons; YHWH accepts their claim and incorporates it into the Torah's laws of inheritance.

Moses empowers Joshua to succeed him and lead the people into the Land of Israel. The Parasha concludes with a detailed list of the daily offerings, and the additional offerings brought on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh (first of the month), and the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

During Israel's journey from Egypt the priests gave in to the people and compromised true worship. "And when the people say that Moshe delayed to come down out of the Mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aharon, and said to him, Get up, make us elohim, that shall go before us; for as this Moshe, the man that brought us up out of the land of Mitzrayim, we do not know what has become of him. And Aharon said to them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, and of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings that were in their ears, and brought them to Aharon. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a golden calf: and they said, These be your elohim, O Yisrael. Which brought you up out of the land of Mitzrayim," Shemot 32:1-4.

Aharon gave in to the nation's request and gave them the idol of the golden cow. Remember, if you don't learn from the past then you are doomed to repeat it. If we don't tikkun the errors of our ancestors then we may replicate them. Compromise cannot be tolerated within the family of Yisra'el. It not only has to be stopped, it also has to be fixed. Because of the sin of the golden cow, the nation was in need of tikkun or rectification of sin.

It has been suggest that part of Israel's tikkun was the actions of Pinchas. "And when Pinchas, the son of El-Azar, the son of Aharon the Kohen, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Yisrael into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Yisrael, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stopped from the children of Yisrael," Bamidbar 25:7-15. Tikkun of Aharon's sin took place as Pinchas the priest killed a public sinner. Pinchas acted like the Messiah Y'shua in exacting zeal against those who would abuse the grace of YHWH. Y'shua often rebuked the religious leaders for saying one thing and doing another. He never allowed hypocrisy to happen without confronting the sin and the sinner. Pinchas did the same. He could not sit still while Israel cursed themselves through blatant disobedience.

Balak was unable to curse the chosen people spiritually, yet they cursed themselves through false worship. Pinchas saw what was going on and the resulting plague against the people. He placed himself in danger of death by murdering those who were in rebellion as the Torah calls for an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." The Spirit of the Torah prevailed as Pinchas was rewarded with part of the priesthood. Y'shua as well gave his life up for the world and became a priest forever in the lineage of Melchizadek. Blessed be the name of Y'shua, our high priest and blessed be the memory of Pinchas.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

To truly understand some events in this week's Torah reading, we need to review what has happened to the nation of Yisra'el. Let your mind go back in time and imagine Yisra'el enslaved.

Think for just a minute about the terrible treatment the Hebrews endured for hundreds of years by the Egyptians. Now, can you imagine this huge group of people leaving the bondage of slavery and the harsh taskmaster of

Pharaoh? What excitement! What chaos!

Millions leave behind all they know to establish their own country and to follow their leader Moshe. They want to govern themselves, to cast off oppression and be free. They also want to return to the true worship of the deity of their forefathers.

Now imagine the madness that takes place as this throng of people journey to their own land. They have no rules, no stop signs, and no government. All they know is bondage and slavery. They grumble and they complain. At times this newly born nation behaves in pure rebellion and at other moments they obey their leader in humble submission. One day the society longs for the land of Egypt and the next day they desire their private homeland. The people need laws, they need rules for living, and so they look to their leader for instructions.

To help the nation develop, the people are given a national constitution directly from the Creator of the Universe. The Torah is spoken to Moshe and relayed to the community. Obedience to the Almighty's instructions brings blessing and unity while disobedience results in curses and dispersion.

Because of their incessant rebellion the generation of people that were freed from slavery will not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. A new age group and a new leader will possess the territory and firmly establish the nation. A different leader is to be chosen for this young nation, the nation of Yisra'el.

Moshe is told in the book of Bamidbar/Numbers to "take Yah'hoshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Elazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him." Through this simple process of dedication, leadership was transferred from one generation to the next and an example was set for future generations.

The Hebrew term for the transference of authority and leadership is "semikah." Semikah literally means, "leaning" or "laying on of hands." The patriarchs originally used this simple procedure to bestow divine blessings. The Fathers of our faith would confirm birthright and protection as found in B'reisheet 48:14-18 through the laying on of hands. The Levites were brought before YHWH and the children of Yisra'el put their hands on them as a type of ordination.

Semikah at one time was also a type of dedication of some of the sacrificial animals that were slain on the altar. The person offering the animal would place his hands upon the sacrifice in a symbolic transmission of punishment. "The act was carried out by the owner laying both his hands with all his might between the horns of the animal immediately before it was dispatched," reads the Encyclopedia Judaica. The sinner would confess wrongdoing over the animal, and the substitute bore the punishment of the sin.

Moshe ordained through semikah the 70 elders of Yisra'el who would help interpret Torah. In Bamidbar he was setting aside Yah'hoshua as the undisputed leader of the new nation. Thousands of years later Rabbi Y'shua would use semikah often to heal the sick and transfer blessings. Finally, today modern semikah is more or less, "a rabbinical degree which authorizes a person to answer questions and resolve disputes regarding Jewish law," says the website Judaism 101. Because of corruption and disagreements on halakhah, semikah has dwindled away from the place of priority it once held to become a simple ordination by some religious groups. Others refuse to do semikah at all. Yet the examples of Moshe and Y'shua are to be considered much deeper than just establishing someone as a "rabbi" or minister. Semikah goes beyond simply ordaining someone into the ministry. Following the Torah's leading shows that semikah should be part of the Hebraic lifestyle.

In the Brit Chadasha Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) taught that what took place in the wilderness occurred to represent life to believers today. 1 Corinthians 10:1,6, "Do not be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea...now these things occurred as examples." The Almighty YHWH was forming a culture and lifecycle for Yisra'el with the different ordinances and process that He gave. This nation's guidance and culture was given in the form of Torah. Semikah was just one of the many aspects to this set apart lifestyle.

Semikah appears throughout the Bible in various uses like:

- Blessing
- Setting in place and anointing of leaders
- Consecration
- Impartation of spiritual gifts, strength, authority, and wisdom
- Substitution and the transfer of punishment with sacrifices (Yom Kippur)
- Healing

- Deliverance
- Prophecy
- Reception of the Ruach HaKodesh

It is interesting to consider exactly "how" Moshe did semikah with Yah'hoshua. The Torah says that Yah'hoshua already was "a man in whom is the Spirit." Through semikah Moshe imparted more wisdom and authority to the new leader. "Moshe did as YHWH commanded him. He took Yah'hoshua and had him stand before Elazar the priest and the whole assembly. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as YHWH instructed through Moshe," Bamidbar 27:22-23. Moshe placed both of his hands upon Yah'hoshua - not just one hand. Moshe gave Yah'hoshua twice of what YHWH asked. Perhaps Moshe understood what a huge job it was to lead Yisra'el and so he transferred a double portion to his heir.

The Torah says that Moshe was to "Give him some of your authority (glory) so the whole Israelite community will obey him." Moshe was transferring his authority to his successor, but Yah'hoshua would only receive part of Moshe's anointing. Yah'hoshua would take Moshe's place because he had to express his own authority. He couldn't ride on Moshe's memory. To this the Talmud says, 'Of your glory' - but not all your glory. The elders of that generation said: The countenance of Moshe was like that of the sun; the countenance of Yah'hoshua was like that of the moon."

Through the process of laying on of hands, a physical bond is connected. In the Scriptures, Moshe touched Yah'hoshua; the Lewites touched the sacrifices; Yitz'chak touched his sons; Ya'acov touched his grandsons; El'isha touched the king; Y'shua touched the helpless. Somehow through these simple connections divine blessings were bestowed and heaven and earth were joined. Authority, healing, consecration, and blessing were all conveyed through touch. Semikah seems to release the gifts of Elohim as seen in 2 Timothy 1:6.

Moshiach Y'shua ministered with semikah on many occasions. He laid hands on and brought healing to the unclean lepers. He touched the blind and their eyes were opened. He did semikah to a deaf man and hearing was restored. Y'shua even took a young maiden by the hand and saved her from death. "The people brought to Y'shua all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them, "Luke 4:40. Moshiach also imparted blessing through semikah. Then little children were brought to Y'shua for him to place his hands

on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Y'shua said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there," Mattitياهو 19:13-15. Before Y'shua ascended into Shamayim / the heavens, He told the disciples / talmidim that they would continue His ministry of semikah. "You will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well," Mark 16:18. Maybe Y'shua understood that every day behavior disconnects people and what is often needed is just a simple touch.

Over and over again the early believers in Moshiach followed His instructions. The book of Acts is full of stories of healing and blessing being imparted through semikah. People who experienced mikvah (baptism) had hands layed upon them in Acts 8:16-19. And just like Yah'hoshua, Sha'ul and Barnabas along with the first deacons were set apart to avodah (spiritual service) through semikah. You see, just as semikah is the word used when an animal is consecrated to sacrifice, so to the word represents leadership's sacrifice to serve people and Elohim.

Semikah should NOT be an idea that is foreign to believers, but part of everyday life. Hebrews 6:3 says that the laying on of hands is an "elementary principle of Moshiach." When the people around us are sick we should lay hands upon them and pray in belief for healing. When our children are hurt we should hold them in our arms and bless them. When the time is appropriate we should touch those near us and speak a b'racha / blessing upon them using the Divine name of YHWH. Semikah is just one part of Torah living - it was for Moshe and Y'shua and should be for today.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Pinchas." What does this mean? Who was Pinchas?
2. Read 1 Kings 18:46-19:21. How does this relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in John 2:13-25. What did you learn from studying this passage?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. Read Numbers 27:1-11. How are the sisters referred to in the biblical text?

7. What does this say about the biblical understanding of the importance of their actions? Where do the sisters choose to present their case? How is the narrative affected by the setting they choose?
8. What request do the sisters put to the Israelite leadership? What rhetorical devices do they use to present their case? What precedent is set for future religious innovation through the framing of the sisters' challenge?
9. How did land ownership affect the reality of women's lives in ancient Israel? Numbers 25:13 says, "It shall be for him [Pinchas] and his descendants after him a pact of priesthood for all time, because he took impassioned action for his YHWH, thus making expiation for all the Israelites." Do you think it was admirable for Pinchas to take the punishment of the sinful Israelite in his own hands? Do you think that it was his impassioned zeal that granted him YHWH's favor? How do you feel about performing acts in your own life, passionately? Would that grant you YHWH's favor or not?
10. Numbers 25:17-18, "Assail the Midianites and defeat them-for they assailed you by the trickery they practiced against you-because of the affair of Peor and because of the affair of their kinswomen Cozbi, daughter of the Midianite chieftain, who was killed at the time of the plague on account of Peor." Why did the Midianites have to be defeated? What did they do that was so sinful? After all the curses Balaam prepared turned into blessings, and Balak never denied passage to the Israelites. Who was more sinful, the Midianites or the Israelites who took to lusting with the Midianite women. What was the trickery? Whose fault was it anyway? Couldn't lusting be just a normal practice of the Midianites?
11. Numbers 26:53, "Among these shall the land be apportioned as shares, according to the listed names: with larger groups increase the share, with smaller groups reduce the share. Each is to be assigned its share according to its enrollment." Do you think this is the fairest way to apportion the land? What other ways could the land be apportioned, just as well or even better? Do you think this land is actually a geographical location or could it be the landscape of spiritual reality? What do you think each tribe represents in the spiritual domain?
12. Numbers 27:7, "The plea of Zelophehad's daughter is just: you should give them a hereditary holding among their father's kinsmen; transfer their father's share to them." Do you think this was the only dispute that took place regarding the division of the land? What other issues may have arisen? Why has the Torah not discussed other disputes? If you ever had the occasion to share in property what were some of the issues that came

up for you? What could have happened if YHWH did not deem Zelophehad's plea as just?

13. Numbers 27:16, "Let YHWH, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community who shall go out before them and come in before them, and who shall take them out and bring them in, so that YHWH's community may not be like sheep that have no shepherd." Can you find any indication from this verse or those closely connected that the Israelites ever actually crossed over the Jordan into the land of Canaan? Who was the person appointed to be the community's shepherd? Why was he selected? What specific qualifications does he have? Must we have shepherds, leaders to teach us right from wrong? Do we have them today? Do we need them at all?
14. Numbers 28:1-2, "YHWH spoke to Moses, saying: Command the Israelite people and say to them: Be punctilious in presenting to Me at stated times the offerings of food due me, as offerings by fire of pleasing odor to Me." At this particular juncture, just before Moses was about to be gathered to his kin, why would YHWH have Moses repeat all the laws regarding offerings at auspicious times, the holidays and festivals? Why does there seem to be an emphasis on being precise and conscientious regarding these offerings? Why is YHWH's food to be by fire of pleasing odor? What happens to food burnt over fire? What is the symbolism the Torah is trying to express?
15. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
16. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
17. Can you recall experiences in your life when you have experienced something similar to this story?
18. How would you describe the characters in the story? Who do you know who's like them?
19. Can you personally identify with any one of the characters in the story? Which one?
20. Can you find a similarity between yourself and all the characters in the story?
21. Pinchas is one of the few Parashot named after an individual Hebrew. To appreciate the significance of this, not there is no Parsha named Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, Joseph, Moses, Aaron or David. Why is this portion named after Pinchas?
22. Although Pinchas was the grandson of Aaron, he was not a Priest. This is due to the fact that Pinchas was born before the Priestly assignment took effect. As he was not "born to a Priest," he could not be considered one.

However, YHWH gave Pinchas the "covenant of peace" and brought him and his descendents into the priesthood forever. Pinchas eventually became the high priest. How does YHWH's action in this case relate to the written Torah?

Pinchas was zealous in his actions. His intentions were only "for the honor of Heaven" as YHWH says it was "My vengeance." Pinchas did not fear doing this in the public view. It would appear he "judged" the situation correctly, and placed his own spiritual and material welfare to the side in order to carry out YHWH's will -- His Torah. Do you agree?

23. Compare Pinchas' "judging correctly" with Y'shua's teachings from the Gospels, who says, "By which you judge, you will be judged." YHWH is said to both punish and reward people, "measure for measure" (midah k'neged midah). Pinchas' judgment and actions result in his being given "The Covenant of Peace" by YHWH. How is this "measure for measure?"

Compare Pinchas' actions to those of Shimon and Levi when they killed the men of Shechem after their sister, Dinah had been violated (Genesis 34:1). Shimon and Levi are criticized by Jacob for this. Why is Pinchas praised for killing and Shimon and Levi criticized?

24. Later in this Torah portion comes another story with "motive" at its center. The daughters of Tzelofchad seemingly requested something physical (a share in the Land of Israel). On the other hand, in a previous Parsha, we saw how Korach requested something spiritual. The outcome of these was that Korach was killed and the daughters of Tzelofchad were praised by YHWH. Why?

What do the stories of Shimon & Levi, Korach, Pinchas, and the daughters of Tzelofchad teach us about examining our motives according to YHWH's Torah? Compare this to the words from the "New Testament" found in James 1:25.

25. In Hebrew, the word for peace, (shalom), is derived from the root "shalem," meaning "whole" or "complete." To have "wholeness" (i.e., true shalom) that which divides must be removed. Thus peace is an active state and not passive. Sometimes it requires an act of violence to achieve this. In this Parsha, YHWH sends a plague which claims the lives of 24,000 of His people who were sinning. After this, a final census is taken, and those remaining enter the land. Compare this entire historical scenario to the judgments found in the book of Revelation, which at the end bring YHWH's great and final shalom.

26. Why was Pinchas not originally a Kohen?

27. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?

28. What does the yod and hey added to the family names testify?
29. Korach and his congregation became a "sign." What do they signify?
30. Why did Korach's children survive?
31. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
32. Who was Yaakov's only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
33. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
34. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the midbar. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
35. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na'aman all have in common?
36. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
37. What trait did Tzlofchad's daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
38. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad's daughters' names?
39. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
40. Why did Moshe use the phrase "Elohim of the spirits of all flesh"?
41. Moshe "put some of his glory" upon Y'hoshua. What does this mean?
42. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
43. Goats are brought as musaf sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
44. Why is Shavuot called Yom Habikkurim?
45. What do the 70 bulls offered on Sukkot symbolize?
46. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parashot Matot and Massei

- Numbers 30:1-32:42
- Jeremiah 1:1-2:3
- Acts 9:1-22

AND

- Numbers 33:1-36:13
- Jeremiah 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2
- James 4:1-12

The Torah Portion at a Glance

This is a double Torah portion that is read together on non leap years. Moses conveys the laws governing the annulment of vows to the heads of the tribes of Israel. War is waged against Midian for their role in plotting the moral destruction of Israel, and the Torah gives a detailed account of the war spoils and how they were allocated amongst the people, the warriors, the Levites, and the High Priest.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad (later joined by half of the tribe of Menasseh) ask for the lands east of the Jordan as their portion in the Promised Land, these being prime pastureland for their cattle. Moses is initially angered by the request, but subsequently agrees on the condition that they first join, and lead, in Israel's conquest of the lands west of the Jordan.

In portion Massei, the forty-two journeys and encampments of Israel are listed, from the Exodus to their encampment on the plains of Moab across the river from the Land of Canaan.

Also in Massei: The boundaries of the Promised Land are given, and cities of refuge are designated as havens and places of exile for inadvertent murderers. The daughters of Tzelofchad marry within their own tribe of Menasseh, so that the estate which they inherit from their father should not pass to the province of another tribe.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Y'shua the Messiah came and tabernacled among the nation of Israel. His life here on earth was like the journey of Israel through the wilderness. Every second of every day that Y'shua walked terra firma he was preparing to enter the Promised Land by giving his life on the execution stake. His life was special. It was spectacular.

Moshe, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings all speak of a coming Messiah. This "anointed one" would lead the human race back to the Garden of Eden to restore man's lost relationship with YHWH. These prophecies came to pass when a heavenly messenger visited a young Hebrew virgin named Mary (Miriam in Hebrew). The angel proclaimed that though Miriam had not known a man, she was going to give birth to a son. This child was to be named "Y'shua" which means "YHWH is salvation."

Mary was astonished by the possibility and said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of YHWH," Luke 1:34,35. (Notice that the Holy Spirit will "come upon" her and "power of the Most High" will overshadow her.) This, of course, is called the "virgin birth."

Something that is interesting about conception is that the mother contributes no blood to the baby. Blood is produced without contact with the mother's bloodstream, after the sperm meets the egg. "The mother provides the unborn developing infant with the nutritive elements for the building of that little body in the secret of her bosom, but all the blood which forms in that little body is formed in the embryo itself and only as a result of the contribution of the male parent. From the time of conception to the time of birth of the infant not ONE SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD ever passes from mother to child," wrote Dr. M.R. Dehaan.

Miriam's spouse Joseph (Yosef in Hebrew) physically had nothing to do with the conception of Y'shua. His sperm was not used and therefore his blood was not passed to Y'shua. Does this prove that the Savior had divine blood that had not been tainted by Adam's sin? That makes perfectly good sense. Well, what about Mary? Did Y'shua get His humanity from her? Did He look like her? Wasn't it Mary's egg that was fertilized with a special seed? No. If that was the case, then Mary's sinful nature would have passed down to Y'shua. The truth

is that Miriam acted merely as a surrogate mother of Y'shua. A surrogate mother is a woman who agrees to bear a child for a couple who are childless, usually due to wife being infertile or unable to carry a baby. The child grows inside the surrogate mother but has no biological relationship with the mother. This is exactly what we see with Y'shua and his earthly mother. YHWH bypassed human sperm and human egg to implant a heavenly body within Miriam. In doing so, Y'shua's flesh and blood was not tainted with the original sin of Adam.

Y'shua's flesh and blood - his temporary tent - was totally divine from YHWH. Y'shua said, "if you have seen me then you have seen the Father." Y'shua did NOT say, "if you have seen me then you have seen the virgin Mary." We've been told by our Pastors, Sunday school teachers, and church leaders that "Jesus" was 100% man and 100% god. What if that isn't true? What if Y'shua was more than just a man with a special anointing?

This message proves that Y'shua was not born a sinful sinner. He was not born with the physical traits of Mary. He was not born with "normal" human flesh. He was not born 100% man and 100% YHWH. Instead, the scriptures clearly teach in Colossians 2:9 that in Y'shua "dwelt the fullness of YHWH in bodily form." Y'shua came to earth in the flesh but it wasn't earthly flesh. It couldn't have been earthly flesh because normal flesh had been polluted with sin.

The Messianic prophecies in Isaiah call Y'shua the "wonderful, counselor, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Y'shua was the exact image of Abba YHWH in an earth suit.

Y'shua's flesh, blood, and bones were all from YHWH in Heaven. "There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Master Mar Yah from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man," 1 Corinthians 15:44-49.

Philippians 2 says that He "took on the form of a human." Hebrews 2 says that Y'shua appeared "like" his brothers but NOT in the nature of "angels or men." Y'shua came to earth with a perfect body just like Adam in Genesis. This truth totally rejects the Greek myth of a man-god coming to earth to rescue humanity.

And Judaism readily accepts this true idea of Y'shua as the "Adam Kadmon" with the soul of Messiah. The "Adam Kadmon" is the primordial Adam made in the "betzelem elohim" or "image of YHWH." We see more clearly how Y'shua came as the FULL image of YHWH in book of Luke.

Let's review the birth of the Messiah to learn more! Miriam was told, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of YHWH," Luke 1:34,35. The feminine aspect of YHWH, the Holy Spirit, hovered upon her and the power of the Father overshadowed her. In Genesis it says, "male and female, He created them both." Through a divine implant, YHWH brought forth the body of Y'shua. Notice in Genesis 1:35 that Y'shua is called the "son of YHWH." Y'shua wasn't the son of mankind, Adam, Mary, or Yosef but the very son of YHWH. Mary was a willing servant who raised Y'shua as a child. She was not sinless and she did not contribute to Y'shua's earthly body. Y'shua came in the image and form of a perfect man. His body was 100% YHWH and 0% regular dusty human flesh. Yes, He was hungry, tired, and He even got dirty. And yes, He felt the human emotions of joy and sadness. His flesh looked "normal" and of this world but it was actually "out of this world." Y'shua's flesh was not polluted with sin and sinful desires.

When John 1:14 says, "the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." It literally means that. The word, the "Torah," was made into flesh and blood. The Torah literally walked and talked with mankind. In Hebrew the words "betzelem elohim" means "in the image of YHWH." We know that Y'shua was the exact image of YHWH. Y'shua is/was the betzelem elohim. Interestingly, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters found in the phrase "betzelem elohim" equals 248. A connection is clear, as there are exactly 248 positive, "thou shalt" commandments in the Torah. Y'shua's body was literally the Torah - the "thou shalts" made flesh!

Hebrews 10:5 explains that Y'shua came to earth in a body prepared for Him. His body was not given to Him by Mary or Joseph. "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me," Hebrews / Ivrim 10:5. This passage is quoting the Psalms which say the same in chapter forty verse eight.

If Y'shua had natural human flesh then He could not have conquered the sin of Adam. The "all" of "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of YHWH" would have included Him.

If Y'shua had natural human flesh then He could not have offered His life as a sacrifice to YHWH. The Bible declares over and over again that YHWH abhors human sacrifice. See Deuteronomy 12:31 and 18:10 for the proof.

If Y'shua had natural human flesh then He could not have been the sinless Son of YHWH. Sin is transgression or violation of the Torah. The Torah clearly prohibits mixing of fabrics. Y'shua's body was NOT mixed with the fabric of Earth and the fabric of Heaven. This principle is called "shanetz" and validates that Y'shua was not some man-god hybrid. ""You shall not wear a garment of different sorts, such as wool and linen mixed together," Deuteronomy 22:11. The skin of Y'shua was totally YHWH.

Y'shua had to be born in the "form" of a man to accomplish what the first Adam failed to do. Y'shua came to bring life to death. "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah all shall be made alive," 1 Corinthians 15:21,22.

Let us finish with the passage with which this teaching began. In John 6, we see Y'shua declaring Himself to be the Manna from Heaven. Remember that manna was the supernatural bread that came from YHWH to feed the Israelites in the wilderness. Y'shua makes it clear when He says, "I and the Father are one. I came down from Heaven to do the will of the one who sent me." Many of His disciples said, "this is a difficult teaching! Who can hear and obey?" Our Messiah is the pure whole wheat bread of Heaven. He has not been dyed or processed! Y'shua is YHWH in the flesh. Yes, this message is difficult but it is the truth.

One must make a choice when the message of the true unleavened bread Y'shua is presented. Will you dare to accept the emet? Or will you turn away from Y'shua to believe what the preacher has always taught? The more you are open to YHWH and the more you study, the more this revelation will be revealed. Y'shua's true nature is a life changing revelation. We are sinful beings. At birth humanity is separated from YHWH by the desire to receive for self. So, we need a Savior to provide redemption. We must be born again after this Savior, the second Adam. And then, as we have experienced the Bread from Heaven, we are

to share the message of His true nature and sacrifice. "In Adam all die, so in Y'shua all will be made alive," 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

"You should not be ignorant of how your ahvot (fathers) were under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and were immersed into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all did eat the same spiritual food. Now all these things happened to them for EXAMPLES: and they are written for our warning, upon whom the ends of the olam hazeh (world) have come," 1 Corinthians 10:1-3,11.

In this verse from Corinthians the word translated "example" is the Greek term "tupos." It is from "tupos" that we get the English word "type" or "model." The events in the dessert wilderness were types and models for us today. Indeed, everything that happened to Israel, from the brazen serpent to the water from a rock, is a type and pattern for future generations.

Luke tells us "Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scripture. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day." (Luke 24:45-46) The Torah includes history, prophecy, and types and shadows that give us instruction for living. Remember that future events are foretold in the Scriptures in order to change our life today. Why study scriptural genealogies or boring journeys in the Torah? Because it is through the Torah that YHWH speaks to us about life. Numbers 33 and the journeys of Israel are prophetic pictures of the ministry of Y'shua. This week's Torah portion is a shadow of end time's events. The stations where Israel camped model the path each sold out believer walks before YHWH. The list of journeys or "stations" in Numbers 33 is absolutely amazing. This chapter is living history; it is prophecy for today and the days to come. May YHWH open our eyes that we could behold wonderful things from His Torah in this chapter.

A believer can mature to great spiritual levels by grasping the simple message that "what happened to the people of Israel in Biblical times is a picture of what happens to people today." History repeats itself. The times may have changed but the scenarios are still the same. Everything - everything - that occurs in your life is a message from the supernatural side. YHWH is speaking behind the details of the day. In every way the Creator is calling us closer.

Let's first have an overview of the events in this chapter and set the stage for personal application. Then we will discuss how Numbers 33 is an amazing foretelling of the end of days.

Yisrael was rescued from the bondage of Pharaoh by the strong and mighty arm of YHWH. Remember that "pharaoh" is symbolic of slavery and sin. The actual phrase "pharaoh" means "fence" or "boundary." The pharaohs in our lives hold us back and fence us in from accomplishing YHWH's will. Our spiritual life begins with being set free from the Pharaoh of sin and death.

We must constantly be reminded that Israel was freed from Pharaoh and we have been set free from our enemies as well. However, after the plagues punished the Egyptians the nation failed to enter into the Promised Land. The people believed the evil report of the 10 spies and were faced with strict punishment of dying in the wilderness. Because of their unbelief in the faithfulness of YHWH the wicked and perverse generation would pass away and their children would inherit the land of milk and honey. Along the way, Israel had forty years to work out their personal issues. Can you imagine waiting through 40 years of tests and trials? Does it sometimes feel like you are in the middle of 40 years worth of wandering?

It took one night, the night of Passover, for YHWH to bring Israel out of Egypt. Yet, it took 40 years for YHWH to bring Egypt out of Israel. Or did it? Our discussion begins with debunking this commonly held idea of a 40 year journey from Egypt to Eretz Israel. According to the Torah, the Israelites spent more than 40 years in the wilderness; they spent a total of 42 years.

In the Newer Testament, we read: "And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness," Acts 13:18

It reads "about the time", that is, "around" forty years. It doesn't say "exactly 40 years. We know that Israel is punished one year of wandering for each of the 40 days the spies were surveying the land. What we must consider to have an accurate understanding is that the counting of the 40 years starts after the Hebrews were at Kadeshbarnea and on the verge of entering Canaan's land. Two years of time passed from that Passover night in Egypt and the agreement with the evil report from the 10 spies.

First, lets consider Numbers/Bamidbar 9:1-2

"And YHWH spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the

second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,
Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season."

We can clearly see that at the start of the second year, the Hebrews were still in the wilderness. In the next chapter we read, "And it came to pass on the twentieth day of the second month, in the second year, that the cloud was taken up from off the tabernacle of the testimony. And the children of Israel took their journeys out of the wilderness of Sinai; and the cloud rested in the wilderness of Paran." Later the people rebel against YHWH and gather to eat quail for about a month in Bamidbar 11. In Chapter 12 the nation is at the threshold of the Promised Land and ready to enter into the glory of YHWH. Bamidbar 13 recounts how the evil report was believed and were given 40 years to walk out their problems. This occurred at Kadesh Barnea, the very entrance of Canaan. There were 2 years from Pesach in Egypt to the evil report and 40 years from Kadesh Barnea to Jericho when they finally enter the land for a total of 42 years. This understanding is important because the number of years is highly symbolic. 42 is not only the number of years spent in the wilderness but also the number of stations or stops Israel made along the way to the Promised Land. The number of years that Israel wandered in the wilderness is connected to the exact stops made along the route. This is important because even though these stops occurred thousands of years ago, they are still occurring today in our lives. There is nothing new under the sun.

Whatever place you are at in your faith has already been visited by the nation of Yisrael. We are just like our forefathers who journeyed through the wilderness and struggled with rebellion, problems, unbelief, leadership, and spiritual battles. We haven't arrived at the Promised Land of Heaven. We are each on our voyage of emunah / faith. We are each being changed from glory to glory. Along the way to perfection are 42 steps - the same exact steps taken by the nation of Yisra'el. We read that the nation "rested" and "pitched" their tents. Numbers 9:21-22 , "And so it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and that the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether it was by day or by night that the cloud was taken up, they journeyed. Or whether it was two days, or a month, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed."

From the deliverance from Egypt to the time they crossed the Yarmen river, the nation camped 42 times. These areas are commonly referred to as "stations."

These were not convenient places to stop by camps that were chosen by YHWH for the good/tov of His children. Sometimes the stop was to test the people. Other times the stop was for rest or even punishment. Amazingly, each station had to supply enough space for the tabernacle and people plus food and water.

The nation was led by the cloud of fire by night and pillar of smoke by day. The cloud of fire is symbolic of the Ruach HaKodesh - the fire of YHWH that leads us into all truth. The pillar of smoke is symbolic of the Torah - the powerful word of YHWH that teaches us how to offer our lives as a pleasing aroma of faithfulness. The people followed the glory of YHWH along their route. We must choose to do the same. We might not see the fires or Shekinah glory BUT we can see the examples that have been left for us in the Torah.

To help us along the path, we are going to examine some of these stations and discuss how we can proceed to spiritual growth and maturity.

As we begin this discussion let's first review a popular commentary from Rashi on the stations in Numbers 33. "The account of the journeys is analogous to a king whose son became sick, and he took him to a faraway place to be healed. On the way back, the father began to mention all the stages of their journey, saying to him, "This is where we slept. This is where we felt cold. Here you had a headache, etc." Each station has a story and a lesson to learn. We are sin sick in a far away place and the king is leading us home. Along the path of our spiritual journey we must hear the voice of YHWH and obey.

We also know that 42 months equal three and a half years. The wilderness travels of Israel are prophetic of how the nation of Israel and the world will suffer greatly for the 42 month period when Yerushalayim is down-trodden.

Revelation 11:2, "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

Revelation 13:5, "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months."

Now, we can study the so-called "boring" wilderness years of Isra'el as a type or shadow of the great tribulation. Indeed there is much to learn if we will just take the time to look at YHWH's wonderful Torah! What is being discussed is the needed multiple witnesses concerning spiritual life today and end time events!

Let's look at this journey with a renewed mind and see what YHWH has in store for us. At these stations we can clearly find a three-fold message that is historical, practical, and prophetic. Follow along in Numbers 33 as we examine the journey of faith!

As the nation is leaving Egypt they first camp at "Ramses." This is when the 42 years begin. Named after a pharaoh of Mitzrayim, this area was the highest quality land in Egypt. (Genesis 47:11) Here, YHWH is declaring the "end from the beginning" as seen in Isaiah 47:10. YHWH is leading us to a life of quality, peace, blessing, prosperity, and joy. The next 42 months may be difficult but they are for our good. YHWH chastises those whom He loves. YHWH stretches us to a place of faith. The 42 months of Revelation as seen in Chapter 12 will challenge us to look to a city whose foundation is in Shamayim. No matter what the future holds we must look to the glorious rewards of the Heavenly Yerushalayim.

Next, the people take up camp at "Succoth." This word "Sukkoth" literally means "tent" or "temporary dwelling." This is the same word used for "chag Sukkot" or the "festival of tabernacles." YHWH was showing the people that each step of obedience is a temporary step. Each battle we face, doctrine we challenge, demon we conquer, or issue we settle is just a temporary tent. Whatever you are going through right now is just temporary whether it is good or bad. Life is full of mountains and valleys. It was here at Succoth that the bones of Yosef were retrieved. His bones had been left here to be carried into the Promised Land. This is prophetic of the dry bones of the nation of Yisrael that will rise up on the latter days to inherit the Land of Israel. During the last days some of us will be dwelling in tents or "Sukkot" as we flee the wrath of the anti-Messiah.

The third stop is in "Etham." This name literally means "with them." Etham is on the edge of the wilderness and is symbolic of Revelation 12 when Ha'satan is cast down to earth and is "with them." The anti-messiah and false prophet will be empowered by the enemy. Though YHWH is with us, the enemy will be Etham or "with them." We must remember that "greater is He that in us than he that is in the world."

Between here and Pihahiroth - Ex 14:2; Nu 33:7
Overtaken by Pharaoh - Ex 14:9
Exhorted to look to YHWH - Ex 14:13,14

The cloud removed to the rear - Ex 14:19,20
Red Sea divided - Ex 14:16,21

The next camp was at "Pihahiroth." This is near where Pharaoh began chasing the nation which eventually led to the sea parting. In Revelation 12:6 we see that the "earth helped the woman." The earth will help hide the saints during the acharyit hayamim. This city's name is a compound word. "Peh" is the Hebrew word for mouth. "Ha Hiroth" means "the wrath." As a believer we must battle the wrath of those who will speak evil lies about us. The end days will be no different. "The wrath of the mouth" will be unleashed as the enemy's mouth utter blasphemies against YHWH in Revelation 13:5.

The fifth stop of Israel was at "Marah" which means "bitterness" or "rebellion." We too must deal with the bitterness of rebellion. There are seven things that YHWH hates: one who sows discord among the brethren. Rebellion sours the refreshing water of YHWH's presence. We are warned to make sure that we do not fall into the sin of Marah. In Palm 95 we are told not to harden our hearts as the people did here. They wanted fresh water and were upset that the drink was bitter. The spirit of rebellion is opposite of the spirit of unity. It is in the spirit of rebellion that the end times beast will rear its ugly head. In revelation 13:5 the beat rebels against YHWH and leads the world to take the mark of rebellion.

Next, the nation comes to a place with 12 springs and 70 date palms. This is "elim" which means "their leader." Revelation 13:7 shows how the world follows the evil leader. The people of faith follow the leader Y'shua who is the Melech of Israel. Elim is where each person had to drink from one of the 12 streams. This is symbolic of how the 12 gates to the New Jerusalem will be named for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The 70 date palms are symbolic of the "nations" of the world that also must be grafted into the vine and will be able to drink from the same wells of Israel. The living waters of YHWH will bring healing to the nations.

The seventh stop of Israel is seen in verses 10-11 and is called the "red sea." In Hebrew this is Yom Suf which is literally the "reed sea" or the "sea of the end." This station is symbolic of how we must come to the end of our self and crucify our flesh. We must take up our execution stake and follow Y'shua. Prophetically, those who overcome do so by the "blood of the lamb, word of their testimony, and not loving their life until the death," Revelation 12:11.

At the Wilderness of Sin is where YHWH provided the manna and the quail for

the people. The end of days will be full of supernatural provision. "I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging for bread," Psalm 37:25. While YHWH will provide supernaturally we should not totally depend of this for our life today or in the future. YHWH does not want us to live miracle to miracle. Miracles are supernatural rescues from YHWH. We are not to be in constant need of rescue and miracles. Instead, YHWH wants us to live in obedience to His word which will means that we are living "blessing to blessing," As we obey Torah AND prepare for the days ahead YHWH will provide the blessings and the miracles.

The ninth station for Israel is called "Dophkah" which comes from the root word "Adonis." Adonis is the Phoenician god from where the word "lord" is translated. Revelation 12:17 shows us the end times battle of the false Adonis or Lords and YHWH. The practical lesson to learn here is service to YHWH. Man can not service 2 gods. We must choose to service YHWH only. Whatever occupies your time is your god. Do you spend more time in worship and ministry or something else? YHWH is also removing the false lords from our tongues.

In verses 13-14 is the stop at "alush." This is where water flowed from the rock. At "alush" Moshe acted in anger and struck the rock for water to flow. This was a misrepresentation of Y'shua. In Revelation 13:3 the anti-messiah uses false signs to appear as power from God.

When the nation stops at "Rephidim" they come in contact with Amelek and fight an interesting battle. Here the nation is promised victory as Moshe's hands are raised. If his hands fall then the nation fails. The name Rephidim literally means "reph yadim" or the "weakening of the hands." When our hands are weak - when we are tired or frustrated - we should spread them in praise and prayer to YHWH. 'Lift up your hands in the sanctuary," Psalm 134:2. Of course, the mark of the Beast is placed in the weak hands of the unbelievers as seen in Revelation 13:16-17. The events at Rephidim can be found in Shemot/Exodus 17:1-13

The next station is in the Wilderness of Sinai. In Hebrew, the word for "in the wilderness" is "bamidbar." In the wilderness, YHWH is able to speak clearly to us and reveal His will. In the wilderness we are removed from the comfort zones of normal life. YHWH led Moses, Israel, Elijah, and Y'shua into the wilderness for preparation and calling. Revelation 13:1 shows us that the major end time's events and even Babylon is found in the midst of the wilderness, surrounded by sands.

Many important events occurred at Mt Sinai including:

- Jethro's visit - Ex 18:1-6
- Judges appointed - Ex 18:14-26; De 1:9-15
- Torah given - Ex 19:3; 20:1-26
- Order for making the tabernacle, &c - Ex 24:1-27:21
- Tribe of Levi taken instead of the first-born - Nu 3:11-13
- Aaron and his sons selected for priesthood - Ex 28:1-29:46;
- Golden calf made - Ex 32:1,4
- People punished for idolatry - Ex 32:25-29,35
- YHWH's glory shown to Moses - Ex 33:18-23; 34:5-8
- Tabernacle first set up - Ex 40:1-38
- Nadab and Avihu destroyed for offering strange fire - Le 10:1,2;
- Passover first commemorated - Nu 9:1-5

The thirteenth stop of Israel is at Kibrothhattaveh in Chapter 33 verses 16 and 17. This large word means "graves of longing" or "graves of lust." Our spiritual journey certainly includes a death to lustful desires. We must choose to delight in YHWH and put to death fleshly urges that are contrary to the word. Here is where those who died during the battle with Amelek were buried. We read in Revelation that those who fight against YHWH will die and the blood will rise as high as the horse's reins.

The nation comes to the town of "Libnah" or "Leban" along their way. This is a white land in the west and is known to be a center of trading and harvesting of the essential oil of frankincense. Frankincense is an aromatic resin that can be obtained by the boswillia tree. The bark is tapped and the resin bleeds the oil which then hardens into rock like "tears." Frankincense was used in the kadosh anointing oil and was presented to baby Y'shua. This essential oil of the Scriptures that has many uses including calming stress and anxiety and healing asthma, coughing, and scars

Next the nation pitches their tents at "Rissah" which was a fortified city. Mishlei / Proverbs 25:28 says, "like a city without walls is a man without self control." Rissah is symbolic of the fruit of self control. Prophetically we must learn self control and fortify our cities, homes, families, and bodies.

In Numbers 33:23-24 Bnai Yisrael stops at Mount Shapher. "Shapher" means "journey." This is the mountain of journeys. We have many spiritual mountains along our walk. These are times when we can almost physically feel or touch the

presence of YHWH. On spiritual mountains YHWH is near and our problems are far. To bad we can't stay on the mountain top. Remember that this was the desire of those who climbed to the top of the mount of transfiguration with Y'shua. They wanted to set up camp and abide in the manifest presence of YHWH. That didn't happen. However, in the book of Revelation and in Matthew 24 we are told to flee to the mountains. This is a physical and spiritual climb. There are those who will physically camp in the mountains as the anti-messiah unleashes the fury of the adversary. During times of testing we are all to flee to the mountains of YHWH.

Remember that during the time of Ya'acov's trouble many will flee to the mountains and be fed manna from YHWH. This is exactly what happened in the wilderness. This supernatural provision will take place for 42 months just as YHWH protected Israel in the wilderness for 42 months. Revelation 12:6, "And the woman (Israel) fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of YHWH, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

There are other prophetic verses that verifies our subject as historical, applicable today, and prophetic for the end of days. Micah 7:14-15:

"Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous things. "

The 21st stop of Israel is at "Haradath." This means "place of departure or fear." This is symbolic of how we must depart from our fear of man and seek the fear of YHWH. One verse that we should commit to memory and keep before our minds is Matthew 10:28. Here Y'shua said, ""Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," Matthew 10:28. We know that Revelation 12:11 says that they "overcame by the blood of the lamb, by the word of their testimony, and not loving their lives until the death." If we are going to endure then we should not fear the loss of our life.

Next, the nation comes to "makheloth" which was near Moab and was actually a place dedicated to Molech. Why would YHWH allow the people to camp here? This station simply demonstrates that we are to be "in the world but not of the world." As the days grow darker our light should shine brighter. The people of

Moab and those living near us today need to see a living example of YHWH's power. We are to keep the faith but we shouldn't keep it to ourselves! YHWH does not call us or want us to only fellowship with like minded believers. We aren't to be reclusive or secret service saints. "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father who is in heaven," Matthew 5:16. We must be like Y'shua and fellowship with sinners so that we can share Torah with the sinners. The end times will provide more opportunities for our light to brightly shine before the darkness of the world.

The 24th stop was at Terah. This was a town named after Abraham's father. This station reminded the nation that they had to depend on Abraham's Heavenly father - YHWH Himself.

In Numbers 33:32-33 we see Israel camping at Horhagidgad. This is Petra the lost city of stone in the modern nation of Jordan. Literally, this campsite was the cleft of the cleft of the rock. This of course teaches us of the deeper times of intimacy with YHWH and His people. As we mature in YHWH and move from glory to glory we will have times of hiding in the cleft of YHWH's presence. Those in the cleft of the Rock of Y'shua will endure to the end. "This is the endurance of the saints: those that kept the testimony of Y'shua and guarded the commandments." Revelation 14:12.

Later, the nation stations themselves at Punon. Here the nation complained about their meals and their leadership. YHWH punished the people with a plague of snakes. Complaining is not allowed. Maya Angelou once said, "If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. Don't complain." James / Ya'acov 5:9, "Do not complain about each other, brothers, or you will be condemned. Look! The Judge is standing at the door!"

The 39th stop was in Dibungad, the capital of Moab in East Jordan. This is one of many stops that were made in Moab. The Moabites were the enemies of Israel and the enemies of YHWH. Why would YHWH allow them to camp here? Why spend so many nights in Moab? The Hebrew phrase "Moab" literally is "mo ab," which means, "who is my father?" or "what is my origin?" Our journey to follow YHWH is all about knowing abba YHWH and walking in His ways. Of course we are also in search of the true origins of YHWH. Sadly, this is one campsite that many people never leave. They are happy with their religion and care little about origins, fossilized customs, pagan practices, and the like. We must choose to continually have our faith and mind renewed. In Moab the people asked "who is

my father" we must do the same.

Finally the 42nd stop was in the plains of Moab near the Jordan River. The people were ready to cross over and anon the brink of a breakthrough. It was here that Moshe was taken up to be with YHWH. Even His body disappeared and was not allowed to be found. YHWH knew that if the people would have worshipped or honored his body and his memory. Sadly, many fall into this area of sin as well. We chase spiritual memories, spiritual ghosts, or spiritual prophets. YHWH wants us to go forward in our faith and not dwell on the past. We should wonder in our heart about how it could have been. Nor should we think "well this isn't how it used to be." Instead we must go forward with YHWH and follow the cloud and fire daily. During the end of days there will be many false Moses / false prophets that will not disappear. Instead, they will call attention with false signs, wonders, and words. We must be careful not to fall after this delusion and seek the truth of Y'shua.

This was a place of faith and a place of unbelief. Like the tribulation, this station separates those who are Torah fans and those who are Torah keepers. All who were formerly numbered over the age of twenty, except Caleb and Joshua were now dead. Moshe is allowed to behold the Land but dies. Joshua sends two spies into Jericho and the people prepare to cross the river Jordan. Joshua 4:10 and 1 Peter 1:17

We have discussed many stations and areas along the path to perfection as an Israelite. Where are you now? Is your life different than you had once desired? Do you find yourself in an unfamiliar place with problems galore? The lessons we learn from these stations are part of our purification process. They are readying us for the Promised Land. Each part of the journey is to purify us!

Dwell upon 1 Peter 4:12-13, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Messiah, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation."

What happened to Israel happened for you. We need to learn from their example this powerful point - the wilderness was not their destination, it was only part of the journey. The Israelites didn't set out to wander around for forty long years. The nation of slaves didn't leave Egypt to get lost in the sand. No! They were set free to claim their inheritance in the Promised Land. We must understand and

live this powerful message. We should view the journeys of Israel as applicable to today and prophetic for tomorrow. The Torah isn't boring - it's our life's story!

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are "Matot" and "Massei." What do these mean?
2. Read Jeremiah 1:1-2:3 and Jeremiah 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2. How do these relate to the story of Numbers this week?
3. Consider the words found in Acts 9:1-22 and James 4:1-12. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life. What is it about the story, a verse, or word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
6. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
7. Can you recall experiences in your life when you have experienced something similar to this story?
8. How would you describe the characters in the story? Who do you know who's like them?
9. Can you personally identify with any one of the characters in the story? Which one?
10. Can you find a similarity between yourself and all the characters in the story?
11. Who may annul a vow?
12. When may a father annul his widowed daughter's vows?
13. Why were the Jewish People not commanded to attack Moav, as they were to attack Midian?
14. Those selected to fight Midian went unwillingly. Why?
15. What holy vessels accompanied the Jewish People into battle?
16. Those who killed in the war against Midian were required to remain outside the "machane" (camp). Which machane?
17. Besides removing traces of forbidden food, what else is needed to make metal vessels obtained from a non-Jew fit for a Jewish owner?
18. "We will build sheep-pens here for our livestock and cities for our little ones." What was improper about this statement?
19. During the conquest of the Land, where did Bnei Gad and Bnei Re'uben position themselves?

20. What promise did Bnei Gad and Bnei Re'uven make beyond that which Moshe required?
21. Why does the Torah list the places where the Jewish People camped?
22. Why did the King of Arad feel at liberty to attack the Jewish People?
23. What length was the camp in the midbar?
24. Why does the Torah need to specify the boundaries that are to be inherited by the Hebrew People?
25. What was the nesi'im's role in dividing the Land?
26. When did the three cities east of the Jordan begin to function as refuge cities?
27. There were six refuge cities, three on each side of the Jordan. Yet, on the east side of the Jordan there were only two and a half tribes. Why did they need three cities?
28. To be judged as an intentional murderer, what type of weapon must the murderer use?
29. Why is the Kohen gadol blamed for accidental deaths?
30. When an ancestral field moves by inheritance from one tribe to another, what happens to it in yovel?
31. One of this week's Torah Parashot is called "Massei" which means "journeys." This is of course associated with the segments of their journey out of Egypt to the Land of Israel. The Parsha however, tells us not so much of the "journeying" but rather of the stops they made along the way. How many stops did Israel make?
32. Egypt was called "Mitzrayim" by the Hebrews, meaning "a place of confinement." How were the Jews confined in their ability to serve YHWH while in Egypt? If we think in personal terms, these 42 stages can be said to mirror our own lives as we journey from our own personal "exodus from Egypt" toward our destination, which would be the spiritual counterpart of the Land of Israel. What are some of the physical, mental and emotional "Egypt" that we pass through in life?
33. At Sinai they received the Torah, which gave them the freedom to serve YHWH. Consider what Ya'acov ("James") meant when he wrote, "But he who looks into the perfect Torah of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (Ya'acov 1:25)
34. The 42 segments of the Hebrew's journey had both "good" and "bad" moments, which were all part of their spiritual growth. How can what appear to be "bad" events in our own journey be seen as having a positive reason for occurring? How does this mirror what Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul) meant

when he wrote, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)?

35. Sometimes we may "fail" at certain junctures of our spiritual journey. This is where teshuvah ("repentance") comes into play. How can someone who falls (through sin) and ascends (through teshuvah) rise to even greater spiritual heights than someone who did not go through this process?
36. It is said that the Torah was given due to sin. How can this be seen in the law of taking of oaths? Compare this to what Y'shua said of the Torah's laws concerning divorce in Matthew 19:8? Compare what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 5:5-7 to what Y'shua says in Matthew 5:33-37.
37. Upon nearing the Land of Israel, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, plus a portion of Menasseh, indicated a desire to settle apart from the other tribes, outside the Land of Israel. Later, when Israel went into exile, these same tribes were the first to be taken into captivity (I Chronicles 5:26). What does this teach us about YHWH's desire for "unity among the brethren?"
38. This reading concludes the book of Numbers. How can you apply this book of Moshe to your life? What in Bamidbar touched you the most?
39. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

CHAZAK, CHAZAK, v'NIT'CHAZEK.
Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened!

Parasha Devarim

- Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22
- Isaiah 1:1-27
- Acts 7:51-8:4

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses begins his repetition of the Torah to the assembled Children of Israel, reviewing the events that occurred and the laws that were given in the course of their 40-year journey from Egypt to Sinai to the Promised Land, rebuking the people for their failings and iniquities, and enjoining them to keep the Torah and observe its commandments in the land that YHWH is giving them as an eternal heritage, into which they shall cross after his death.

Moses recalls his appointment of judges and magistrates to ease his burden of meting out justice to the people and teaching them the word of YHWH; the journey from Sinai through the great and fearsome desert; the sending of the Spies and the people's subsequent spurning of the Promised Land, so that YHWH decreed that the entire generation of the Exodus shall die out in the desert. "Also against me," says Moses, "was YHWH angry for your sakes, saying: You, too, shall not go in there."

Moses also recounts some more recent events: the refusal of the nations of Moab and Ammon to allow the Israelites to pass through their countries; the wars against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og, and the settlement of their lands by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and part of the tribe of Menasseh; and Moses' message to his successor, Joshua, who will take the people into the Land and lead them in the battles for its conquest: "Fear them not, for YHWH your Elohim, He shall fight for you."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Moshe gives a repetition of words of the Torah in our last book of the Torah. In the book of words, or Devarim, Moshe says, "I charged your magistrates at that time as follows, "Hear out your fellow men, and decide justly between any man and a fellow Israelite or a stranger. You shall not be partial in judgment: hear out low and high alike. Fear no man, for judgment is YHWH's. And any matter that is too difficult for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it." Thus I

instructed you, at that time, about the various things that you should do,”
Deuteronomy / Devarim 1:16-18

Here we see how judgment is YHWH's. It is interesting to note that Y'shua too left the judgment to YHWH the Father. Y'shua once said, “And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day,” John 12.

The Messiah also said in Matthew 7:1, 2 "Judge not that you be not judged. For with the judgment that you judge, you shall be judged; and with the measure that you mete, it shall be measured to you." Here Y'shua made it clear that one must be careful how they judge others and do so without partiality. Y'shua went as far to state that how you express condemnation, correction, or high standards will be the same way such is given back. The actions and words of Y'shua judge each and every human being on the face of the earth. Either we see the example left by Y'shua and allow his word to conform us to His image or we will be judged by his word on the last day.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

In the book of Devarim, Moshe raises his voice and reminds his listeners about the nuts and bolts of living as YHWH's set apart nation. In fact the whole scroll of Devarim is pretty much a review of the rest of Torah, as just seventy new laws are presented in the whole book.

Instead of bringing lots of new ideas, the foundation of Hebrew faith is presented as Moshe acts as the speaker in Deuteronomy. Here Moshe addresses the nation as they are poised to enter into the Promised Land. In a series of three speeches he reminds them of their past, reviews their laws, and challenges the nation to live up to their high calling. This is great reading!

The first Torah reading section is named “Devarim” like the entire scroll itself. “Devarim” means “words” and is derived from chapter one verse one, “These are the words that Moshe addressed to all Yisra'el on the other side of the Jordan.” The English name Deuteronomy comes from the Septuagint and literally and correctly means “second law.” The entire book is also referred to in Judaism by an ancient Rabbinic title, “Mishneh Torah.” This is just like most ancient middle-

eastern manuscripts, which receive their name from some of the first opening phrases. Even the Torah reading portions are usually named after the first important word or phrase used.

For example, the section on the evil king Balak and the evil prophet Bilaam is titled “Balak.” And the first parasha in the Torah is called “B’reisheet” after the first Hebrew word found in the Torah, which means “beginning.” The Torah is the “basics” of Biblical faith and reading, the Torah is one of the most vital parts of having an abundant faith. To help with reviewing the basics, the Torah has been divided into 54 sections called “Parashot.”

The Hebrew term “parasha” literally means “portion or section,” and Judaism has used an annual reading cycle for over two thousand years. Reading each week’s parasha will walk you through the five books of Moshe within a year.

Some say that Moshe instituted reading the Torah in a year’s time, but early history teaches that in Yisra’el the Torah was divided into 155 portions and took three years to read. Some groups, like the Reformed Jews, still use this triennial cycle of smaller sections. Most believers have adopted the annual cycle that at least dates back to the Babylonian exile. The annual cycle begins and ends near the holy day of Simchat Torah. Simchat Torah is a festive celebration of the Torah and the Torah reading cycle, which is promoted in the places of worship or synagogues. Sometimes two portions are read to complete the cycle in a year, because of leap years and holy day readings. When one completes the reading of one of the five books it is customary to stand and say the phrase, “Chazak, chazak, v’nit chazak” which means, “Be strong, be strong, and let us be strengthened.” This is an encouragement to continue the reading cycle.

Some congregations have huge Torah scrolls that are paraded around the building and read from in Hebrew, while other groups read the English sections in home settings, podiums, or dinner tables. Traditionally a B’racha or blessing is spoken before and after the Torah reading and a small portion from the rest of Tanakh is also usually read. The Brit Chadasha has also been separated into corresponding Parashot for those who desire to read from it as well as the Torah. There is great freedom when it comes to reading the Torah Parashot – the essential point being that the Torah is read aloud.

In the book of Devarim Moshe spoke the Torah aloud as an example. He told Yisra’el that they should read the Torah aloud on Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, and

Feast days. Later Ezra the Scribe would institute reading the Torah aloud on Mondays, Thursdays, and Shabbat Afternoons (Nehemiah 8:1, Megillah 4:1). The Brit Chadasha continues this theme when it teaches that “Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of Elohim.” Without the Torah being read aloud it is difficult for faith to truly set in. “Give attendance to the reading of Torah, to exhortation, to teaching,” says First Timothy 4:13 in the . Y’shua the Moshiach set an example for all believers when he attended the synagogue for Torah reading on many occasions. (Surprisingly he never went to church to hear a sermon!) “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, according to his practice, He went into the synagogue on Shabbat, and stood up to read,” Luka 4:16. Y’shua never stopped the Torah reading in the synagogue to do miracles or teach. He read from the Torah and things just started to happen!

Some may say that the “Spirit should lead” what is done during worship services and that is perfectly fine. The Spirit of Truth or “Ruach V’Emet” will certainly lead as the Debar YHWH (word of YHWH) is presented. “All Ketuvim are given by the inspiration of YHWH, and are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, as Torah in righteousness: that the man of YHWH may be perfect, fully equipped to all tov mitzvot,” Timteous Bet / Second Timothy 3:16, 17. We are to worship in Spirit and in Truth says the Messiah. “Elohim is Ruach: and they that worship Him must worship Him in Ruach and Emet,” Yochanan 4:24. The Ruach HaKodesh will minister and move as we first delve into the Emet or Truth of YHWH.

The Torah is the basics of the faith. The rest of the Scriptures are just commentaries on the first five books, and Devarim is a “commentary-like” review of the first four books. Get ready to read through the rest of Devarim with an open heart and an opened Bible. Review the basics and raise your voice as you read.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Devarim." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 1:1-27. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Acts 7:51-8:4. What did you learn from studying these passages?

4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
6. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
7. Why was Parashot Devarim given by Moshe? To whom was he speaking and for what reason?
8. \Why did Moshe go into such a detailed historical account?
9. Who is the subject of Moshe's story? What significance is that?
10. Is the Tanakh the expression of YHWH's wrath and the Brit Chadasha the expression of YHWH's grace? Explain.
11. Why do you think YHWH had Israel not fight the Edomites or Moabites for their land?
12. Explain the difference between YHWH fighting for Israel and Israel doing the fighting?
13. Why did the YHWH have Gad, Re'uven and half of Manasseh fight with the rest of Israel before they settled down east of the Jordan?
14. In the covenant structure of this book, what verses constitute the preamble and what verses make up the historical prologue? What is the importance of each of these divisions of the covenant structure?
15. What are some of the important words found in the Book of Deuteronomy?
16. Who are the primary actors in the Parsha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
17. Are any of the mitzvot found in the book of Number repeated in the book of Devarim? If not, can you explain why?
18. In Sefer (the book of) B'reisheet, we find the story of Creation, the Flood and the story of the Fathers of the Faith. Are any of these stories repeated in Sefer Devarim? If so, which story and where it is repeated?
19. Which holiday is believed to be the time when Moshe made his recounting to the people and in which year? Where did he make this speech?
20. Moshe describes how heavy the burden of the Hebrew people was for him, and how he divided up the decision making. How is his description different from what we were told when it actually happened?
21. How is Moshe's recounting of the spies' report different from the report itself?

22. There were certain tribes of peoples that the Israelites were told not to fight. One was the people who lived in Seir. Why were we not to take their land
23. What was a second tribe we were ordered not to attack, and why?
24. The Israelites completely conquered two peoples and killed their kings. Name one of them and their king. Name a second and their king.
25. There are two mitzvot / commandments in Parasha Devarim. Both are negative precepts. What are they?
26. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Eikev

- Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25
- Isaiah 49:14-51:3
- Hebrews 11:8-13

The Torah Portion at a Glance

In the Parasha of Eikev ("Because"), Moses continues his closing address to the Children of Israel, promising them that if they will fulfill the commandments (Mitzvot) of the Torah, they will prosper in the Land they are about to conquer and settle in keeping with YHWH's promise to their forefathers.

Moses also rebukes them for their failings in their first generation as a people, recalling their worship of the Golden Calf, the rebellion of Korach, the sin of the Spies, their angering of YHWH at Taveirah, Massah and Kivrot Hataavah ("The Graves of Lust"); "You have been rebellious against YHWH," he says to them, "since the day I knew you." But he also speaks of YHWH's forgiveness of their sins, and the Second Tablets which YHWH inscribed and gave to them following their repentance.

Their 40 years in the desert, says Moses to the people, during which YHWH sustained them with daily manna from heaven, was to teach them "that man does not live on bread alone, but by the utterance of YHWH's mouth does man live."

Moses describes the land they are about to enter as "flowing with milk and honey" blessed with the "Seven Kinds" (wheat and barley, grapevines, figs, pomegranates, olive oil and dates), and the place that is the focus of YHWH's providence of His world. He commands them to destroy the idols of the land's former masters, and to beware lest they become haughty and begin to believe that "my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."

A key passage in our Parasha is the second chapter of the Shema, which repeats the fundamental mitzvot enumerated in the Shema's first chapter and describes the rewards of fulfilling YHWH's commandments and the adverse results (famine and exile) of their neglect. It is also the source of the precept of prayer and includes a reference to the resurrection of the dead in the Messianic Age.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

From the precepts learned in this week's portion it is honest to question if the Messiah violated the Torah of Moses. How? Well, in Deuteronomy 8:10 we are instructed to bless YHWH after we have eaten our meals. This verse says very plainly, "When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the YHWH your Elohim for the good land which He has given you." There are several places in the New Testament that show Y'shua blessing bread and then breaking it. Did Y'shua break the Torah when He broke the bread?

One passage to consider is Luke 24:30, "When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them." This might seem to indicate a foul up by Messiah but read in context the opposite is true. Y'shua never broke the Torah. He completed it to the inth degree and always gave thanks after or during a meal. Mark 14:22, "While they were eating, Y'shua took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." In Judaism it is tradition to bless a meal before and after partaking. The blessing after the meal is a beautiful reminder of YHWH's goodness in accordance with the Torah. The blessing or "grace" before a meal is an additional time to thank YHWH for all that He has done for us. David Bivin, founder and director of Jerusalem Perspective, reminds us that the focus is YHWH, not the food: "The blessing can only be a blessing directed towards YHWH. The blessing that was said in Y'shua's time before one ate was praise and thanksgiving to YHWH who so wondrously provides food for His children, to Him who 'brings bread out of the earth.' One does not bless the food, nor does one even ask YHWH to bless the food. One blesses YHWH who provides the food."

The prayer often spoken before a meal is "baruch atah YHWH Eloheynu Melech Ha olam, ha motzi lechem min ha'aretz." This means, "blessed are You YHWH our Elohim who brings forth bread from the earth."

The traditional prayer after a meal is as follows: We praise You, YHWH, Ruler of the universe, Who sustains the entire world with goodness, kindness and mercy. YHWH gives food to all creatures, for YHWH's love is everlasting. Through YHWH's abundant goodness we have never been in want; may we never be in want of sustenance for the sake of YHWH's great Name. YHWH sustains all, does good to all, and provides food for all of the creatures whom YHWH has created. We praise You, YHWH, Who provides food for all.

We thank You for having given a lovely, good and spacious land to our fathers; for having liberated us from the land of Egypt and freed us from the house of bondage; for Your covenant which You have sealed in our flesh, for the Torah which You have taught us; for the laws which You have made known to us; for the life, grace and loving kindness which You have bestowed upon us, and for the sustenance with which You nourish and maintain us continually, in every day, every season, and every hour.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

From the classic tale of Romeo and Juliet to today's blockbuster movies, the world is in love with love. People sing about it, dream about it, and write books about this most natural of all feelings. You see, everyone has two basic emotional needs: the desire to feel loved and the desire to show love. A major malfunction in humanity occurs when these desires are mixed up, or when love is not properly received or given.

When it comes to real love, the world has it all wrong.

Like a toaster in a bathtub, is how love is taken out of the correct environment and substituted falsely. People say that they "love spaghetti" and they "love the Atlanta Braves." Boyfriends fall in and out of love with girls all through high school. Mankind is searching for true love, but as one Country music song puts it, the world is "looking for love in all the wrong places." The truth is that true love and true fulfillment in life is NOT found in receiving love. Being the center of your mate's attention isn't all you need. Satisfaction and purpose in life can be found simply by tapping into the awesome power found in giving love to the Almighty. Love isn't about getting some feeling or fix, it is about giving devotion and time. It is better to give than receive.

This week's Torah parasha echoes the words from last week's reading about loving YHWH and the Shema. Now, Moshe is summing up exactly what YHWH is looking for in His people - "And now Yisra'el, what does YHWH your Elohim require of you, but to fear YHWH your Elohim, to have your halakhah in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve YHWH your Elohim with all your lev and all your being. To shomer the mitzvot of YHWH, and His chukim, which I commanded you this day for your tov," Devarim / Deuteronomy 10:12,13. Again

Moshe is saying that all YHWH wants from Yisra'el is love! He wants Yisra'el to be devoted to Him alone.

It is simply amazing that what Y'shua called the "greatest commandment" in all of the Torah is usually ignored by most teachers, preachers, and even rabbis. Think about it. Just how many sermons have you heard on the subject of "loving YHWH?" How many Bible studies have you attended when you discussed how to properly love the Creator? People will talk about tithing or church attendance but very little is studied on the issue of loving YHWH. Yet it is this commandment that is most important in YHWH's eyes. YHWH wants His children to love Him properly. "And you shall love the Master YHWH with all your lev, and with all your being, and with all your mind, and with all your strength: this is the first commandment," said Messiah Y'shua in Markus 12:29-31, RSV.

How do you love YHWH? How exactly can you love someone you can't see or touch? What does it mean to love Him with all of your heart, being, and resources? To answer these questions let's return to the origin of the word "love" and better understand what YHWH desires.

First, take to mind that Y'shua never told us to "love YHWH." This is because He never spoke English. The Jewish Messiah spoke Hebrew and said to "ahavta YHWH." The puppy love of today's English is much different than the devotion Y'shua called for when He spoke in Hebrew. In modern thought love is an emotion that can be turned on and off like a light switch. The Hebrew concept of love is very different. So, clear your mind of what it means to "love." What you already know isn't exactly what the original intention of the word was. "Therefore ahavta YHWH your Elohim and shomer His charge, and His chukim, and His mishpatim, and His mitzvot always," Devarim 11:1. Love or "ahava" in the Hebraic mind is very different than love in today's culture. In the Hebrew, love is connected directly with action and obedience.

The primitive root word "ahav" means to "have affection, sexually or otherwise, love, like, to befriend, to be intimate." It brings to mind the idea of longing for or breathing for the Creator. Hebraically ahava is a verb, it is an act of doing something. It is not just a feeling. Ahava is also connected to appetite. To ahava YHWH is to crave Him and His Word. All throughout the Bible ahava is related directly to Torah. Obedience to what the Torah commands is the way mankind loves YHWH. "If you love me, obey my mitzvot. If a man loves Me, he will guard My words, and My Abba will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our

stay with Him," said Moshiach Y'shua in John/Yochanan 14:15,23. To ahavta YHWH, you must walk in submission to YHWH's will and crave that your life is pleasing unto Him.

When you love YHWH then your deepest desire is to connect with Him. "Torah study is the way to discover this path of meaning. Torah Chayim - literally the book "instructions for living" is YHWH's communication to the world. It's the ultimate repository for wisdom on how to succeed at marriage, parenting, community building, and fixing the world. That's because Torah is the mind of Elohim. The sign of successful Torah study is when it becomes an insatiable addiction. If something doesn't make sense, you will rack your brains to figure it out. And every time you succeed in working it out, the pleasure makes you want more and more. This level is called 'Ahavat torah' - true love of Torah. You become so overwhelmed that Torah study becomes your very essence and you want to absorb as much as you can. Torah study ingrains in us the idea that Elohim is the infinite source of all wisdom and defines the ultimate in "meaning." Therefore personal goals and desires cannot compare, and you'll drop anything which is not consistent with the will of YHWH," wrote one teacher .

Sefer Devarim says, "you shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your possessions." When you love YHWH with all of your heart or "lev," you are basically losing self to Torah. This is when your will is totally compliant to Divine will in all areas of life. "To love Elohim is not an emotional feeling. To love Elohim the way He desires us to love Him, means to totally give ourselves over to Him - to surrender, to relinquish and to abandon ourselves to Him, regardless of how we feel, what we think or what we desire. It means to set aside our life, so that His Life can come forth from our hearts. A perfect Scripture that sums up what it means to ahava YHWH is Mattitياهو/Matthew 16:24, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his execution stake and follow me," wrote Chuck Missler in The Way of Agape book.

Y'shua spoke clearly about love and Torah when He said, "He that has My mitzvot, and keeps them, he it is that loves Me: and he who loves Me, shall be loved by My Abba, and I will love him, and will reveal Myself to him," John/Yochanan 14:21.

When you love YHWH with all of your soul or "nephesh," you are reconnecting to the original intention of Torah. YHWH created man to be in direct

communication and following the mitzvot restores this fellowship. To love YHWH is to obey Torah and therefore bridge the gap between man and the Almighty. When your actions line up with YHWH's word it is like your nephesh is returning to the Gan Eden. Compliance with the mitzvot creates an attachment to the eternal. In fact, according to Strong's Exhaustive Dictionary the root word to the term "mitzvot" or "commandments" is "tsavah" which literally means to "constitute or enjoin." The mitzvot of Torah enjoin Yisra'el back to YHWH.

But, if this is true, then the opposite is also true. Sin, or Torah breaking, separates humanity from the holy. Torahlessness reveals a lack of love for Elohim!" Sin is really an expression of love of self more than love for YHWH," says one source. Loving YHWH with all of your soul is returning to the ancient paths and living the Word. It is becoming like Y'shua and being the "word made flesh." This also means coming to grips with the issue of satisfaction.

Remember that the word "ahava" suggests craving. People have an inward craving and desire to love but they fill this void with love of stuff, or people, or self. When your nephesh is devoted to YHWH, you accept the emet that YHWH has not cheated us. The world only has an appearance of satisfaction - having money, "fitting in," eating anything, and carefree living will never satiate your inner craving to love YHWH and receive His love.

Finally, to love YHWH with all of your resources or possessions is to serve Him with all that you have and all that you are. This type of ahava is deep. Y'shua once came in contact with a rich man who kept many of the mitzvot but did not fully devote himself to YHWH. "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Tov Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal chayim? And Y'shua said unto him, why do you call me tov? No one is tov, except one, that is YHWH. You know the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your abba and your ima. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Y'shua heard these things, he said to him, yet you lack one thing: sell all that you have, and distribute unit to the poor, and you shall have treasure in shamayim: and come, follow me. And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich," Luke 18:18-23. The man had to do something, to sell all he had and follow Y'shua, to prove his love for YHWH. The proof is the actions, not just the words.

Let's look again to a quote from Devarim - "Therefore ahavta YHWH your Elohim and shomer His charge, and His chukim, and His mishpatim, and His mitzvot

always," Deuteronomy/Devarim 11:1. Here the emet, the truth is very clear. To ahavta YHWH you will obey His mitzvot always. No matter what it costs. No matter what it calls for? If you really love YHWH you will obey Him.

Have you accepted a counterfeit in place of loving YHWH? Are there areas in your chayim that you need to fully turn over to Elohim? Do you wish to really love Him, to really obey Him?

Focus in your lev to follow the Torah as you pray this prayer:

"O Elohim, you are my El; early will I seek You: my being thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land, where no mayim is; to see Your power and Your tifereth, so as I have seen You in the Set-Apart Place. Because your loving chesed is better than chayim, my lips shall hallel you. So I will bless You while I live: I will lift up my hands to Your Name. My being shall be satisfied as with marrow and abundance; and my mouth shall hallel you with joyful lips: When I remember You upon my bed, and meditate on You in the night watches," Psalm/Tehillim 63:1-7.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Eikev." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 1:1-27. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Acts 7:51-8:4. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
6. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
7. What must the Hebrew people do to ensure that YHWH will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
8. What were the:
(a) wonders (b) strong hand (c) outstretched arm that was seen in Egypt?
9. When a group performs a mitzvah, whose name is attached to the mitzvah?
10. How did the Hebrew People do their laundry in the midbar/dessert?
11. How did the Hebrew People obtain clothing for their growing children in the midbar?
12. How many days did Moshe spend on Mt. Sinai altogether?

13. On what day did Moshe come down from Mt. Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the people?
14. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
15. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
16. Which sin of the Hebrew People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
17. Why were the levi'im chosen by YHWH?
18. Why do the levi'im have no portion in the land?
19. All aspects of man's life are in YHWH's "hands" except one. What is this? What is the "added benefit" of observing the mitzvot?
20. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
21. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and Eretz Yisrael?
22. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
23. Which activity is "serving YHWH with the heart"?
24. When the Hebrew People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
25. How does one "cleave to YHWH"?
26. Why did YHWH choose Am Yisrael?
27. Read Devarim 9:25-29 carefully. Is this simply a review of Moshe's request that YHWH invoke His mercy or do find a theme from "chet ha'meraglim" as well?
28. As you read through Parsha Eikev, note how Moshe seems to be speaking to the generation that went out of Egypt. Note also how Moshe is clearly speaking to the second generation in the fortieth year based on 8:1-2 and its context. Can you explain why?
29. Note that in Deuteronomy YHWH himself uses the "name" elohim to refer to idols. What does this teach us about the use of the word "elohim"? Because the pagans have appropriated one of the names or titles of YHWH for idolatrous practices does this mean that his people cannot continue to use it in worshipping him?
30. What are some of the important words found in the Book of Deuteronomy?
31. Who are the primary actors in the Parsha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
32. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Re'eh

- Deuteronomy 11:26-16:17
- Isaiah 54:11-55:5
- John 7:37-52

The Torah Portion at a Glance

"See," says Moses to the people of Israel, "I place before you today a blessing and a curse" -- the blessing that will come when they fulfill YHWH's commandments, and the curse if they abandon them. These should be proclaimed on Mount Gerizim and Mount Eibal when the people cross over into the Holy Land.

A Temple should be established in "the place that YHWH will choose to make dwell His name there" where the people should bring their sacrifices to Him; it is forbidden to make offerings to YHWH in any other place. It is permitted to slaughter animals elsewhere not as a sacrifice but to eat their meat; the blood, however (which in the Temple is poured upon the Altar) may not be eaten.

A false prophet, or one who entices others to worship idols, should be put to death; an idolatrous city must be destroyed. The identifying signs for kosher animals and fishes, and the list of non-kosher birds (first given in Leviticus 11) are repeated.

A tenth of all produce is to be eaten in Jerusalem, or else exchanged for money with which food is purchased and eaten there. On certain years this tithe is given to the poor instead. Firstborn cattle and sheep are to be offered in the Temple and their meat eaten by the Kohen (priest).

The mitzvah of charity obligates a Jew to aid a needy fellow with a gift or loan. On the Sabbatical year (occurring every seventh year) all loans are to be forgiven. All indentured servants are to be set free after six years of service.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

In this week's Torah portion we are given the specific guidelines on how to tell if a prophet is a genuine seer that has been sent from YHWH or not. What is the true test of a prophet?

Deuteronomy 13 says that a prophet of YHWH MUST establish the words of the Torah in his teachings. It's not seeing the future or performing a miracle that makes a prophet a prophet. Rather, a person is known as a servant of YHWH if, and only if, they profess the Elohim of Israel and His Torah.

"If there will arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of a dream, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder of which he spoke to you happens, [and he] says, "Let us go after other gods which you have not known, and let us worship them, "you shall not heed the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of a dream; for YHWH your Elohim, is testing you, to know whether you really love YHWH your Elohim, with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall follow YHWH your Elohim fear Him, keep His commandments, heed His voice, worship Him, and cleave to Him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of a dream shall be put to death; because he spoke falsehood about the YHWH your Elohim Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and Who redeemed you from the house of bondage, to lead you astray from the way in which YHWH your Elohim, commanded you to go; so shall you clear away the evil from your midst. If your brother, the son of your mother, tempts you in secret or your son, or your daughter, or the wife of your embrace, or your friend, who is as your own soul saying, "Let us go and worship other gods, which neither you, nor your forefathers have known." Of the gods of the peoples around you, [whether] near to you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; You shall not desire him, and you shall not hearken to him; neither shall you pity him, have mercy upon him, nor shield him," Devarim 13.

These verses and this Torah portion is important to consider when reflecting upon our Messiah Y'shua. For thousands of years, religion has stolen the true identity of Messiah. Man-made organizations have professed and propagated a Messiah that abhorred the Law of YHWH and sought to rid mankind of such vicious commandments. This is not the Messiah and such a teacher is not a prophet. The Savior exclaimed by many is a counterfeit that doesn't pass the litmus test of Devarim 13. ANY prophet of YHWH, teacher of YHWH, and servant

of YHWH must lead people to worship the Holy One of Israel and keep His Torah. Those who do not are not true prophets! It's that simple.

Mark 8:27-33 shows how the people of the day saw and heard the Torah teaching and the Torah keeping of Y'shua and therefore perceived Him to be a prophet. "Y'shua went on with his disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."

Y'shua taught Torah and upheld the truth of the Torah at all times. He is a prophet greater than Moshe and Elijah. He is the Messiah. Don't accept a false Messiah that doesn't support the Torah.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Many teachers erroneously proclaim their Bible to be the "inspired infallible word of God." The error of such a statement is easily proven when any translation is compared to the ancient texts of the Scriptures. English translations fall short time and time again.

Take for example the beloved New International Version (NIV) that has ripped literally thousands of comments out of the Bible. Compared to the King James Version, the NIV has a shortage of words equal to the entire text of 1 and 2 Peter combined. Many verses in the NIV also run contradictory to other translations. In Isaiah 9:3, the King James Version (KJV) says, "Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy." The "Nearly Inspired Version" NIV says, "You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy." Which is the case? The following verses are just some of the many that appear in the KJV but not in the NIV: Matthew 17:21; 18:11; 23:14, Mark 7:16, Luke 17:36; 23:17; John 5:4, Acts 8:37; 28:29, Romans 16:24 and 1 John 5:7.

The King James Version has its own set of problems as well. This popular Bible is named after the openly homosexual King James I of England. King James fell madly in love with his male cousin Esme Stuart whom he made Duke of Lennox. In 1582 James was kidnapped and forced to issue a proclamation against his lover and send him back to France. The original KJV contained 80 books instead

of the 66 books of Genesis - Revelation. It wasn't until the end of the 19th Century that the 14 books of the Apocrypha were removed from the KJV.

Also removed from KJV is the true meaning of many verses as translators actually added hundreds of thousands of words to the Biblical text. These additions were italicized when printed to indicate the addition. Most readers don't know this and therefore assume the doctrine being propagated is correct. Just imagine an opinionated editor adding words to a book by President Obama to understand the depth of this travesty. One definite error of translation is in Matthew 23:24. The KJV has 'strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.' But the Greek has 'strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.' This mistake can not be ignored as it shows the work as fallible.

The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1500 years in three languages - Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Therefore, English is not one of the original languages of the Bible. All English translations of the Scriptures will suffer from differences in languages and culture. This is expounded by the move of modern translators to render a thought for thought based work as opposed to a text that literally translates each word. In the book, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* by Bruce Metzger, the author shows how "Revelation 2:23 contains the Greek word nephros, which literally means "kidneys." However, the English sounds pretty weird when Y'shua says, "...I am He who searches the kidneys and hearts..." The word refers to the deepest emotions and affections of man, and is more understandable in our culture when translated as "thoughts" or "mind." Such changes cloud the original intention and prove that no English Bible is either inspired nor infallible.

This current Torah portions says in Devarim 13:1 tells us, "All this word which I command you, that shall ye observe to do; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." English Bibles violate this command over and over again.

The solution to this problem is first stop trusting the translations. Dig deep for the original meaning of a verse by understanding the culture, context, and language first used. Then discover how a verse was originally intended to be kept and then observe it in the same manner.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Re'eh." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 54:11-55:5. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in John 7:37-52. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
7. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
8. What were the sites designated for the "blessings and the curses" to be pronounced by the people?
9. On what condition will Bnei Yisrael receive the blessings from YHWH?
10. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that YHWH commanded?
11. What was to be the sign for the Hebrew People that they would inherit the Land?
12. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
13. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
14. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of kedusha (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
15. Why was the tribe of Y'hudah not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
16. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
17. Why were the People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
18. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
19. If a person performs miracles in the name of YHWH and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
20. The Torah says, "to Him (YHWH you shall cleave." How does one fulfill this command?
21. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
22. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
23. What is the "source" of the Hebrew People being an am kadosh (holy nation)?
24. How should the Israeli People maintain themselves as an am kadosh?
25. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?

26. What mitzvah recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
27. Which four individuals are under YHWH's "special protection"?
28. Re'eh what?
29. B'nai Yisrael was to destroy all of the idols, altars, and places of worship of the nations they would dispossess. Where was B'nai Yisrael to worship?
30. The people were told they could eat flesh within their gates, both the clean and unclean. What does that mean, both the clean and unclean, and what flesh could they eat?
31. B'nai Yisrael was not allowed to eat their tithes of corn, oil, etc. within their gates. Where were they allowed to eat them?
32. Under what circumstance were the people to disregard the signs and wonders of a dreamer or prophet?
33. What was B'nai Yisrael to do if members of their community drew others away to worship other gods in another place?
34. What are the 2 qualifications for an animal to be eligible for a Hebrew to eat?
35. What is the difference between the way eligible animals and birds are described as compared to eligible fish?
36. If an animal died on its own, what could a Hebrew do with it?
37. B'nai Yisrael was to tithe the produce of their fields every year? What were they to do with the tithe?
38. Every so often, the Hebrew was to dispose of his tithe in a different way than described above. How often and what was he to do?
39. When was a slave allowed to go free and under what conditions?
40. We were told not to regret the freeing of the slave for to the double of the hire of a hireling has he served for 6 years. What does that mean?
41. Deuteronomy 15:7, says "You shall not harden your heart nor close your hand against your destitute brother." What is the meaning of this comparison?
42. Devarim 15:10 says, "You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give to him." Why does the verse repeat the words naton titein -- which translates literally as "give, you shall give to him"? The verse could have just said "give to him," once.
43. What are some of the important words found in this portion?
44. Who are the primary actors in this parasha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
45. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Shoftim

- Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9
- Isaiah 51:12-52:12
- Mathew 3:1-17

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Moses instructs the people of Israel to appoint judges and law-enforcement officers in every city; "Justice, justice shall you pursue," he commands them, and you must administer it without corruption or favoritism. Crimes must be meticulously investigated and evidence thoroughly examined -- a minimum of two credible witnesses is required for conviction and punishment.

In every generation, says Moses, there will be those entrusted with the task of interpreting and applying the laws of the Torah. "According to the law that they will teach you, and the judgment they will instruct you, you shall do; you shall not turn away from the thing that they say to you, to the right nor to the left."

Shoftim also includes the prohibitions against idolatry and sorcery; laws governing the appointment and behavior of a king; and guidelines for the creation of "cities of refuge" for the inadvertent murderer. Also set forth are many of the rules of war: the exemption from battle for one who has just built a home, planted a vineyard, married, or is "afraid and soft-hearted"; the requirement to offer terms of peace before attacking a city; the prohibition against wanton destruction of something of value, exemplified by the law that forbids to cut down a fruit tree when laying siege (in this context the Torah makes the famous statement "For man is a tree of the field").

The Parasha concludes with the law of Eglah Arufah - the special procedure to be followed when a person is killed by an unknown murderer and his body is found in a field - which underscores the responsibility of the community and its leaders not only for what they do but also for what they might have prevented from being done.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Since the invention of the printing, the Bible has been the most widely produced manuscript. More Bibles have been sold than any other book and more books have been written about the Bible than any other subject. A recent Google web search revealed some 22 million web sites with the word "Bible" in them.

Throughout the Internet is countless information on all types of religious subjects. There are also literally millions of books written by Christians, Jews, and others who all have their "say" on what the Scriptures really mean. TV preachers, rabbis, and local pastors each have their own personal interpretations. And, people love to read the writings of everyone from Max Lucado to Baal Shem Tov.

But who reads the Bible anymore?

Honestly...do you spend more time reading about the Scriptures or reading the scriptures?

How many hours a week do you spend on web sites or in books about the Bible? Now compare this to how much time you actually spend in the Word.

Do you get more out of a commentary on the Torah portion or reading the Torah portion itself?

It is within the Torah that true and undefiled inspiration can be found. "And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his chayim: that he may learn to fear YHWH His Elohim, to shomer all the words of this Torah and these chukim, and do them," Devarim 17: 19.

Don't take this wrong, there is much that can be learned from ministers of the faith who present encouragement. Yet, books, web sites, and commentaries (like this one) are just secondary sources. Reading these writings should never take the place of reading the Torah. Surfing the web for the latest revelation or insight should never take precedence over studying the Word itself.

Our current parasha is titled "Shoftim" and speaks of the judges of Torah that were established for the nation of Yisra'el. These chosen officers were held to a high standard of knowing the Torah and establishing judgment within the

community. "According to the sentence of the Torah that they shall teach you, and according to the mishpat that they shall tell you, you shall do: you shall not decline from the ruling which they shall show you, to the right or to the left," sefer Devarim 17:11. The Shoftim helped Moshe interpret the Torah and decide on issues. For a time, the common Hebrews relied only upon the shoftim to establish halakhah, or the way to walk Torah. The words of YHWH were passed down from Moshe to the seventy leaders of Yisra'el onward to their students and the nation as a whole.

As time passed the word was written on scrolls. But everyone did not own a Torah scroll nor could the majority read Hebrew. Teachers or rabbis who had studied the Word developed their own perspectives on the Scriptures. These Rabbis presented their teachings at synagogues and gave the community at large a chance to choose which Rabbi to follow. This is how the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the school of Shammai, and the School of Hallel all came about. Each group was trying to follow the prophet Moshe and His revelation from Horev. Each group was literally trying to walk in the standard of these original judges. A time was prophesied though in our same Torah portion that YHWH would raise a navi or leader who would be the righteous judge that all of Yisra'el should follow.

"YHWH your Elohim will raise up to you a Navi from the midst of you, of your brothers, like me; to Him you shall listen; according to all that you desired of YHWH Your Elohim in Horev for 'I will raise them up a Navi from among their brothers, like you, and will put My words in His mouth; and He shall speak to them all that I shall command Him. And it shall come to pass, that whoever will not listen to My words that He shall speak in My Name, I will require it of Him,'" Devarim 18:15-19.

This navi, or leader, who is spoken of in the Torah is Y'shua Ha Moshiach. "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me," said the Messiah in Yochanan 14:24. Y'shua came in His father's Name to properly interpret the Torah. He appeared to act as the shoftim and navi of Devarim. Part of His ministry was to teach students His Torah interpretations and commission them to teach others. In doing so the Father's will would be spread throughout the world, and all throughout time. The sheep of Yisra'el were to look to their Shepherd for halakhah. "Y'shua answered, "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him

who sent me. If anyone chooses to do YHWH's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from Elohim or whether I speak on my own," Yochanan 7:16.

Y'shua is our Rabbi, our teacher, and our judge of Torah. He is Messiah. He is the One who has set the pattern for living out the Bible. Not Chuck Swindoll. Not Billy Graham. Not even Rambam. Y'shua, ha Navi. Y'shua alone. Have you been guilty of looking to others for inspiration before looking to the Messiah? Do you surf the net more than you spread open your Bible? This teaching on the Torah could go on and on about this subject. When it comes to Torah study, you could discuss everything from Moshe's hairstyle lent to the sacrificial Red Heifer. Why not let the Torah speak for itself. Here's the Torah reading from the King James Version with the Sacred Names added. Try reading the Torah a little more this week. Pray for the Ruach HaKodesh for inspiration. Let Y'shua, your Rabbi teach you.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

The idea of "justice" is a lost theme in today's world that once restored can bring about a spiritual revival the size of a tsunami. The book of Micah says, "What does YHWH require of you? But to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with YHWH." By doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with Him, you're going to fulfill the commandments, the mitzvot; however, it begins with doing justly.

The Hebrew word often in the Scriptures for justice is mishpat, and it comes from a root word, shophet. Mishpat means ordinance or custom or manner. The root word, shophet, means to judge or to govern. A Hebraic understanding of justice is to right the wrong, to provide truth for the offended, to give balance to prevent anything else bad from happening, to declare good or bad. Justice means to restore. It means to restore a set of relationships to the community, to acquit the innocent, and to sentence the guilty.

It is not justice if you just sentence the guilty. It is not justice if you just acquit the innocent. Justice is both. The Hebraic concept of justice includes a conquering of the world's injustices. You experience an Injustice if you face punishment for something even though you are innocent. When you face a problem, when you are persecuted for righteousness sake that is called an injustice. It tells us in the Scriptures, "Learn to do well, seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1) Learn to do well. Seek justice.

In the Scriptures, we have the Book of Judges, right? This isn't people who just wore this long robe and had the curly hair and the gavel. A judge in the Torah is a person who knows Torah, who understands Torah, and when someone comes to them with a problem, a scripturally based problem, then they are able to discern good from evil, right from wrong. Remember Moshe? They would come to him, and he would discern for them. He would make judgments for Israel. Then he set up judges over tens and twenties and fifties and hundreds and thousands or such.

Solomon understood that there is a judicial system in the heavenlies and that YHWH is all about law. Let's just make that clear right now. YHWH is all about law. You could call Him a legalist if you wanted to. He's not about man's law. He's not about "Oh, you've got to do this a certain, and exactly how high can you jump?" But He's all about law and a system of law because He set up the universe with checks and balances.

There are physical and spiritual laws. These are guidelines that are in place. One law is the law of gravity. If you walk off the top of a building, you are going to fall, and you are probably going to die. That is a law of gravity. YHWH does not violate His laws. Justice is a spiritual law as well as mercy and grace.

By focusing on mercy and grace, we as believers have forgotten about justice, and the scales of justice have been tipped over. There has to be justice. There are spiritual laws in place to enact justice. "Whatsoever you reap you shall sow." YHWH is not made a liar. He's not mocked by this. You reap what you sow. That is a spiritual law.

Did you know that justice is something Y'shua called a weightier matter of the Torah? Matthew 23:23 he said, "You scribes and Pharisees, because you tithe to the nth degree, but you leave behind the weightier matters of Torah, being love, justice, and mercy."

We THINK we keep the weightier matters of the Torah. We begin to learn what kosher eating is. We begin to eat more kosher foods. We begin to wear tzitzit, and we begin to keep the Sabbath, but it's time also we learn about mishpat. Rabbi Paul said, "When I became a man, I put away childish things." It's time to put away our doctrinal discussions and complaints over these other issues and move on to the weightier matters of Torah, being justice.

Rabbi Sha'ul or Paul said that justice should be one of the things we think about. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, think on these things." Here's the problem. We like to think about our pain and our injustice. I can speak for myself. I do. I like to wallow in it. I like to have pity parties; however, Paul tells us to not dwell on that but to think on things that are just. He's telling us here, "Believers, learn what justice is, and when you learn what it is, don't just learn it but think about it and do it."

There is a judicial system set up, and it's in the heavenlies. First of all, there's YHWH, and He is the judge! Wipe the sweat off your brow. You are not the judge. You are not the judge. You are not the judge. YHWH is the judge, because only YHWH can be just and fair.

Here's the good news about YHWH being judge. He's not moody. Amen to that? He's not temperamental. He doesn't wake up on the wrong side of the bed. YHWH is fair. YHWH is just. YHWH is holy. YHWH is awesome. He has set the laws into effect by His Word, and He never has and He never will violate His Word. YHWH is the judge, and in the Scriptures, He's actually called YHWH Mishpat, YHWH Elohe Mishpat, which means YHWH, the mighty one of justice. He never has, and He never will violate His Word, and He seeks justice for His children.

Turn to Psalm 37:2. It says here that YHWH loves justice and does not forsake His saints. Tehillim / Psalms 37:2. He says, "YHWH loves justice and does not forsake His saints," which would tell us that if justice was not available for us, that it would be like YHWH leaving us. If justice, if making things right that were wrong, was not available, that it would be like YHWH forsaking us. Psalm 37:2 is a good verse to memorize.

Psalm 97:2 says, "Righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne," and actually, that's about 4 places in the Psalms, where it says that the foundation of His throne is justice. Without justice, could we have a throne of YHWH? Think about that. The foundation of Heaven is His righteousness, is His justice.

Deuteronomy 32:4 says, "All His ways are just." Who is the judge? YHWH is the judge and He's a perfect judge. He's a just judge. It tells us in Exodus 34:7, "YHWH will by no means leave the guilty unpunished." Zephaniah 3it talks about

the restoration of the Hebrew language. It says this there, "Every morning, YHWH brings justice to light." Now we know in Lamentations it says, "His mercies are new every morning." Here it says, "Every morning He brings justice to light." What that means is if you take this verse, and then you take the verse Exodus 34:7 that says, "YHWH will by no means leave the guilty unpunished" then - every morning, what is done in the darkness, those deeds in the darkness, those deeds of sin, He's bringing to light, and He is judging because He is a just judge.

Hebrews 10:30 says, "YHWH will judge His people." It says that it's a scary thing to fall into the hands of an angry Elohim because YHWH will judge His people. We have the judge.

We also have an accuser, the prosecuting attorney. This prosecuting attorney may look like our friends or our family or people we thought were our friends. But who is the prosecuting attorney? None other but the adversary himself! In Hebrew, the words Ha'satan literally means 'the accuser'. Ha is the prefix meaning 'the,' literally the accuser. The Bible calls him 'the accuser of the brethren.'

The brothers and sisters are always fighting, always have problems with each other, and many times the world will come against us, but even worse, our brothers will come against us, and we think they're the enemy. They may be the ones speaking the words or doing the actions, but who is behind them? It is the accuser, the adversary, pushing them along. He's trying to get them to do that, to bring the case against us.

Now here's the issue. The prosecuting attorney, the adversary, Ha'satan, he knows our weaknesses. He knows our areas of sin, and he often attacks us to bring a legal case against us. What's more, he knows the Torah better than we do. He knows the Bible inside and out. He understands it, and so when we violate mitzvot, or when we fall into sin, he is building his case against us.

He knows the spiritual laws, and he also knows the physical laws. If he can tempt you to walk out in front of that 18-wheeler and say, "You know what? I'm tired of life." Take these pills or slit your - do whatever. He knows the physical laws, and he uses those against us.

He knows the Scriptures better than we do, and he twists it, and he turns the Bible in order to form a case against us. Our problems and our sin that we do,

put into motion certain effects. "The wages of sin is death." The accuser can't be everywhere at one time, so what he has done (he's smart) is he knows these spiritual and physical laws, and he uses them against us. He is sly. He is sleek. He is cunning. He is evil. He is a sleazy attorney.

He knows that the wages of sin is death, and he knows this: He knows that we have sinned. He accuses us of things that we've done. And he accuses us of things we've not done! He uses other people to accuse us of things too. He uses people to build a case against us. The Word tells us, "We war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and authorities in this world's darkness."

Behind the attacks, are these shadim, these demons, and the prince of the power of the air, the god of this world, the accusing attorney. His goal is to render us powerless and unfruitful, dead in our sins. That is his number one goal. He has accused us and will continue to accuse us.

So we have the prosecuting attorney which would be the accuser. We have the judge. Who is the accused? We are the accused. Here's a tough thing: We're guilty. Unless you are sinless, you're guilty. We have been caught, and we are deserving of punishment, and because YHWH is just, because YHWH is an Elohim of justice - then justice always requires punishment for the crime. Nobody gets away with anything with YHWH. For the sins that we have committed, justice requires punishment.

The truth is, we're guilty, and what Ha'satan does is takes our guilt and heaps more and more accusations upon us. He accuses us of things. He lies to us. He lies about us, and he uses anybody he can, right? He'll use other believers. He'll use the world. He'll use our ex's. He'll use our bosses. He'll use our y's, our q's, our p's, our families, whoever else, to hurt us, to steal from us, to bother us, to try to trap us, confuse us, and bring about pain. The enemy wants us to settle with him. Just like an attorney, the enemy wants us to settle!

He wants us to admit defeat. The enemy wants us to settle with our "sinful ways" and "consequences." He wants us to settle where? Not in court, but where? Outside of court. He wants us to be so beaten down that we don't bring our case before the judge. We are the accused. We have YHWH. He is the judge. He is faithful. And we have us.

We are the accused. We are the victim. The judicial system grants us what? Even today, we have a right to what? You have the right to remain silent. Some people don't have the capacity to do so, but we do have the right to remain silent. We ALSO have the right to a what? To an attorney. The Scriptures are clear. We have a right to an attorney.

Now, we have a couple of choices. We can be our own attorney. We can fight ourselves, and it is a vain effort. There is an old saying, "He who has himself for an attorney has a fool for an attorney," because we have the accuser coming against us. We have YHWH, the judge, who is always just, and we have ourselves, and we try to fight off ourselves. We try in a vain effort to defend ourselves, maybe to excuse our actions.

YHWH is the judge and guess who He appoints for us? From the law firm of Y'shua Ha Moshiach and Associates, none other than the master Yah, Y'shua. He is our defending attorney, but if we don't repent, we remain guilty. Y'shua Ha Moshiach is the one the court system has allowed to represent us. We have an attorney who stands for us, and His defense is pretty simple.

Now this is going to surprise you. Y'shua is our defending attorney. Ha Satan is the accuser. YHWH is the judge and Y'shua our attorney actually acknowledges that we are guilty! When our case is brought before the judge and he asks, "how do you plead?" Our attorney says, "Guilty as charged, Your Honor." Our sin causes us to be guilty.

The Torah tells us if we've committed one offense, we've broken them all. And because we're guilty, we deserve what? The judgment. Because YHWH is just, we deserve the judgment. But then, because our attorney says we're guilty as charged, He then stands to His feet and says, "I will step forward to pay the price." Justice always requires a penalty for sin, and Y'shua accepts that penalty for sin for us.

It tells us in 1 Corinthians 5, "Y'shua became sin so that we might become the righteousness of YHWH." Many times, when the word justice is translated in our Scriptures, it is the same Hebrew word for righteousness. Y'shua took our place. He took our sin, and therefore, it is just as if we have never sinned, when we repent, when we do teshuvah. What happens when we don't do teshuvah? We are there defending ourselves, and we're bad attorneys.

So, after Y'shua steps forward to receive our penalty, the judge accepts our attorney's plea. He bangs the gavel, you could say, dismisses the charges, and He says, "You are released and set free to go."

The penalty is paid, however the attorney keeps working. Every minute, every second, every hour, every day, every week, every month, every year, the enemy keeps dragging us to court. Think about it. Today, if you live in a major city, you can't go in and have a lawsuit in a matter of a couple weeks because there are all these frivolous lawsuits bogging down the judicial system, right? That's what the enemy does with us.

He keeps dragging us back to court, accusing us, 'Well he did this, and he did that, and he said this, and he went there - " He accuses, he threatens, and he uses people to slander us and hurt us and steal from us and cheat us. His constant attacks are attempts to make us weary and to weigh us down so we're too weary to walk. He knows that the judge's decision is final, yet he also knows that he can render our life and our faith ineffective, if he can wear down the saints. Satan keeps dragging us to court.

"The enemy seeks to steal, kill, and destroy," John 10:10. He keeps us in court with frivolous lawsuits, and false charges. He keeps us away from our settlement, because the enemy knows that justice not only calls for wrongs to be righted, but it calls for a settlement. If you break into my house, and you steal from me, you may go to court, and you may also be found guilty. You may also have to repay to me what you've stolen. That is called a settlement, because an injustice was done to me.

The enemy perpetrates injustices against us, day after day, minute after minute. It tells us in Exodus 32 that YHWH will not allow the guilty to go unpunished. And He will allow us to receive a settlement back. As justice calls for a settlement or payment to the person who has had an injustice done to them, YHWH longs to give us justice. He longs to avenge us of our enemy.

Isaiah 30:18 says, "YHWH longs to show you mercy, and to rise up on your behalf." You see, the accuser accuses, but our attorney is ready to win. YHWH longs to give us justice. He longs to avenge us of our enemy, and our attorney is there waiting, but we many times don't keep our court date! We never show up for court. How many times have you prayed for justice this week? How many times this past month have you said, "YHWH, avenge me of my enemies! I seek

justice for how I've been wronged, how I've been lied about, how I've been cheated! My boss has let me down. My boss promised me this, and now I've been lied to." We never show up for court by never asking for justice!

One reason why is because we don't understand the heavenly judicial system, or we're too boggled down by our problems. We're too hurt to think about justice. All we want to think about is revenge or our problems. We never show up for court and, in essence, what happens? The accuser wins.

Here's what the Bible says in Colossians 2, "As you have received Y'shua Ha Moshiach, so also walk after Him." So if we've received justice at salvation, what are we to do? We're to walk in that justice. If we receive salvation by grace through faith, what are we to do? We are to walk by grace through faith. We've been saved by judgment, by YHWH's justice. We are to experience life, abundant life through that same power. YHWH has provided justice from our eternal enemy.

If we've been promised then He is faithful to deliver. The curse of sin has been dealt with. The curses and the lies and the actions of others have been dealt with. They do not have to defeat us. Matthew 12:20 is one of these verses that is spoken when you go into counseling, something bad happens. It says, "A crushed reed He shall not break. A smoking flax He shall not quench." Haven't we heard someone say, "Oh brother, I know you're going through this. It's hard. But God won't break you."

But what does this verse really say? Read it in context. "A crushed reed shall He not break. A smoking flax shall He not quench until He brings forth justice, mishpatim, to victory." The context of this is victory is justice. Yes, you may feel like you are burning out. You may feel like you are already burnt out. You may feel like you are a crushed reed, but this verse tells us that your justice is going to come, and it is not just coming, but it is going to lead you to victory. No matter what we face, no matter how bad it gets, it is going to lead us to victory. Victory is ensured by the judicial process.

There are two ways to receive justice. The first is for the guilty. The guilty receives justice for their punishment. They did something wrong and will face the consequences. The second type of justice is for the not guilty, the innocent. We call that an injustice. Evil intruded upon your life. You didn't invite it. You didn't ask for it. It invaded you. If there has been no invitation. If you are innocent as

charged or if you are innocent by repentance (teshuvah), then you are due justice and settlement.

That's good because what that tells us is yes, we might have wronged someone, and we might be requiring justice and judgment and punishment, but by teshuvah, we don't receive that punishment. All the curses are broken by the blood of the Lamb. "Sin, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?" We don't have to reap what we sow. Why? Y'shua took it when He died for us on the Tree.

You might not have asked to be forgotten, to be forsaken. You might not have asked to be molested or fired or the door slammed in your face or to have the problems you are going through in your life. If you didn't ask for that, then do you know what that means? Justice is waiting for you. There is a settlement kept in heaven waiting to be received. It is in the escrow account waiting for you to reach out and grab it.

If you are living the faith, if you are walking in truth, if you're loving others, if you're trusting people - trusting them, loving them, shepherding them, guiding them, befriending them, and they turn their back on you, that is an injustice that requires a settlement. YHWH will restore what the enemy has taken.

It tells us, "I will restore to you all the years the locusts have eaten, the cankerworm, the caterpillar, the palmer worm," All the years wasted before you were born again and the years since then, when you've been attacked by the enemy, He is going to restore to you.

YHWH's scales of justice are balanced. He is good. He is balanced. That means if you get a small attack, you get a small anointing. When you get a bigger attack, you get a bigger anointing. When you get a large attack, guess what? You get a larger anointing. We all want anointing without attack, but what does that do? It causes the scales of justice to be imbalanced. We become prideful, and when pride sets in the enemy goes crazy. Justice provides settlement for our pain and injury.

YHWH is YHWH Mishpat. He is YHWH of justice. He is the judge. Those who do evil bring a mockery to His name. Here is the key, though, you have to catch the thief. You have to bring him before the judge.

We all say, "Oh, the enemy has been attacking." Right? "He's been getting me." And we don't even like to profess that because we don't want to give him any glory, but yet we know that we've even said, "Well, if the enemy is attacking, we must be doing something right." That is fine, but do you understand that is just slapping him on the wrist? That is saying, "Yeah, he is guilty. There he goes. He's attacking me some more." We have to bring him before the judge.

It tells us in Exodus (Shemot) 22, "If you catch a thief, he shall repay you." This is one of those chapters that we skimmed over yet it contains a powerful principle. If you catch a thief - a demon - stealing from you then he shall repay you.

For some instances, it says he is going to repay you two times, sometimes four times, sometimes five times, and sometimes seven times. Y'shua talked about a hundredfold return. It tells us very clearly according to the offense, that thief has to pay you back. If he has stolen your health, he has to pay you back, but you have to bring him before the judge. If he has stolen your future, your life, your feelings, your family, your ministry, then you can get repaid spiritually BUT you have to bring him before the judge.

Here is an interesting verse, Exodus 22:6, "If a fire breaks out and spreads to thorn bushes so that stacked grain or the field itself is consumed, he that started the fire shall make restitution." Yet we know in the Book of James, what is the tongue called? "A fire set aflame by Hell itself that cannot be quenched." So let's put the two verses together. "If a fire breaks out, if evil speech breaks out, if words break out against you, and they spread to thorn bushes or people on the outskirts, so that stacked grain (something stored for later) is consumed then he that started the fire shall bring restitution.

Just saying you are under attack is not enough. We have to bring the thief before the judge. Here's the great part: to the degree that we are innocent, YHWH is able to act on our behalf. Part, and part of our settlement is greater wisdom, is greater anointing, is greater understanding, is greater favor, is greater blessing, but we must accuse the accuser instead of slapping him on the wrist and say, "I rebuke you, Devil." Repent first to remove judgment from ourselves, and then pray for justice.

Turn to Luke 18 and have the way you pray changed. Luke 18:1 says, "And He spoke a parable to them saying this, 'Men are always to make prayer and not to faint. There was in the city a judge, a shopet / judge, who feared not YHWH,

neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came to him saying, 'Do right to me according to my adversary.' And he would not for a while, but afterwards, he would. He said to himself, "Though I don't fear YHWH, nor regard man, because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her lest her continual coming to me wears me out." And Y'shua said, "Hear what the unjust judge said, hear this, and shall not YHWH do good to His own elect who cry day and night to Him though He bear long with them."

This parable is a story of contrast. This is NOT speaking about YHWH the Father. Y'shua is not saying YHWH is that mean old judge who won't grant you what you need. Y'shua is contrasting YHWH to this judge. He is saying, "This judge is bad. He doesn't even fear YHWH, and he won't even do what is right unless he is begged. How much greater will the heavenly judge, Abba YHWH, who sits on the throne, whose throne is made of justice do for you when you come to Him the first time."

We don't have to beg Him and beg Him and beg Him and wear Him out for justice. We come one time, and we say, "Avenge me of my adversaries." If you've been hurt, if you've been ripped off, if you've been lied about, stolen from, talked about and you, feel like YHWH isn't doing anything then it is probably because you've not asked Him to do anything. Yeah, we've said, "Rebuke the enemy." Yes, we've said, "We bind those words," but YHWH says, "Ask for justice."

Job chapter 22 verse 21 says "agree with Him and serve Him and be at peace (be at shalom) thereby good shall come to you."

So what does that say? "Agree with YHWH and serve Him." What is that called? That is called repentance. That is teshuvah. Agree His way is right. Turn from your wicked ways, and good will come to you. You may have some hard times, but good will come to you. Verse 22, "Receive, I beg you, the Torah from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart." Now again, what is Torah? How do we usually translate Torah? Law. So what is he telling us? He says here, "Agree with Him and serve Him. Receive; I beg you, the law, the judicial system, from His mouth. Lay up His words in your heart." Verse 23, "If you teshuvah to the Almighty, you shall be built up." Get this! When you trust YHWH and ask for justice "you shall be built up and you shall put away iniquity far from your tents." Praise YHWH!

When we take a stand for justice, when we take a stand for righteousness, YHWH shall put iniquity far from our tents. Job 22:24, "Then you shall lay up gold as dust. And the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks. Yes, the Almighty shall be your defense, and you shall have plenty of silver. For then shall you have your delight in the Almighty and shall lift your face to Elohim. You shall make your prayer to Him, He shall hear you, and you shall pay your vows to Him. You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established to you. And the light shall shine on your ways."

What does that mean? You don't really see dust until it accumulates, do you? What this means to me is that gold or righteousness or all of our needs will be met. We might not see it as this big a million dollar check in the mail, but continually, every day as we bring the thief before the judge, He is going to meet our needs over and over and over. We're going to have everything we need. Not only that, but we're going to be blessed more abundantly. Why? Because the enemy has come against us. To the degree that he has come against us and accused us of injustices, we have settlements.

When others accuse you, when they hurt you, when they use you, then the judge can and will act on your behalf. The greater the injustice, the higher YHWH will raise you up, and it says here that He will make you shine. It's time we understand justice. Solomon said, "Give me wisdom of heart that I may understand justice."

It says this in Psalm 146:7-8, "YHWH executes justice." Who executes justice? Not you! YHWH does it! The Bible states, "YHWH executes justice for the oppressed. He gives food to the hungry. He sets the prisoner free." Do you feel oppressed sometimes? Are you hungry for righteousness? Hungry for food? Feel like you're a prisoner, that all you do is battle off the adversary sometimes? It says, "YHWH executes justice for you."

Jeremiah 21:12, "Oh house of David," thus says YHWH, 'Execute judgment in the morning and deliver them that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor.'" Here, YHWH says to execute judgment on the behalf of others. Your actions, your prayers, on behalf of the poor, the sick, the needy, is a way to execute judgment for another person. When we reach out to others, when we give money, when we minister to them physically, when we pray for them, we are enacting justice for that person. We are getting them help.

Greater than that, we are understanding the judicial system. We have a better understanding of it now - mishpat. That is what YHWH wants for us, that we should decree a thing and it should be established, that we should decree justice, bring the enemy before the judge and allow YHWH to render His judgment.

Psalm 97:2 reminds us that "righteousness and justice are the foundations of His throne." If YHWH does not bring justice to you in your circumstances and situation, then there is not a throne in heaven. How have you been hurt? How have you been lied to? How have you been misled? If YHWH doesn't bring justice for you and a settlement, then His throne tips over, and we have no Mighty One.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Shoftim." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 51:12-52:12. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Mathew 3:1-17. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Describe two ways that you can apply this week's Torah portion to your life.
6. What is it about the story, a verse, or a word that seems to resonate with some aspect of your life?
7. Is there something about the story that rings a bell?
8. The Parsha begins: "Shofetim and Shoterim" in Hebrew. Who were the shoterim and what was their job?
9. What is the role of shoftim? What is the role of shotrim?
10. We are familiar with the phrase: "justice, justice, thou shall pursue". What are the rewards for following this mitzvah?
11. This Parsha tells us about four kinds of leaders among the Hebrew people. Who were they?
12. B'nai Yisrael was told that when she came into the land, she was to have a king. Who was to choose the king and who was automatically eliminated from consideration?
13. What were 4 things the king was forbidden from doing?
14. The Levites were to have no portion. To what does that refer and what was their inheritance?
15. Why did we have prophets among the people from time to time?

16. At least 4 categories of males were not required to go into battle. What were they?
17. What was the difference in how B'nai Yisrael was to treat those defeated enemies who lived within Eretz Yisrael and those living outside the Land and why did YHWH differentiate?
18. If a person was murdered and the murderer was unknown, who decided which city had to take responsibility? What were the elders of the responsible city to do?
19. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
20. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
21. What is the source for the concept "seek out a good beit din / house of judgment"?
22. "You will come to...the judge who will be in those days." It's impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
23. What does YHWH promise a king who doesn't amass much gold, doesn't raise many horses and doesn't marry many wives?
24. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
25. How was King Sha'ul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Samuel?
26. Certain kosher animals are not included in the laws this week. Which ones?
27. Families of kohanim served in the Beit Hamikdash on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system implemented?
28. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
29. What does it mean to "prepare the way" to the cities of refuge?
30. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word eid (witness)?
31. "Through the mouth of two witnesses...." What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
32. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be zomemim (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
33. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
34. The Hebrew army is warned of four "scare-tactics" the enemy might employ. What are they?
35. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?

36. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf's neck was broken?
37. Do you think it is difficult to remain impartial when you are a judge? What happens in your family when a parent has to be a judge and decide who is guilty or innocent in a particular family incident? How is a decision made?
38. Have you or a sibling ever exclaimed "that's not fair!" ? Under what circumstances has this happened? Did you think the judge, in this case your parent, was not impartial? What affected their judgment? Why?
39. Have you ever done something wrong which required a fine or restitution?
40. Describe the incident and the resulting punishment. Was the incident concluded with the payment or did it continue to have an impact on you? Why might a fine or restitution be a good idea?
41. Much of Shoftim describes the punishment fitting certain crimes. What is the purpose of punishment? How do you think punishments should be chosen and given out in your family? By the civil and criminal courts of your state and the United States?
42. What do you think of the guidelines for the King of Israel? Are guidelines important for our leaders? Why? If so, what kinds of guidelines should we have for our leaders? Who should establish those guidelines? Could everyone agree on the same guidelines? Why or why not?
43. Explain sorcery and soothsaying. What would be the possible dangers of being involved in these activities? Can you give some contemporary examples of soothsaying? What might be the negative or positive effects of paying attention to a prediction? How might it affect your life and the lives of people around you? How could a false prophet be harmful? Can you think of any modern day examples of a false prophet?
44. What are some of the important words found in this portion?
45. Who are the primary actors in this parasha and what role or roles does each play? What is the significance of each role? Who are the secondary actors and what roles do they play? What is the significance of their roles?
46. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Ki Tetse

- Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19
- Isaiah 54:1-10
- 1 Corinthians 5:1-5

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Seventy-four of the Torah's 613 commandments are in the Parasha of Ki Teitzei. These include the laws of the beautiful captive, inheritance rights of the first-born, the wayward and rebellious son, burial and dignity of the dead, returning a lost object, sending away the mother bird before taking her young, the duty to erect a safety fence around the roof of one's home, and the various forms of kilayim (forbidden plant and animal hybrids).

Also recounted are the judicial procedures and penalties for adultery, for the rape or seduction of an unmarried girl, and for a husband who falsely accuses his wife of infidelity. The following cannot marry a person of Jewish lineage: a bastard; a male of Moabite or Ammonite descent; a first- or second-generation Edomite or Egyptian.

Our Parasha also includes laws governing the purity of the military camp; the prohibition against turning in an escaped slave; the duty to pay a worker on time and to allow anyone working for you - man or animal - to "eat on the job"; the proper treatment of a debtor and the prohibition against charging interest on a loan; the laws of divorce (from which are also derived many of the laws of marriage); the penalty of 39 lashes for transgression of a Torah prohibition; and the procedures for yibbum ("levirate marriage") of the wife of a deceased childless brother Orchalitzah ("removing of the shoe") in the case that the brother-in-law does not wish to marry her.

Ki Teitzei concludes with the obligation to remember "what Amalek did to you on the road, on your way out of Egypt."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Born in Troyes France in 1040, Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak was raised by his father as a student of the Torah. At the meager age of twenty-five he founded his first academy in France. He amazingly lived through the time of the first crusades and supported his schools of Torah through his vineyards and winemaking business.

Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak's name was shortened to the acronym RASHI at his school where he taught what is considered the most fundamental commentaries on the Torah. His teachings explained individual words in each Torah portion, as his concern was that every single word in the Tanakh needed explanation and elaboration. His students wrote down his lectures and recorded his answers to their questions. These writings were soon to become the first Hebrew book ever to be printed. Rashi also dissected the Talmud into annotations that allowed all to understand the difficult words of the Jewish Sages. "His main objective was to explain the straightforward meaning of the texts, drawing on homiletical interpretations, Rabbinic literature, Aramaic translations, details of Torah law, and the entire Talmud," says one source.

The teachings of Rashi have been studied by millions for hundreds of years. Some of his insights are simply amazing. Rashi is considered to be one of the greatest rabbinical thinkers of all time. In a commentary this week's Torah parasha, Rashi expounded on the rebellious son, moral responsibilities, and violations of marriage laws. In reference to Devarim 25:1-3, Rashi taught some powerful principles. The Torah reads, "If there be a controversy between men, and they come to mishpat, that the shophet may shophet them; then they shall justify the tzadik, and condemn the wicked. And it shall be, if the wicked man is worthy to be beaten, that the shophet shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number. Forty stripes he may give him, and not more: lest, if he should continue to beat him above these with many stripes, then your brother should be degraded before you."

Rashi said to this, "One might think that all those convicted by the court must be flogged. Therefore, Scripture teaches us, "and it shall be, if the guilty one has incurred the penalty of lashes..." (verse 2). From here, we see that sometimes a convicted party is given lashes, and sometimes he is not. Who receives lashes is derived from the context, as follows: Some negative commandments are mitigated by positive commandments which relate to the same matter, for example, the law

of sending away the mother bird (Deut. 22:6-7). Scripture (22:6) states the negative commandment: "you shall not take the mother upon the young," and immediately, Scripture (22:7) continues to state the positive commandment of: "You shall send away the mother." Here, the negative commandment is mitigated by the positive commandment. How so? If someone transgressed the negative commandment and took the mother bird from upon her young, he may clear himself of the punishment he has just incurred, by fulfilling the positive commandment of sending the mother bird away from the nest. This is an example of "a negative commandment mitigated by a positive commandment." (see Mishnah Mak. 17a) Now, in our context, immediately after describing the procedure of flogging in court, the next verse (4) continues with the negative commandment of: "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is threshing," a negative commandment which is not mitigated by a positive one. Therefore, from the very context of these verses, we learn that only for transgressing a "negative commandment, which is not mitigated by a positive commandment," is one punished by lashes. From here the Rabbis said: "They must give him two thirds [of his lashes] behind him [i.e., on his back], and one third in front of him [i.e., on his chest] the number of forty," but not quite a full quota of forty, but the number that leads up to the full total of forty, i. e., "forty-minus-one." All day that is, throughout the entire procedure], Scripture calls him, "wicked," but, once he has been flogged, behold, he is "your brother." What insight Rashi brings to the Torah!

Yet, in all of his wisdom and all of his learning, Rashi missed one vital point in our parasha. Devarim 25:1-3 are prophetic verses concerning the Moshiach ben David. For whatever reasons, Rashi could not see Y'shua in our reading. Let's not make the same mistake.

Hidden within parasha Ki Tetse are more verses that prove that Y'shua is the prophesied Messiah of the Bible. Much can be learned with just a little study into this pasuk about Y'shua and his flogging.

The Torah refers to the punishment of flogging for various serious offenses. The Sages limited this harsh punishment to only 39 lashes, that is, one minus the total of 40 allowed by Devarim 25:3. It is no secret that Y'shua was flogged by part of the vicious torture he endured as part of His crucifixion. Flogging or "scourging" involved whipping with thirteen strikes on the chest and twenty-six on the back. Often the victim died from the beating that was done to tear open the skin with metal-laced whips.

"Then Pilate took Y'shua and had him flogged. The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Y'shua came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him." The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of Elohim," Yochanan 19:1-7.

A few years ago, Medical Doctor David Terasaka did an in-depth study into the crucifixion of Y'shua. He found out that, "a flogging consisted of 39 lashes with a whip made up of multiple leather straps, 18-24 inches long that had small metal balls woven into them. There were also pieces of sharp metal, bone or glass attached to these straps. Apparently the number 39 was a standard number of lashes, (Jewish mercy was 40 minus one). After repeated blows the metal balls would bruise and eventually open the victim's skin. The pieces of metal and bone would be imbedded into the skin and then rip outward as the whip was recoiled. The lashes would target the entire back, buttocks and the back of the legs of the victim. Some recorded accounts of flogging describe the victim's spine being exposed, and the red meat of the muscles being shredded, and go into a state of 'uncontrollable quivering or trembling'. Sometimes the bowels (organs) would be opened up and most often blood vessels and veins would be severed. This led to tremendous blood loss and dehydration. This condition, known as hypovolemic shock, leads to the following bodily reactions: The heartbeat will become rapid in order to try and pump more blood throughout the blood-starved body. Of course it pumps in vain. Blood pressure drops drastically. The kidneys shut down so to save fluids for a now fluid starved system. Due to the loss of fluids the victim will thirst, can faint, and go into shock. Lastly the heartbeat becomes erratic and eventually can go into cardiac arrest. Many died simply from the flogging."

When He offered Himself as a sacrifice Y'shua took upon the Torah violations of the whole world. "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of Elohim, and afflicted. But he

was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and YHWH hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased YHWH to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of YHWH shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities," Yesha'yahu 53:3-11.

Many groups use the verse "by his stripes we are healed," to claim supernatural healings. But, within proper context it is clear that with the flogging Y'shua endured, more was accomplished than just a supernatural doctor's visit. The stripes upon Y'shua restored mankind to Elohim. The issue of this pasuk is not just physical healing but spiritual healing. Through his death, Moshiach paid the penalty for sin. Y'shua's beating and his bloodshed repaired the breach between man and YHWH.

In fact, the word "healed" used in Yesha'yahu is the same word used elsewhere in the Scriptures interpreted as "repaired" like in I Kings 18:30, and "be made whole" in Yermi'yahu 19:11. The scripture from Kings is speaking of "repairing" the altar, and the scripture from Jeremiah is speaking of destroying a piece of pottery so that it cannot "be made whole" again. These are the exact words used to describe Israel's restoration through Moshiach, being reconciled to YHWH through the stripes, chastisement, wounds, and bruises that Y'shua suffered. Colossians 1:22, "yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach."

The breaking of negative commandments led to Y'shua's flogging. Yet it wasn't His sin that did this. It was ours. "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so

that we might die to sins, and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls," 1 Kefa 2:23-25.

When you look at this week's Torah parasha don't miss the fact that Y'shua bore your punishment. He paid the price for your sins. Y'shua was beaten and bruised as an offering for our breaking of Torah. In Levitical law an offering had to be made to atone for sin. Y'shua is that offering.

Our portion says that "Cursed is anyone hung on a tree" in Devarim 21:22-23. Yet Romans 5:8 declares, "Elohim demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Y'shua died for us." Galatians 3:13 makes it clear that "Y'shua has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." In his comments on this verse from Devarim Rashi wrote, "hanging person is an insult of Elohim. It is a degradation of the King, for man is made in the likeness of His image, and Israel are His sons. This can be compared to two twin brothers who resembled each other. One became a king, while one became ensnared in banditry, and was hung. Whoever would see him hanging would say, 'The king is hanging!' Perhaps Rashi did see Y'shua in the Torah after all!

Y'shua gave His life for you. He shed His very life's blood so that you could be restored to Elohim.

Have you fully received Y'shua's gift of salvation?

Applying the Portion to Life Today

The more we are involved in this world, the more we are in darkness. The systems of economy, politics, and entertainment darkly cloud our memory of our true purpose. The world and all its cares cloud our memory, because they crowd our memory. As we fill our day with work and worries we block out the Light. However, with YHWH's reminders, we can function, despite our surroundings, with a mind that is steadfastly focused on Elohim.

Elohim has purposefully given us certain commandments like eating clean foods, to keep our mind alert and watchful. These reminders are like spiritual post it notes that remind us of YHWH and His Word. This week's Torah portion includes

over 79 specific commandments. We need these reminders because it is so easy to get consumed by the busy-ness of home and the rat race of work. We can allow dirty diapers, fast food meals, deadlines, and car oil changes to fill our day. It is so easy to forget that what we see, touch, feel, taste, and experience in this world is only a small portion of what is really important. Therefore, to help us remember that we are more than what we see, YHWH has filled our lives with small, yet significant, reminders. These prompts call us back to Him throughout our busy days. They help us zakar and change our actions from being self-serving to YHWH serving.

"Zakar" is the Hebrew term for remember; it means "to mark (so as to be recognized), to remember; to mention; to burn incense, earnestly; be mindful, recount, record, make to be remembered, bring (re)call; come, keep, put (in) to remembrance."

One purpose of these rituals is to bring to mind a vast array of ideals through an act.

When we don't remember our history, including the covenants made between our ancestors and the Creator, or disregard the words of Torah, we become stiff-necked and rebellious. This is spiritual amnesia at its worst. It is hypocrisy and exile.

"They stiffened their necks, and listened not to Your mitzvot, and refused to obey, neither were mindful of Your wonders that You did among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a leader to return to their bondage: but You are Elohim, ready to pardon, gracious and full of rachamim, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsook them not" -- Nechemyah / Nehemiah 9: 16-17.

A type of spiritual amnesia can come about in many ways. Sometimes we pray and don't receive an answer. Maybe we face a nagging temptation and don't seem to gain victory. Maybe an illness lingers and we feel abandoned by YHWH. Maybe we are under extreme pressure or going through a time of depression. The routes to this condition are many, yet the treatment is as simple as 1, 2, and 3. Remember, 2. Repent, 3. Return. Y'shua, our Messiah, said, "[1] Remember the height from which you have fallen! [2] Repent and [3] do the things you did at first," -Gilyahna / Revelation 2:5.

We have a tendency to drift from Elohim, so we need to be aware of our weaknesses and remind ourselves everyday that we are nothing without YHWH. Every memory expert will tell you that the best way to memorize someone's name is to repeat it often. Repetition helps memory. Well, we need to come back to YHWH again and again, through His reminders. These actions bring healing and help us focus. "O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your Abba that has bought you? Has He not made you, and established you? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask your Abba, and He will show you; your zechanim, and they will tell you," -- Devarim / Deuteronomy 32: 6, 7, 8.

Through the physical actions of obeying the mitzvot, through doing things as simple as eating kosher foods, for example, we promote ourselves spiritually. As we obey the Torah and look to the Creator, we are in essence climbing Jacob's ladder. Though we actively follow the mitzvot in the physical realm, our actions are spiritual. It is a little known truth that being spiritual is not about how much time we spend at our worship center or how many verses we can quote from memory. Likewise, spirituality is not measured by how big our Bible is.

True spirituality is revealed by our obedience to the mitzvot; our obedience is our expression of our love of the Creator. The physical acts of obeying the mitzvot, though performed in this world, are actually spiritual acts. The choices we make about what we eat, how we dress, the words we say, the thoughts we think, and the actions we take are all spiritual decisions. We are told by the Rabbis that YHWH gave us the mitzvot because of the effect they would have upon us and our inner world. With the mitzvot, we have no excuses for disobedience or ignorance. "For the invisible things coming from Him from the creation of the olam hazeh (this world) are clearly seen, being understood by the things of creation, even His eternal power and divine nature; so that they are without excuse," -- Romim / Romans 1: 20.

While we act out the mitzvot, we change who we are and we decide who we are to become. How we act upon YHWH's word is equal to how much of YHWH we want to reflect. Just think about it, if we want to be loveable then we should love. If we want to be giving then we should begin to give. If we want to be spiritual then we must do the mitzvot and connect to the Higher Power of Elohim. The mitzvot are like magnets that attract the presence of Elohim. "Come near to Elohim and He will come near to you," wrote Ya'acov (James.)

The natural measures we take affect the supernatural, 99%. Our physical actions influence and shape our spiritual position. As we obey in this realm, we replicate the binding of Yitzchak, the hair on Samson's head, the fishes and loaves multiplied by Messiah, the construction of the tabernacle, Naaman dipping in the muddy Jordan River, and the blood being applied on the doorposts of the Hebrews. Such events of obedience changed the course of history. Our obedience can also change our lives. The truth is, YHWH holds all the power in the universe and he disperses that power to us through the physical world.

How does this work? How can little strings of blue and white that are tied together channel the power of YHWH? How could Y'shua use mud to heal a blind person? Well, let's first understand that there is nothing 'special' about the paper used for Torah scrolls or the string used to make tassels. "Rather than being attractions to sideline us in routine, repetitious ritual, the material objects that Elohim has inspired men to make from His written Word, job our memories and point us unfailingly to the Living Word. We celebrate not the objects themselves, but the Master who is manifest in and through the principles that they reveal. The mature believer uses the object or symbol as a reminder, an aide to concentration on the invisible reality that the emblem represents," wrote Dr. John D. Garr. Even when we recite a blessing while performing a commandment we always say "Baruch atah YHWH" - we always bless the Creator and not the creation. While other religions may bless items or food, the Hebraic faith realizes that YHWH is the source of all power and goodness. We bless YHWH for enabling us to fulfill the mitzvot, light the Sabbath candles, celebrate the feasts, or read from the Torah. In doing so, His authority as King of the Universe is recognized and His power is manifest.

As we obey the instructions of Torah, YHWH's power is connected to the physical world. This connection transfers power from the Shekinah to the Malchut (this world). The mitzvot literally act like extension cords that transfer YHWH's Light to our darkness. Through faithful obedience and trust YHWH's Light fills plain, everyday objects to produce divine sparks. These sparks manifest as miracles, healings, and victories that we need. Impossible?

First, let's remember that in the beginning YHWH created the universe from the words of His mouth. A quagmire exists though as preachers will tell us that from out of nothing came everything, while scientists say 'matter can be neither made nor destroyed.' The truth is, all matter already existed as part of Elohim.

"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together" - Qolesayah / Colossians 1: 16, 17.

This is isn't to say that the grass in your yard or the couch you sit on is Elohim. Rather this verse clarifies that all of creation came forth from YHWH. In every part of creation is a part of the Creator. How can this not be?

Everything in this universe that exists is made up of energy, of atoms. In the nucleus of an atom are electrons, protons, photons, and neutrons. These particles of atoms are in constant movement at all times. The energy in a piece of plastic is moving very slow compared to the flames in a fire, yet the whole cosmos is in continuous movement. When we look at a car or a computer, quantum physics tells us that we actually seeing rapidly-moving packets of energy. This clarifies our confusion, doesn't it?

Well, scientists still are not sure how sub-atomic particles are held together without splitting or changing more frequently. This problem is answered in the Messianic writings, "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together," -- Qolesayah / Colossians 1: 16, 17. The power of Messiah, the Living Word, is the magnetic force that holds everything in place as it should be.

At creation, YHWH (the incomprehensible Creator) spoke the world into existence through His Son, the Word. It is Moshiach's power that allows creation to function as it does. It is Moshiach's power that is manifest through the reminders. When we use a ram's horn, a glass of wine, or any of the Scriptural reminders for higher purposes, the presence of Messiah that holds all things together is empowered to alter the world. Miracles and healings occur when the natural is used to touch the supernatural through emunah (faith /trusting belief.)

Through emunah (faith) a simple blue thread has the power to transfer healing. Like with the woman with the issue of blood that touched the hem of the garment of Messiah and was healed, the physical is connected to the Spiritual. This just clarifies the peculiar verse in Scripture, "We know that the whole creation has

been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time," --
Romim / Romans 8: 22.

While in movement, all of creation is groaning to be reconnected with the Creator. Creation is not only is groaning, but also singing praises to YHWH! "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thorn bush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briers the myrtle will grow. This will be for the YHWH's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed," --
Yesha'yahu / Isaiah 55: 12-13.

How can trees clap or mountains sing? How can as Psalm 150 says, "everything that has breath praise YHWH?" Let's understand that music is simply a vibration. When a guitar is strummed, a drum is beat, or a horn is blown, the sound produced is only a vibration of air and matter. The sounds we hear are just vibrations; the vibrations are simply movement. Therefore, if the atoms of everything in the world are in constant movement, then all creation is making music to Elohim! All creation is groaning, singing, and sounding forth praise to YHWH! All of creation is one giant reminder of YHWH, pointing to Moshiach! "He is the image of the invisible Elohim, the firstborn over all creation," -- Qolesayah / Colossians 1: 15.

It takes no effort to forget YHWH, however it is our calling and duty to walk in His Spirit and to fulfill His word. As we do, we establish His Kingdom through our actions. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of Elohim to be revealed." - Romim / Romans 8: 19.

One rabbi has written, "The mitzvot which the Patriarchs performed using physical objects did not actually sanctify or elevate those items. By fulfilling a mitzvah, they elicited an exclusively spiritual reaction without transforming the physical object into a holy one.

The intent of the Torah was that there should be an arousal from below. Mitzvot are performed with, and intended to transform, physical objects. For example tzitzit are made of physical wool and tefillin are made of physical parchment - each transforming these mundane objects into holy ones. Even "service of the heart" is intended to affect our bodies; i.e. one's heart should actually feel love and awe of Elohim.

So, too, with loving a fellow Hebrew, the love should be physically felt in one's heart. The heart should feel joy at another Hebrew's good fortune, and pain at someone's sorrow, being compelled to help others - whether in physical or spiritual matters. Likewise, we are commanded to grasp, with our physical brain, the reality of Elohim. Torah learning itself must be performed aloud, using the mouth, as it says, "...and you should speak of them" (from the Shema prayer). In general, the Torah's commandments require us to interact with, and thus elevate, the material world. Every created being has its source in the loftiest planes, as the Sages teach, "There is no blade of grass in the world below that does not have a spiritual life-force above striking it and telling it to grow" (B'reisheet Rabba 10:7. Cf. Zohar I:251a, Zohar Chadash 4b).

Torah and mitzvot are en clothed in physicality so that we elevate our bodies, natural inclinations, and the material world to holiness." Study and apply the verses in this week's portion and be blessed.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Ke Tetse." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 54:1-10. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Why must a captured woman mourn her family for a month in her captor's house?
6. What fraction of the inheritance does a first-born receive if he has a) one brother? b) two brothers?
7. What will become of a ben sorer u'moreh if his parents don't bring him to court?
8. Why is it degradation to YHWH to hang a criminal's body on the gallows overnight?
9. What do you do if you find a lost object that costs money to maintain?
10. Why does the Torah forbid wearing the clothing of the opposite gender?
11. Why does the Torah link the mitzvah of sending away the mother-bird with the mitzvah of making a railing on the roof of your house?
12. When is it permitted to wear wool and linen?
13. What three things happen to a man who falsely slanders his bride?

14. Although the Egyptians enslaved the Jewish People, the Torah allows marriage with their third-generation converts. Why?
15. Why is causing someone to sin worse than killing him?
16. If one charges interest to his fellow Jew, how many commandments has he transgressed?
17. What is the groom's obligation to his bride during their first year?
18. When is a groom required to fight in a non-obligatory war?
19. What type of object may one not take as collateral?
20. Why does the Torah say the seeming extra word FOR YOU when it describes the soldier taking the yefat toar as a wife? (21:11) Of course if he marries her it will be FOR HIM!
21. Why, when choosing an example of a non animal in the command to return loss objects does the Torah choose a shirt (simlah)? (22:3)
22. Why does the Torah call the person who deserves lashes BIN HAKOT instead of BEN which is usually used to describe a person?
23. Devarim 25:2 says, "a perfect and honest measure shall you have, so that your days shall be lengthened." What is the connection between longevity and perfect weights and measures?
24. Devarim 25:19, "You shall wipe out the memory of Amalek from under the heaven." Instead of "from under the heaven" should the verse not have said "from upon the earth"? Why only in connection with the mitzvah to wipe out the memory of Amalek is it necessary for the Torah to also instruct, "you shall not forget"?
25. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Ki Tavo

- Deuteronomy 26:2-29:9
- Isaiah 60:1-22
- Luke 24:44-53

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Moses instructs the people of Israel: When you enter the land that YHWH is giving to you as your eternal heritage, and you settle it and cultivate it, bring the first-ripened fruits (bikkurim) of your orchard to the Holy Temple, and declare your gratitude for all that YHWH has done for you.

Our Parasha also includes the laws of the tithes given to the Levites and to the poor, and detailed instructions on how to proclaim the blessings and the curses on Mount Grizzim and Mount Ebal -- as discussed in the beginning of the Parasha of Re'ei. Moses reminds the people that they are YHWH's chosen people, and that they, in turn, have chosen YHWH.

The latter part of Ki Tavo consists of the Tochachah ("Rebuke"). After listing the blessings with which YHWH will reward the people when they follow the laws of the Torah, Moses gives a long, harsh account of the bad things -- illness, famine, poverty and exile -- that shall befall them if they abandon YHWH's commandments.

Moses concludes by telling the people that only today, forty years after their birth as a people, have they attained "a heart to know, eyes to see, and ears to hear."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

The Newer Testament states that YHWH has blessed believers "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah" (Ephesians 1:3). This is a powerful concept that shows that all that YHWH promised Israel in the Older Testament is a blessing today for those who cling to Messiah.

We can experience these blessings when we walk with Y'shua in His commandments. "All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey YHWH your Elohim," Deuteronomy 28:2.

The anointed abundant life does not come fully when a person is saved, immersed in the Spirit, or obedient to a set of church regulations. It does not come when a person is addiction free or even demonic free. The abundant life only comes when a person is "in Christ."

The term "in Christ" is found 76 times in the Authorized King James Version. These occurrences are often associated with powerful promises that we will examine. But first, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance writes the Greek the word used in this phrase is "Christos."

Christos literally is defined "anointed, the Messiah." Christos is a poor Greek substitute for the Hebrew "Moshiach" which according to Strong's means exactly the same thing. To be "in Christ" is to be "in Moshiach." And believe it, or not, to be "in Moshiach" is to be "in Torah."

John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" teaches that Y'shua is the Torah embodied in human form. Y'shua lived, breathed, walked, talked, studied, taught, and prayed Torah. Torah is in Y'shua Ha Moshiach. Therefore to be "in Moshiach" or to be "in Christ" is to literally be "in Torah."

So, if you are supposed to be "in Moshiach," who is "in Torah," what is Torah? "Torah" is the Hebrew word meaning "teaching." When Torah is mentioned it is most often associated with the teachings of Moses. The first five books of the Bible are the words which YHWH gave to Israel in the wilderness. These teachings of Moses are the building blocks YHWH uses to base the entire Bible; therefore, Torah signifies His instruction throughout the Hebrew scriptures, including the Prophets and the Psalms.

Since all of His Word is His Teaching, all of it is His Torah. Torah is all the written teaching of YHWH, from Genesis to Revelation. And according to scripture Torah is holy, right and good; and useful for everyone who belongs to YHWH. To be "in Moshiach" or "in Christ" is to be in the teachings of the word. These teachings never contradict themselves, are not limited to certain dispensations, and are all for today. (read Matthew 5) It is important to note that most believers do not have a strong understanding of the teachings of Moses and therefore misunderstand other scripture passages. Though the word "Torah" does not appear in various Bible translations, it is there, hidden beneath English words like "law," "word," "commandment."

The teachings of Moses (the first five books of the Bible) are the foundation upon which the whole Bible is based. Nothing has passed away, nothing has been dismissed, and nothing has been abolished. Without properly understanding the words of the Creator to man, as spoken of in the Torah of Moses, a person can not understand how YHWH dealt with His people through the ages and how YHWH deals with man today. For more on the importance and power of Torah read Psalm 119. Now, the question is "Are you in Torah?"

The word "in" is a very appropriate one as it conveys the idea of total submission. To be "in" something means that one property loses its identity to another. So when we are "in Moshiach" we lose our identity to Him and we become the Torah made flesh. This is referred to as the Torah being written on our hearts of flesh. To be "in Torah" or "in Moshiach" is to consume your life with His words, His thoughts, His ways, and follow Him no matter what.

If you want to live in the anointing of the Spirit, then you must live in Torah. Sure, there are those who experience visitations of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) but what we need today is habitation not visitation. This habitation will come only when we are obedient to Torah as a lifestyle of intimacy and worship.

When we do this we tap into a hidden power of His presence, which releases the abundant life that Y'shua demonstrated. This lifestyle of obedience to Torah releases blessings immeasurable. For everyone who follows Torah is blessed but, ONLY when a person is "in Moshiach" does the promise of abundant life come into full effect.

Through a simple word study and search I have come to the conclusion that a person may have faith in Y'shua but yet never be "in Moshiach." This probably surprises you, as it did me, but it is a scriptural concept. I'm sure you understand that faith in Y'shua brings eternal life. Galatians 3:26, "For ye are all the children of Elohim (the Mighty One of Israel) by faith in Christ (Moshiach)." (KJV)

So, salvation brings eternal life while living "in Moshiach" brings abundant life. I have been "saved" since I was a child but it has been only a short time that I have experienced the abundant life by living "in Moshiach/in Torah." Don't you know people who have had a salvation experience but never were "a new creation?" It seems many people convert without ever changing (if this is possible.) This is because the promise of being a "new creation" is fulfilled ONLY when we are "in

Moshiach." 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." All things become new ONLY when we are "in Moshiach!"

Name any popular promise from the Brit Chadasha (New Testament) and it will most likely be based upon whether a person is "in Moshiach." It is ONLY when we are "in Moshiach" that we are blessed with every Spiritual blessing, have our needs met according to his riches, and are alive to YHWH and dead to sin. But don't take my word for it; here is a list that will surprise you. According to the Bible when we are "in Christ" or "in Moshiach" we are:

- Alive YHWH and dead to sin - Romans 6
- Are under no condemnation - Romans 8
- Have the love of YHWH - Romans 8
- Speak the truth - Romans 9
- Are one body - Romans 12
- Are workers - Romans 16
- Sanctified - 1 Corinthians 1
- Are wise - 1 Corinthians 4
- Are made alive - 1 Corinthians 15
- All of the promises are yes and amen - 2 Corinthians 1
- Are anointed to stand firm - 2 Corinthians 1
- We speak before YHWH with sincerity - 2 Corinthians 2
- A new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! - 2 Corinthians 9
- Caught up to the third heaven - 2 Corinthians 12
- Have freedom - Galatians 2
- Justified by faith - Galatians 2
- You are all sons of Elohim - Galatians 3
- You are all one in Y'shua Ha Moshiach - Galatians 3
- Blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing - Eph 1
- Created to do his good pleasure - Eph 1
- You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, - Eph 1
- YHWH raised us up with Moshiach and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Y'shua Ha Moshiach - Eph 2
- For we are Elohim's workmanship, created in Y'shua Ha Moshiach to do good works, which YHWH prepared in advance for us to do. - Eph 2
- But now in Moshiach we who once were far away have been brought near through the blood - Eph 2
- Called heavenward - Phil 3

- Have the peace of YHWH - Phil 4
- Have all of our needs met according to his riches - Phil 4
- Given fullness - Col 2
- Have assurance of our faith - 1 Timothy 3
- Are strong in grace - 2 Timothy 2
- Are persecuted to live a life devoted to YHWH - 2 Tim 3
- Have a full understanding of every good thing - Philemon 1
- Have the peace of YHWH - 1 Peter 5

All these items are taken directly from the Scriptures and all are true only when we walk in Torah observance through the power of Moshiach, which is the anointing of Y'shua.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

The daylight hours are growing shorter. School bells are beginning to ring again. Football teams are kicking off their seasons. Temperatures are dropping. Can you feel it? The times are changing. The month has even changed. Yes, yes everyone knows it is September but did you know that we are in the Biblical six month, counting from Passover. Counting from Yom Teruah this is the twelfth and last month of year. This is the month of return. Right now we are in the middle of a full thirty days given to reflect upon life and repent of sins. This is the time given each year to prepare for the High Holy Days of the Bible.

The Feast of Trumpets or Yom Teruah is just around the corner with Yom Kippur only ten days later. Between now and then is preparation time to reflect upon life, repent of sins, and return to the Father with faithful obedience and devotion. "Teshuvah / repent for the forgiveness of sins," says Acts 2:38.

In the book of Nehemiah this month is called 'Elul.' "Elul has been interpreted as an acronym, with its Hebrew letters "aleph," "lamed," "vav," and "lamed" representing the words of Song of Songs - "Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li." The words mean "I am my beloved and my Beloved is mine," says ou.org. This name points to the love of YHWH. Even the zodiac sign for this time reflects the overall message of the month. This is the month of the Maiden - the maiden of Yisra'el returning to the Groom. "Return O Maiden of Yisra'el, return to these cities of yours," Yermi'yahu 31:20.

With the serious theme of this month, it is fitting that each year at this time all Isra'el reads torah portion Ki Tavo. As Devarim concludes, the themes of the covenant are reviewed and a prophecy is given. If the people will just follow the instructions of YHWH then they will be the envy of the whole world. But, if Yisra'el is stubborn and rebellious then they will be punished. Exile is foretold for the rebellious people.

One sage teaches that the twelve tribes of Israel gathered at the Mounts of Gerizim and Ebal. Six families were on one side while six were on the other side. Moshe and the Levites are in the middle valley. Moshe reads aloud the Torah and states that obedience leads to blessing and disobedience leads to cursing. The Levite elders would turn to Mount Gerizim and call out, "Blessed is the man who...", and everyone would answer "Amen!" Then they would turn to Mount Ebal and call out "Accursed is the man...", and everyone would answer "Amen!"

The Hebrew word for 'curse' found all over our reading is "awrar." This word means to "execrate or bitterly curse, to declare to be hateful or abhorrent; denounce, to denounce evil against, or to imprecate evil upon; to curse; to protest against as unholy or detestable; hence, to detest utterly; to abominate." This is not a pretty sight! The Yisraelites received, they brought all of this upon themselves for disobeying YHWH. While the ancient Hebrew word for 'blessed' is the term "barak." Barak means to "to kneel, by implication to bless YHWH (as an act of adoration), and (vice-versa) man (as a benefit); also bless, congratulate, curse, greatly, indeed, kneel (down), praise, salute, thank." As you can see these terms are complete opposites, they are staunchly different and come about by the different actions of Bible believers.

"And it shall come to pass, if you shall listen diligently to the voice of YHWH Your Elohim, to shomer and do all His mitzvot which I command you this day, that YHWH Your Elohim will set you on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall listen to the voice of YHWH Your Elohim. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your cattle, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out," Devarim / Deuteronomy 28:1-6. The blessings continue and the curses are presented all

throughout the parasha. There are in fact twelve curses within Devarim 27:15-26 - one curse for each tribe.

The theme of all of this is that Yisra'el, each individual in Yisra'el, had the choice of life or death. This is kind of like a trial where the prosecutor and defendant both make their cases, except the crime has not been committed yet. The speeches have been made, the attorney's have rested their cases, and now Yisra'el must decide whether or not to follow YHWH. This is the same situation that we are in today.

As we read this portion of Scripture during this time of preparation, we too must make decisions. We too must choose our future. Studying this portion brings us face to face with the truth that we are indeed in control of our destiny. What has happened in our past doesn't really matter. How we were raised, what faith we grew up with, our thoughts, our feelings, our doctrines, our desires, and our problems don't mean much. Now that we have been presented the choice we must decide to either follow YHWH or not.

Are you willing to follow YHWH in order to receive blessings and life? Or would you rather have things your way and inherit curses and death? Is there an area in your life that you just won't surrender to the Almgihy? Do you follow vain traditions just because they are comfortable? Are you living obedience or acting in disobedience? Your actions prove your answer, and right now, before Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur is the perfect time to consider your devotion.

Jewish tradition teaches that the world was created during this month, on exactly the twenty-fifth of Elul. If man was created on Yom Teruah, as many teach, then a few days prior would be the beginning of the world and the start of creation. This is how you come to the 25th date. Do you know what else occurred on the 25th? "And the wall was finished on the 25th of Elul, after fifty two days," Nehemi'yah 6:15. After the dispersion at Babylon, Nechem'yah had urged the Hebrew people to rebuild the wall of Yerushalayim. With a spear in one hand and a tool in the other hand, the Hebrew people worked hard and completed the wall on the 25th of Elul!

You see, thousands of years ago the Gan Eden was created at this time. The place of perfect relationship with YHWH was made during this month. Centuries after YHWH spoke the universe into existence, restoration came to the Holy City at exactly the same time. Today you have the same

opportunity as Nechemi'yah. As we live during this special month and as we approach the High Holy Days we can experience restoration. Through our actions and through our choices we can return to Father and the essence of creation. Like the leaves of the trees that are starting to change colors, it is time for a change of heart. Blessing or curse, the choice is yours and the time to choose is today.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Ki Tavo." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 60:1-22. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Luke 24:44-53. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. When did the obligation to bring bikkurim begin?
6. Bikkurim / firstfruits are from which crops?
7. How does one designate bikkurim?
8. Who shakes the basket containing the bikkurim?
9. Which Arami "tried to destroy my father?"
10. When during the year may bikkurim be brought? Until when are the special verses recited?
11. Someone declaring that he separated terumah and ma'aser says: "And I didn't forget." What didn't he forget?
12. What were the Hebrew People to do with the 12 stones on Mt. Eval?
13. Six tribes stood on Mt. Eval and six on Mt. Gerizim. Who and what were in the middle?
14. Who "causes the blind to go astray"?
15. How does one "strike another secretly"?
16. Eleven curses were spoken on Mt. Eval. What is the significance of this number?
17. Why are sheep called "ashterot" in Hebrew?
18. What was the first thing the Israelites were commanded to do upon coming into the Land?
19. To whom were they told to take their offerings, and where?
20. Which is the year of tithing?
21. What was supposed to be written on the stones of the altar that the Israelites were commanded to build after crossing the Jordan?

22. Moses charged six of the tribes to stand on one mountain and the other six tribes on one facing it. What were the names of the two mountains?
23. Those standing on the two mounts would hear blessings and curses. From whom did they hear them?
24. How is the manner of expressing the curses in Parsha Bechukotai more severe than in this week's Parsha?
25. An Aramean [Laban] tried to destroy my forefather [Jacob]. And he descended to Egypt (26:5) How did Laban's evil intentions cause Jacob to go down to Egypt?
26. You shall inscribe on the stones all the words of this Torah (27:8) Why on stone and not on any other material?
27. You will be left few in number, instead of having been like the stars of heaven in abundance. (28:62) Sometimes the number of the Jewish people is compared to the dust of the earth, and sometimes to the stars of the heaven. Why, in our verse, is the analogy of the stars used?
28. What was the first thing the Israelites were commanded to do upon coming into the Land?
29. Give a brief history of how we reached the point of offering our first fruits in the Land to YHWH.
30. What are the blessings for following YHWH?
31. What are some of the curses for walking in opposition to YHWH?
32. Which is the year of tithing?
33. Which 4 groups would benefit by our tithes?
34. What was the first curse the people heard?
35. After discussion, each team should give their opinion as to why, after hearing or reading these blessings and curses, the great majority of B'nai Yisrael failed, and continue to fail to follow YHWH's commandments. Each team should give what they consider to be the principle reason.
36. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parashot Nitsavim and Vayelech

- Deuteronomy 29:10-30:20
- Isaiah 61:10-63:9
- John 15:1-11

AND

- Deuteronomy 31:1-30
- Hosea 14:2-10
- Joel 2:15-27, Micah 7:18-20
- Romans 10:1-17

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The Parasha of Nitsavim includes some of the most fundamental principles of the Hebrew faith: The unity of Israel: "You stand today, all of you, before the L-rd your YHWH: your heads, your tribes, your elders, your officers, and every Israelite man; your young ones, your wives, the stranger in your gate; from your wood hewer to your water drawer."

The future redemption: Moses warns of the exile and desolation of the Land that will result if Israel abandons YHWH's laws, but then he prophesies that, in the end, "You will return to YHWH your Elohim... If your outcasts shall be at the ends of the heavens, from there will YHWH your Elohim gather you... and bring you into the Land which your fathers have possessed."

The practicality of Torah: "For the Mitzvah which I command you this day, it is not beyond you nor is it remote from you. It is not in heaven... It is not across the sea.... Rather, it is very close to you, in your mouth, in your heart, that you may do it."

Freedom of choice: "I have set before you life and goodness, and death and evil; in that I command you this day to love YHWH, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments... Life and death I have set before you, blessing and curse. And you shall choose life."

The Parasha of Vayelech ("And He Went") recounts the events on Moses' last day of earthly life. "I am one hundred and twenty years old today," he says to the people, "and I can no longer go forth and come in." He transfers the leadership to Joshua, and writes (or concludes writing) the Torah in a scroll which he entrusts to the Levites for safekeeping in the Ark of the Covenant.

The mitzvah of Hak'hel ("Gather") is given: every seven years, during the festival of Sukkot of the first year of the shemita cycle, the entire people of Israel -- men, women and children -- should gather at the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, where the king should read to them from the Torah.

Vayelech concludes with the prediction that the people of Israel will turn away from their covenant with YHWH causing Him to hide His face from them, but also with the promise that the words of the Torah "shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their descendants."

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

As prophesied in this week's portions, the Messiah Y'shua is indeed gathering Israel from the four corners of the earth. Like never before, people are choosing the blessings of following the Torah of YHWH and the Spirit. We are living in a time like no other. This is the glory of Moshiach!

Devarim 30 describes our times: "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt bethink thyself among all the nations, whither YHWH thy Elohim hath driven thee, and shalt return unto the YHWH thy Elohim, and hearken to His voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; that then YHWH thy Elohim will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the peoples, whither the YHWH hath scattered thee. If any of thine that are dispersed be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will YHWH gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee. And YHWH thy Elohim will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers," 30:1-5.

It says in Jeremiah 29:14, "'I will be found of you,' says YHWH, 'I will turn away your captivity. I will gather you from all the nations, from all the places where I've driven you. I will bring you again into the place where I called you to be carried

away captive." What did Y'shua say? He said, "I came to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

Acts 3:19-20 says, "Therefore, repent and return so that your sins may be wiped away in order that the times of refreshing may come from YHWH that He may send Y'shua, the Messiah appointed for you, whom Heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things which YHWH spoke about by the mouth of His holy prophets in the ancient times." It tells us here that Heaven must receive Y'shua until the restoration of all things spoken about by the prophets. Y'shua just can't come back tomorrow. He is being held in Heaven until certain things are restored on Earth today that the prophets talked about.

What did the prophets talk about? The restoration of Israel. They kept calling them back, "Repent! Return to YHWH!" There are certain things that have to take place, and how does it take place? How was the nation of Israel restored? How were things going to take place? Verse 19, "Repent and return." As we repent and return to Y'shua then He will be glorified as we are regathered.

No man can come to the Father unless Y'shua draws Him. This shows us that the current move of YHWH to restore the Torah and true righteousness is not about Hebrew roots or being "Jewish." What we are experiencing is a prophecy come true to glorify the Son of YHWH.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

Ask Michele Woolam if it was worth it and she'll say 'yes.' She won't hesitate and she won't even pause to answer you. She would just say 'yes, it was worth it.'

A few years ago, Michele experienced a total of 55 grueling hours of labor to deliver her tiny six pound, two ounce daughter. Her harsh birth pains started at 2am on Wednesday and did not stop until 9:17am on Friday morning. Yet, all of the pain and all of the pressure was totally gone when Michele held her child in her hands right after delivery. Since then Michele insists that people call her "Marathon Mama" as a joke about her pregnancy experience.

Birthing a child is the most awesome experience. Hours, even days of pain, are forgotten when the purpose behind the pain is finally delivered. The expectant mother who has carried her baby for many months, has spent hours upon hours

waiting for this exact moment and all the problems of pregnancy couldn't put a dimmer upon holding the newborn for the very first time. The pain is worth it.

Spiritually speaking there is a birthing process going on within each Bible believer. "Y'shua declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of Elohim unless he is born again," Yochanan / John 3:30.

There are those that teach that being born again is an instantaneous eternal action, yet everyone knows that labor takes time. A person isn't born instantly after they are conceived. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Y'shua answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter Malchut Shamayim unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

The transformation, the development of a sperm into a fetus into a child takes time. A lot of change is taking place. Your spiritual development will also change you. From sinner to saint and from rebellious to redeemed, your life can convert through the power of the Word. This is NOT to say that following the Savior is beyond our reach or that salvation is earned by keeping the 'law.' This is to say that the Word of Elohim will enable people to be born of the Spirit. "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of Elohim. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Master stands forever," 1 Kefa 1:23-24.

This word that stands forever, that has never passed away, is the words of YHWH as recorded in the first five books of the Bible, known as the Torah. Within these pages are teachings for living, and instructions on how the Almighty meant life to be experienced. Everything is discussed including how to worship, raise your children, treat your neighbor, handle problems and what to eat, wear, and say. The scriptures are very clear on how a Saint should live. Just read the Torah and discover the Father's will for your life. Y'shua was the living word, the 'word made flesh,' and those who faithfully trust and obey Him are born again.

There are lots of people that believe that the Torah is just too difficult to follow. They say that since you can't keep it perfectly then you shouldn't even try. They bicker that the Savior has 'done away' with the ceremonies of the 'Old Testament.' "Who wants to live like a Jew anyway" they question. Sadly, these people have a point.

They are right when they taunt that the Torah is not easy to follow. They are wrong when they preach that the Messiah did away with the teachings of Moses. Remember the verse already quoted, "the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Master stands forever." This is a direct quote from the book of Yesha'yahu (Isaiah.) Just because something seems hard doesn't mean that you don't do it. No pain, no gain - right?

Here's the point - if you are totally honest, you will agree that obeying the words of the Torah is not necessarily easy.

Haven't you struggled with certain commandments? Haven't you wondered 'exactly' how you should keep the mitzvot? Doesn't the Torah go against every part of your surrounding family life, workplace, and world? Has your obedience to YHWH's will separated you from friends and loved ones? Does confusion or frustration ever make you want to give up and walk away? Have you ever felt alone in your life of Torah? If so, then good! Your frustrations just mean that the Torah is working! The word of YHWH is separating you from this world and its comforts. "For the word of YHWH (the Torah) is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart," Ivrim (Hebrews) 4:12.

It is perfectly normal to struggle in Torah observance. Don't let anyone beat you down because you are trying. The Divine Will is directly opposite to every part of our society. The Torah is opposed to every bit of your fleshly nature. Yet, this is how your life was destined to be lived. The Torah lifestyle is how the Almighty purposed His people to exist. "When a person knows and grasps in his mind a Torah law... he thereby grasps and holds and encompasses with his mind the divine wisdom and will... while his mind is simultaneously enveloped within them. This makes for a wonderful union, like which there is none other and which has no parallel anywhere in the terrestrial world, whereby complete oneness and unity, from every side and angle, is attained," says the Talmud. Romans 2:13 says, "it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

You must understand that YHWH is actually growing you when your faith is frustrated or when you doubt. When your ego is experiencing pain, you are very pregnant and about to give birth. Don't give up. Living Torah is a struggle, but it is worth it. The Torah itself declares in this week's reading some wise words on this subject. Write these words down. Memorize them and reflect upon them the next time you wrestle with the Mitzvot. Like 55 hours of grueling labor, walking in the Word is worth it.

"Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love YHWH your Elohim, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and YHWH your Elohim will bless you," Devarim 30:11-16.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew names for this portion are "Nitsavim" and "Vayelech." What does this name mean?
2. Read Isaiah 61:10-63:9, Hosea 14:2-10, Joel 2:15-27, Micah 7:18-20. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 10:1-17 and John 15:1-11. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. What do you think has been the effect of 'adding fences' in Judaism?
6. Is there in fact a difference between 'interpreting and adapting' which Judaism allows (and has done) and 'adding and subtracting' which is prohibited?
7. If you had to choose between adding or subtracting, which would you choose?
8. What is the connection between the verse "atem nitzavim" and the curses in the previous Parsha?
9. Who were the wood-choppers and water-carriers?
10. Why can YHWH never "swap" the Hebrew people for another nation?

11. One who ignores the Torah's warnings "adds drunkenness to thirst." What does this mean?
12. What two cities were destroyed along with Sedom and Amarah?
13. "The hidden things are for YHWH, our YHWH, and the revealed things are for us..." What does this mean?
14. Where is the Torah not to be found? Where is it to be found?
15. When and where did the Hebrew People become culpable for each other's sins?
16. How do the earth and sky remind us to keep the mitzvot?
17. Moshe said, "I am 120 years old today. I am no longer able to go out and come in..." How do we know this does not refer to physical inability?
18. Which of Moshe's statements to Y'hoshua was later contradicted by YHWH's command?
19. Why does the Torah refer to Sukkot of the eighth year as though it occurred during the shemita year?
20. Why does the Torah command that babies be brought to the Torah reading?
21. What does it mean that YHWH "hides His face?"
22. What function does the song Ha'azinu serve? What is "Ha'azinu?"
23. Which verse promises that the Torah will never be totally forgotten?
24. What is the difference of opinion regarding the placing of the Torah scroll which Moshe gave the levi'im?
25. On the day of Moshe's death, why didn't Moshe gather the people by blowing trumpets as he normally would have?
26. Moshe said, "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly," but, in fact, this didn't occur until after Y'hoshua's death. What does this teach us?
27. In Nitsavim, whom did Moshe call together to enter the covenant with YHWH?
28. What did the covenant include?
29. Were only those who heard YHWH's word to be included in the covenant? If no, who else?
30. What would happen if the people refused to follow YHWH's commandments?
31. Was there any hope for them in the future?
32. Moshe said that YHWH's laws were not too hard for the people nor too far away. Where were they?
33. How old was Moshe when he spoke to the people in this week's parasha?

34. Moshe said that he would not cross the Jordan. Whom did he say would cross first and whom second?
35. How could Moshe tell the people to cross over into the land of their enemies without fear?
36. Moshe wrote the law, gave it to the priests, and told them to do what with it, how often, and when?
37. YHWH told Moshe that he was about to expire; what did He predict would happen amongst the people and what would be his (YHWH's) response?
38. What did YHWH say would be the reason that they would turn to other gods?
39. Moshe predicted the people would soon be in rebellion. How did he conclude this?
40. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Ha'azinu

- Deuteronomy 32:1-52
- 2 Samuel 22:1-51
- Romans 10:17-11:12, 12:19, 15:9-10

The Torah Portion at a Glance

The greater part of the Torah reading of Ha'azinu ("Listen In") consists of a 70-line "song" delivered by Moses to the people of Israel on the last day of his earthly life.

Calling heaven and earth as witnesses, Moses exhorts the people to "Remember the days of old / Consider the years of many generations / Ask your father, and he will recount it to you / Your elders, and they will tell you" how YHWH "found them in a desert land," made them a people, chose them as His own, and bequeathed them a bountiful land. The Song also warns against the pitfalls of plenty -- "Yeshurun grew fat and kicked / You have grown fat, thick and rotund / He forsook YHWH who made him / And spurned the Rock of his salvation" -- and the terrible calamities that would result, which Moses describes as YHWH "hiding His face." Yet in the end, he promises, YHWH will avenge the blood of His servants and be reconciled with His people and land.

The Parasha concludes with YHWH's instruction to Moses to ascend the summit of Mount Nebo, from which he will behold the Promised Land before dying on the mountain. "For you shall see the land opposite you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the children of Israel.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Moshe declares the words of the Almighty in his second song of the Torah. The first song of Moshe is found in Exodus 15 and is a celebration of deliverance. This tune is more of a warning and a prophetic call to Bnai Yisrael - the children of Israel. "YHWH will judge, and avenge, time of the last days! Vengeance is mine says YHWH," Deuteronomy 32:35-43. This quote from the song speaks of the judgment and vengeance of YHWH against Israel and the enemies of the nation.

Heaven and earth will be two witnesses against the nation as it moves away from YHWH and His Torah. "And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their

descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath," Deuteronomy 31:21.

Because of YHWH's faithfulness the nation of Israel is able to survive apostasy and judgment. YHWH chose the nation to be a light and salt to the earth but their sin caused their light to diminish and their reputation to lose flavor. The wages of sin had to be paid and paid it was by the Messiah Y'shua.

Israel did not face all of the punishment they deserved because of the life and sacrifice of Y'shua.

"Definitely then YHWH was in Moshiach, restoring the olam to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them; and has committed to us the word of restoration. Now then we are ambassadors for the Moshiach, as though Elohim is asking you through us: we beg you on Moshiach's behalf, be restored to YHWH. For He has made Him to be the sin sacrifice for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the tzedeka of YHWH in Him," Corinthiyah Bet / 2 Corinthians 5:19-21.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

"Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you," Devarim 32:7. These words are found in our current parasha titled Ha'azinu. This is the next to last Torah portion of scripture that is usually read during the synagogue service held on the Sabbath between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur. It is on this Shabbat that most Rabbis give a stirring sermon on the effects of sin and the need for repentance.

This Sabbath is aptly called "Shabbat Shuvah" or the "Sabbath of Turning." With this weekly reading mankind is called to turn from a life of sin and return to life with YHWH. This parasha, with the song of Moshe in it, calls Yisra'el to remember what YHWH has done, turn from rebellion, and return to YHWH. This is similar to the words of Y'shua in Revelation, "Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first," 2:5.

With the busyness of life, we need a time when we can stop and reflect upon life. This Shabbat is such a time. The High Holy days of this season are also such times. Shabbat Shuvah occurs during the Ten Days of Awe, the space between

the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. Judaism teaches that it is during these days that the habits of life and spirituality are formed for the next year. During these days of introspection, repentance, and awe we should do as our parasha says and "remember the days of old; consider the generations long past." We should "ask our Abba" and let him tell us about how life was meant to be. We need to research our past, reject our pagan society, and accept the Torah lifestyle as taught within the Scriptures. We ought to "hate what is evil; cling to what is tov," Romans 12:9.

Our culture in general, doesn't inquire about the past. Few study history. Even fewer know about church history. "Ignorance is bliss" for the majority of people that warm pews. Yet the scriptures tell us to "study to show ourselves approved." "This is what YHWH says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, 'We will not walk in it,' Yermi'yahu 6:16.

The truth is out there; it just remains to be found by most people. It is sad that millions of people had to be exposed to the pagan roots of the church through a murder and mystery book by Dan Brown. Brown simply wouldn't have much of a plot if everyone knew the truth.

Another book that brings much enlightenment was written over 100 years ago by the Rev. Alexander Hislop. Hislop's work is titled "The Two Babylons" and reveals the basis for a faith that has been lived out by millions of Catholic and Christian believers for centuries. The Two Babylons reveals the pagan elements in Christian worship and culture. This book proves that much of Christian theology from Christmas to Sunday worship to the sign of the cross has evil pagan roots. "In the unity of that one Only YHWH of the Babylonians, there were three persons, and to symbolize that doctrine of the Trinity, they employed, as the discoveries of Layard prove, the equilateral triangle, just as it is well known the Romish Church does at this day. In both cases such a comparison is most degrading to the King Eternal, and is fitted utterly to pervert the minds of those who contemplate it, as if there was or could be any similitude between such a figure and Him Who hath said, 'To whom will you liken (Elohim), and what likeness will you compare unto Him?'" The Two Babylon's, pgs. 16,17.

This book was first published as a pamphlet in 1853 and was greatly expanded in 1858. Since then it has angered and astonished believers all over the world. The pagan roots of church worship is exposed with clarity as Hislop writes from a

lifetime of research. "The Two Babylons" can be downloaded for free at www.biblebelievers.com/babylon or can be purchased at most bookstores. It is an interesting read for all truth seekers because of the facts and information it presents. You definitely won't find the text of Hislop's book in the "Baptist Faith and Message." These books are not alone in their expose of the emet about the days of past. There are tons of web sites, blogs, articles, and teachers who have researched and revealing the truth.

Do you question what has been taught to you or do you soak up everything the preacher says like a sponge? Have you ever read "The Two Babylons" or "Finding the Truth" or any the other books that reveal the pagan roots of various faiths? Do you follow the torah and "remember the days of old; consider the generations long past," Devarim 32:7. IF so, then continue to learn. If not then it is time to "ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you," Devarim 32:7.

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is "Ha'azinu." What does this name mean?
2. Read 2 Samuel 22:1-51. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Romans 10:17-11:12, 12:19 and 15:9-10. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Why were heaven and earth specifically chosen as witnesses?
6. How is the Torah like rain?
7. How is YHWH "faithful without injustice"?
8. Why is YHWH called "tzaddik"?
9. How many major floods did YHWH bring upon the world?
10. What group of people does the Torah call "fathers"? Cite an example.
11. Why did YHWH separate the world's nations into exactly 70?
12. Why is the merit of the Hebrew People's ancestry called a "rope"?
13. How is YHWH's behavior toward the Hebrew People like an eagle's behavior toward its offspring?
14. Regarding the Hebrew People's punishment, YHWH says, "I will spend my arrows on them." What is the positive aspect of this phrase?
15. How does the idea of "chillul YHWH" prevent the nations from destroying the Hebrew People?

16. What will happen to the nations that conquer the Hebrew People?
17. When YHWH overturns a nation that persecutes the Hebrew People, His attribute of Mercy is "replaced" by which attribute?
18. When YHWH punishes the heathen nations, for whose sins does He exact punishment?
19. How will YHWH's punishment change the way the nations view the Hebrew People?
20. On what day was Ha'azinu taught to the Hebrew People?
21. Verse 32:44 calls Y'hoshua "Hoshea." Why?
22. In verse 32:47, what does "it is not empty from you" mean?
23. Why did YHWH tell Moshe that he would die a similar death to that of Aharon?
24. If Moshe had spoken to the rock rather than striking it, what would the Hebrew People have learned?
25. In this week's Parsha, Moshe sings YHWH's praises to the Hebrew people. In the beginning of their 40-year journey, he sang another song to them. Where and when did that take place?
26. What is the basic difference between the two songs?
27. What symbol is most used to describe YHWH in Moshe's song?
28. Moshe tells the people that they are in a terrible condition; that in order to know how to return to YHWH's ways, they need to know what those ways are. How did he suggest they find out?
29. Moshe says that YHWH guided Yaakov and that he followed no strange gods. He says YHWH made Yaakov suck honey out of the crag and oil out of the flinty rock. What do you think this means?
30. What is the significance to us of the verse - "But Yeshurun waxed fat, and kicked - Thou didst wax fat, thou didst grow thick, thou didst become gross - And he forsook YHWH who made him"?
31. Why did YHWH change his mind about destroying the Hebrews? Who was alongside Moshe when he sang his song to the people?
32. After Moshe finished his song, he charged the people with what order?
33. Where did YHWH tell Moshe to go to be gathered unto his people?
34. Moshe was not allowed to enter the land because he failed to sanctify YHWH in the midst of the Hebrew people by doing what where?
35. What did you learn from this Open Bible teaching?

Parasha Vezot Ha' Bracha

- Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12
- Joshua 1:1-18
- Revelation 21:9-22:5

The Torah Portion at a Glance

Vezot Haberachah then relates how Moses ascended Mount Nebo from whose summit he saw the Promised Land. "And Moses the servant of YHWH died there in the Land of Moab by the mouth of YHWH... and no man knows his burial place to this day." The Torah concludes by attesting that "There arose not a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face... and in all the mighty hand and the great awesome things which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel."

Immediately after concluding the Torah, we begin it anew by reading the first chapter of Genesis (the beginning of next Shabbat's Torah reading) describing YHWH's creation of the world in six days and His ceasing work on the seventh--which He sanctified and blessed as a day of rest.

The Messiah in the Torah Portion

Before Moses died he blessed Israel. Then after his death we read that the people of Israel mourned for him for many days. Of Moshe the Torah reads, "since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders YHWH sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel," Devarim 34:10-12.

Moses lived an amazing life. He was a prince of Egypt, a farmer, a shepherd, a husband, and a father. He spoke before Pharaoh and he spoke before YHWH. He saw the burning bush, the waters turn to blood, the firstborn killed, and the sea part. He spoke prophetically of future events and gave the Torah to Israel. What an amazing prophet! And as amazing as Moshe was, there is one that is greater. Y'shua Ha Moshiach is the prophet greater than Moses. Moshe's greatness only prefigured the greatness of Y'shua.

Let's remember the words of Moshe in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19: "YHWH your Elohim will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him... YHWH said to me: ... I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account." From these verses it is clear to see that Moshe knew he wasn't the end all. Moshe was only a picture of the Messiah who was to come. Praise YHWH for His Son the Master Y'shua!

Sign prefigured by Moses	Y'shua the Greater than Moses
1. The first "sign"	1. At Cana Y'shua, using the holy water from stone vessels, transforms water into wine, the "blood of the grape." This first "sign" is prefigured by Moses' first "sign:" turning the Nile river water into blood, even the water in stone vessels. [John chapter 2 and Exodus 7:8-25; note verse 20 = even in vessels of wood and stone].
2. The Passover	2. Moses was the first prophet to experience the Passover in Exodus 12 by redeeming the firstborn sons of Israel, but Y'shua is the true Firstborn Son, and He is the true Passover victim. In order to save the firstborn sons Moses instructed the people to put the blood of the lamb on their door posts and to eat its roasted flesh at the first Passover. But it is Y'shua who is the sacrificial firstborn Son, identified by John the Baptist as the true Lamb of YHWH that takes away the sins of the world [1:29].
3. Moses who feeds His people	3. In the miracle of the Loaves and Fishes in chapter 6:1-18 Y'shua is the new Moses who feeds the crowd

	of over 5,000 people with five barley loaves [the 5 books of Moses] with 12 baskets left over prefigured by Moses and the miracle of the manna from heaven feeding the 12 tribes of Israel as will provide a superabundance of grace.
4. The manna of Moses	4. In the time of Moses the covenant people received manna, bread from heaven, to nourish them on their journey to the Promised Land for 40 years. In John 6:1-15 Y'shua also miraculously feeds the multitude like Moses but then in John 6:32-58 Y'shua identifies His flesh as the true bread from heaven and the means to salvation; it is His flesh we must eat to be saved, and His blood we must drink to nourish us on our journey to the Promise Land of heaven. His flesh is the bread from heaven that is greater than the manna of Moses.
5. The Tabernacle: YHWH's presence	5. Y'shua is YHWH who is present: In Exodus 25:1-31:11 and 35:1-40:33 Moses received instruction on how to build the Sanctuary in which YHWH's presence would dwell. Centuries Later, King Solomon would build the Temple, YHWH's Dwelling Place, in Jerusalem. At the beginning of His ministry in chapter 2 at the Feast of Passover Y'shua cleanses the Temple [John 2:13-22], a Temple which is prefigured by the Tabernacle of Moses where the presence of YHWH resided. When Y'shua cleansed the Temple, YHWH was indeed present in His Dwelling Place. Y'shua' cleansing of the

	Temple was to call Israel to repentance and to prepare to be transformed into a fully redeemed people. Moses built the first Tabernacle which housed the presence of YHWH but Y'shua' human body is the dwelling place of YHWH.
6. The Bronze Serpent which was "lifted up" to heal the people	6. In John 3:14 Y'shua tells the people: As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of man be lifted up so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Moses, at YHWH's command, lifted up an image of a bronze serpent on a pole to heal the people. Y'shua, lifted up on the Cross as YHWH's holy sacrifice, will give life to whomever looks up to Him and believes. Moses saved the children of Israel; Y'shua will save the world. In the sacrifice of the Mass, it is Y'shua' image on the execution tree to which we look to remind us that though Him we are spiritually healed.
7. Moses the Prophet, Lawgiver, and covenant mediator	7. Y'shua is the promised prophet of Deuteronomy 18:14-22, He is the mediator of the perfect Covenant [John 4:19; 7:40; James 1:25; Romans 8:1-2; Hebrews 3:3; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24].
8. Moses leads the children of Israel in the desert wandering' the Exodus generation of Israel is paralyzed from unbelief and cannot take possession of the Promised Land. 38 years later the old generation is dead and the new generation will complete Israel's	8. In John 5: 5-9 Y'shua heals a man paralyzed for 38 years. The man's paralysis signified Israel's paralysis after her rejection of YHWH's plan at Kadesh Barnes - the plan to bring the people to salvation in the Promise Land by the conquest of

destiny [Deuteronomy 2:14].	Canaan. At YHWH's command the people were be barred from entering the Promised Land until every member of that "accursed generation" had died [Numbers 13-14]. For 38 years Israel was paralyzed before she was restored and led by Joshua [Y'hoshua] and given salvation in the Promised Land. Y'shua has come to heal a paralyzed nation, to restore her and to lead her to the "Promised Land," heaven.
9. Moses and the water miracles	<p>9. Y'shua demonstrates His divinity for the Apostles in a private sign only for them when He walks on the water in John 6:16-21. Moses performed five water miracles that prefigured Messiah:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moses turned the water of the Nile River into blood [Exodus 7:14-24]; even the water which was being stored in stone vessels [Exodus 7:19].• Moses controlled the forces of nature when he parted the Sea of Reeds [Red Sea] so the people could pass safely to the other side [Exodus 14:15-22].• Moses struck a rock in the wilderness to give the people water to drink on their journey through the wilderness [Exodus 17:5-6].• In Numbers 20:10 Moses was instructed by YHWH to "speak" to the rock in order to receive life-giving water.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moses turned bitter water sweet with the wood of a tree [Exodus 15:22-25]. <p>Y'shua reenacts Moses' water miracles and surpasses them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At Cana Y'shua turned the water in stone vessels into the blood of the grape [John 2:6-9].• He walked on water and controlled nature to calm the sea [John 6:16-21].• He identified Himself as the source of "living Water" [Holy Spirit] to the Samaritan woman [John 4:10-14].• Y'shua announced to the covenant people that He is the source of the "living water" promised by the prophets at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. His is the Rock from whom living water flows [1 Corinthians 10:1-5]. He was struck down once for our sins and now all we have to do is call out to Him and He comes to us in the Eucharist [John 7:37-39].• Y'shua will give up His life on a tree [the cross]. His sacrifice will bring the sweet gift of salvation to mankind when water and blood flow from the side of the "Rock" of our salvation. The Resurrection
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	will be His 7 th sign [John 19:16]
10. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the events of the Exodus experience and the building of the Tabernacle and its dedication to Yahweh.	10. The Feast of Tabernacles was feast celebrated in remembrance of the Exodus experience with Moses when YHWH led the people in the Pillar of Fire, the water miracles on the journey to Sinai, when Moses returned from the Mountain of YHWH with the Law as their "light" to guide them in their lives, and when YHWH took possession of His Tabernacle and later the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem by supernaturally lighting the altar of sacrifice. The Tabernacle that Moses instructed the people to build led them in the wilderness journey and symbolized YHWH's presence with them. Now Y'shua's body is the true Tabernacle for now YHWH is truly present among His people [John 2: 19-22]. Moses led the people in the Exodus from political slavery but the New Moses will give them greater than what the prophet Moses could give: He will free them from the death grip of sin and will give them eternal life.

Applying the Portion to Life Today

YHWH's word is full of golden nuggets of truth and power. Like a miner looking through buckets of dirt, a student of the word must sift through the Scriptures to locate the many ways YHWH connects various passages, chapters, and themes together. This week's portion is no different.

This short Torah portion of the Scriptures gives yet another listing of the tribes of Israel. The sons of Jacob are spoken of prophetically by Moses as the blessings of YHWH are pronounced. What is amazing is how these blessings are similar and are different to other listings of the tribes found in the Bible. Genesis 49:3–

27, Deuteronomy 33:6–25, and Judges 5:14–18 present parallel listings of the twelve tribes. Plus the tribes are even listed in the book of Revelation!

Review the chart below and study YHWH’s word to discover the theme of blessing upon Israel:

Tribe	Genesis 49	Deuteronomy 33	Judges 5
Reuben	Jacob’s first-born, Jacob’s might, the first-fruits of Jacob’s strength, the excellency of dignity, the excellency of power; unstable as water, he would not have the excellency because he mounted his father’s bed and defiled it	let him live and not die and become few in number	among their divisions were great resolves of heart; they sat among the sheepfolds to hear the piping for the flocks, and did not contribute; at their divisions was great soul-searching
Simeon	brother of Levi, weapons of violence were their kinship; let Jacob’s soul not come into their council, to their assembly, for in their anger they slew men, in their self-will they hewed oxen; cursed was their fierce anger and their cruel wrath, Jacob would divide and scatter them in Israel	not mentioned	not mentioned
Levi	brother of Simeon, weapons of violence were their kinship; let Jacob’s soul not come into their council, to their assembly, for in their anger they slew men, in their self-will they hewed oxen; cursed was their fierce anger and their cruel wrath, Jacob would	his Thummim and Urim would be with YHWH; YHWH proved him at Massah, with whom YHWH strove at the waters of Meribah; he did not acknowledge his father, mother, brothers, or children; observed YHWH’s word, and would keep YHWH’s covenant; would teach Israel YHWH’s law; would put incense before	not mentioned

	divide and scatter them in Israel	YHWH, and whole burnt-offerings on YHWH's altar; YHWH bless his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite the loins of his enemies	
Judah	his brothers would praise him, his hand would be on the neck of his enemies, his father's sons would bow down before him; a lion's whelp, from the prey he is gone up, he stooped down, he couched as a lion and a lioness, who would rouse him? the scepter would not depart from him, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, as long as men come to Shiloh, to him would the obedience of the peoples be; binding his foal to the vine and his ass's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine, his eyes would be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk	YHWH hear his voice, and bring him in to his people; his hands would contend for him, and YHWH would help against his adversaries	not mentioned
Zebulun	would dwell at the shore of the sea, would be a shore for ships, his flank would be upon Zidon	he would rejoice in his going out, with Issachar he would call peoples to the mountain; there they would offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they would suck the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand	they that handle the marshal's staff; jeopardized their lives for Israel
Issachar	a large-boned ass, couching down between	he would rejoice in his tents, with Zebulun he would call	their princes were with Deborah

	the sheep-folds, he saw a good resting-place and the pleasant land, he bowed his shoulder to bear and became a servant under task-work	peoples to the mountain; there they would offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they would suck the abundance of the seas, and the hidden treasures of the sand	
Dan	would judge his people, would be a serpent in the way, a horned snake in the path, that bites the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward	a lion's whelp, that leaps forth from Bashan	sojourned by the ships, and did not contribute
Gad	a troop would troop upon him, but he would troop upon their heel	blessed be YHWH Who enlarges him; he dwells as a lioness, and tears the arm and the crown of the head; he chose a first part for himself, for there a portion of a ruler was reserved; and there came the heads of the people, he executed YHWH's righteousness and ordinances with Israel	Gilead stayed beyond the Jordan and did not contribute
Asher	his bread would be fat, he would yield royal dainties	blessed above sons; let him be the favored of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil; iron and brass would be his bars; and as his days, so would his strength be	dwelt at the shore of the sea, abided by its bays, and did not contribute
Naphtali	a hind let loose, he gave goodly words	satisfied with favor, full with YHWH's blessing, would possess the sea and the south	were upon the high places of the field of battle
Joseph	a fruitful vine by a fountain, its branches run over the wall, the archers have dealt bitterly with him, shot at him, and hated him; his bow abode firm, and the arms	blessed of YHWH was his land; for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep beneath, and for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, and for the precious things of the yield of	out of Ephraim came they whose root is in Amalek

	of his hands were made supple by YHWH, who would help and bless him with blessings of heaven above, the deep beneath, the breast and the womb; Jacob's blessings, mighty beyond the blessings of his ancestors, would be on his head, and on the crown of the head of the prince among his brothers	the moons, for the tops of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the everlasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof, and the good will of YHWH; the blessing would come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brothers; his firstling bullock, majesty was his; and his horns were the horns of the wild-ox; with them he would gore all the peoples to the ends of the earth; they were the ten thousands of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh	
Benjamin	a ravenous wolf, in the morning he devoured the prey, at evening he divided the spoil	YHWH's beloved would dwell in safety by YHWH; YHWH covered him all the day, and dwelt between his shoulders	came after Ephraim

Portion Points to Ponder

1. The Hebrew name for this portion is " Vezot Ha' Bracha." What does this name mean?
2. Read Joshua 1:1-18. How does this relate to the story of Devarim this week?
3. Consider the words found in Revelation 21:9-22:5. What did you learn from studying these passages?
4. How does this Torah portion speak of the Messiah Y'shua?
5. Name the tribes blessed in this portion. Who is left out? Why?
6. How is this blessing by Moshe similar to Jacob's blessing before he died?
7. Before giving the Torah, YHWH went to Seir and Mount Paran. Why?
8. Why is Yehuda blessed immediately after Reuven?
9. What covenant (brit) did Levi keep?
10. Why was Binyamin blessed before Yosef?
11. Which Tribe received the "best" portion of Eretz Yisrael / Land of Israel?

12. Besides the sun, which celestial body helps fruit to ripen?
13. If there were only 7 Canaanite nations, why did Joshua need to conquer 31 kings?
14. What three things did the land of Zevulun possess?
15. What did visiting merchants see that inspired them to convert to the Hebrew faith?
16. The tribe of Gad saw "the beginning -- reishit." The beginning of what?
17. The source of the Jordan River was in the territory of which tribe?
18. Which tribe possessed the Kinneret Lake?
19. The daughters of which tribe married High Priests and Kings?
20. Who wrote the last eight verses in the Torah, starting with the verse "and Moshe died"?
21. Who buried Moshe?
22. What does the Newer Testament say about Moshe's body?
23. What did you learn from this week's Open Bible study?

CHAZAK, CHAZAK, v'NIT'CHAZEK.
Be strong, be strong, and may we be strengthened!

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“Emet” is the Hebrew word for truth.

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