

Getting Ready

Drash on parashah 12; Vayechi
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The message this week comes from the Brit Hadashah reading related to the Torah portion. It seems to me that Shaul/Paul gets so much attention in Messianic circles, as we seek to defend his seeming anti-Torah teaching, that we forget he is not the only writer of the New Covenant. Kefa/Peter is another, along with others. Shaul may have written most of the books, but certainly not all. As I read books by Kefa or Ya'akov/James there seems to be more support for Torah than anything negative. As I peruse through the first chapter of Kefa, we will hear him say some things that may seem shocking coming from a New Covenant writer. Keep in mind that though the Bible was written by different men, the ultimate author is God, and the Word of God is a unit which does not contradict itself. In Kefa, Shaul, and the other writers of the New Covenant, we don't have men giving their personal opinions about how Believers should act and what they should believe. We do see disagreements between the apostles, but what they write is not their opinion or view, but the singular Word of God. What Kefa writes here cannot be opposed to what Shaul writes in Romans or Galatians. If Kefa says that Torah is for the Believer here, Shaul cannot teach that Torah is done away with elsewhere. Either our understand of Kefa is false, or our understanding of Shaul is false.

We will see other doctrines of Christianity challenged here besides the place of Torah in our lives. Even our concept of salvation will be challenged. The conclusions I come up with are the result of my sincere wrestling with the text. Your conclusions may be different. That is fine, except what we all must consider, is whether we are willing to see the text for what it says, even when it challenges what we have understood all our lives, or if our doctrines have become for us idols that will not allow us to see the text in any other way except what we have been taught. Fasten your seatbelt because the Rock is about to take us on a wild ride.

Praised be God, Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope, to an inheritance that cannot decay, spoil or fade, kept safe for you in heaven. [1Kefa/1Peter 1:3-4]

The first couple of verses are introductory. Kefa doesn't get into the meat of his instruction until verse 3, so this is where we start. The message here is pretty straight forward. It contains a typical Gospel message. By God's mercy, we are born again, through the death and resurrection of Messiah. Being born again has two results. The first is a living hope. The second is an incorruptible inheritance. The hope is in that inheritance. The inheritance is future. It is not of this world. It is not something we have yet. It is something we hope for, but not something we possess. We will possess it

because in His sovereignty, He has already caused it to happen. We have to keep in mind that God transcends time. We live in the present, but there are things that are true about us that have been decreed in the past. There are also things that will happen in the future that God can declare true today, because to Him past, present, and future can happen in one instant.

We are heirs of a Kingdom not yet built because of work done by God's Son two thousand years ago. We spend our lives becoming a person we are not yet, but will be because of God's plan for our life which was designed before we were born.

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I separated you for myself. I have appointed you to be a prophet to the nations." [Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 1:5]

The same is true for us as was true for Yirme'yahu. We may not all be designed to be prophets, but each of us have been given a purpose which is no less important in God's Kingdom. Our mission, if we choose to accept it, is to become the person God has created us to be. As we draw closer to God, He molds us more and more into that person.

Meanwhile, through trusting, you are being protected by God's power for a deliverance ready to be revealed at the Last Time. [1 Kefa 1:5]

I know that there will be pizza in heaven because as we see in the previous verse, God delivers. What we need to understand is what God delivers or saves us from and when. Our sins have both physical and spiritual consequences. The deliverance described above is specifically referring to the spiritual, eternal consequences. This will not be available to us until the End of Time. Certainly God gives us our daily bread and has the power to heal us and guide us today, but this is part of our daily walk with God, and His daily provisions for His people. This is not salvation. In a spiritual sense, none of us are saved. We are being saved as we learn to trust in God and allow Him to conform us into the person He has made us to be.

Rejoice in this, even though for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Yeshua the Messiah. [1Kefa 1:6-7]

Not only are we formed into a new creation, but our faith is too. As we endure various trials our faith has the opportunity to grow and mature. As our faith strengthens, God is able to use us in ways He could not previously. Notice that our trials prepare us for the final judgment, when our faith will be judged worthy of honor. Our faith is not yet there. Just because we have faith, does not mean our faith what it

ought to be. Yeshua told us that faith the size of a mustard seed could move mountains. Anyone move any mountains lately? Me neither. I am not here to condemn anyone or make you feel like you're not good enough, but we are each under construction. We're not there yet. I think a lot of Christians feel like because they are saved, they have arrived. They have all they need. This leads to complacency and even pride. Neither of these seeds of sin have a place in the heart of the Believer. The time of the revealing of Messiah is coming. Are we prepared? Are we ready to stand before the King of Kings as His worthy servants? If you think you are, then let's keep reading.

Without having seen him, you love him. Without seeing him now, but trusting in him, you continue to be full of joy that is glorious beyond words. And you are receiving what your trust is aiming at, namely, your deliverance. The prophets, who prophesied about this gift of deliverance that was meant for you, pondered and inquired diligently about it. They were trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of the Messiah in them was referring in predicting the Messiah's sufferings and the glorious things to follow. It was revealed to them that their service when they spoke about these things was not for their own benefit, but for yours. And these same things have now been proclaimed to you by those who communicated the Good News to you through the Ruach HaKodesh sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things! [1Kefa 1:8-12]

Because of what the Holy Spirit has communicated to us through the dual witnesses of the prophets and the apostles, we love a Messiah we have never seen. This is faith. Our love leads to joy, unspeakable joy that burns in us like a fire. If you have not joy, where is your love?

But let all who take refuge in you rejoice, let them forever shout for joy! Shelter them; and they will be glad, those who love your name. [Tehlellim/Psalms 5:11]

In this passage, we have to go back to verse 3 and 4 to be reminded of what Messiah has done for us and the inheritance which waits for us in His Kingdom. He did this while we were living in sin, ignorance, and rebellion. We were nothing and He gave us everything. We were blind and made us see the truth of His Word. We were naked and He has clothed us in His robes of righteousness. We were lost and He left all the other sheep in His field to find us and save us from the wiles of the Adversary. When Satan reminds you of where you've been, remind him where he's going, and then show him where God has brought you. God is not done with you yet, but you are not where you were. In just knowing Him, you are on the road that leads to the Kingdom. You have a fire that burns within you that comes only from the Holy Spirit. You have joy that even you can't explain. What you need to know is that joy is light. Light is energy. Energy has to be used for something.

Therefore, get your minds ready for work, keep yourselves under control, and fix your hopes fully on the gift you will receive when Yeshua the Messiah is revealed. As people who obey God, do not let yourselves be shaped by the evil desires you used to have when you were still ignorant. On the contrary, following the Holy One who called you, become holy yourselves in your entire way of life; since the Tanakh says, "You are to be holy because I am holy." [1Kefa 1:13-16]

Our faith in God is not a matter of what we have to do, but what we can't keep ourselves from doing because of the joy that burns in our heart. King David threw off his clothes and danced in the streets of Jerusalem at the arrival of the ark of the covenant.

When David returned to bless his household, Mikhal the daughter of Sha'ul came out to meet him and said, "Such honor the king of Isra'el earned for himself today – exposing himself before his servants' slave-girls like some vulgar exhibitionist!" David answered Mikhal, "In the presence of Adonai – who chose me over your father and over everyone in his family to make me chief over Adonai's people, over Isra'el – I will celebrate in the presence of Adonai! I will make myself still more contemptible than that, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes, but those slave-girls you mentioned will honor me!" Mikhal the daughter of Sha'ul remained childless until the day she died. [2Samuel 6:20-23]

Our joy leads to obedience. Obedience leads to holiness. Holiness is part of our inheritance. We will never achieve holiness in this lifetime, but we are commanded to pursue holiness as an act of obedience to our God. Notice that we are to pursue holiness in every aspect of our life. Only as we dig into Torah and learn the lessons in the laws do we learn how to obey God in every aspect of life. Does this mean we are earning our salvation? No, but that does not mean that the actions which result from our obedience do not matter either.

Also, if you are addressing as Father the one who judges impartially according to each person's actions, you should live out your temporary stay on earth in fear. You should be aware that the ransom paid to free you from the worthless way of life which your fathers passed on to you did not consist of anything perishable like silver or gold; on the contrary, it was the costly bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah, as of a lamb without defect or spot. God knew him before the founding of the universe, but revealed him in the acharit-hayamim for your sakes. Through him you trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory; so that your trust and hope are in God. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth, so that you have a sincere love for your brothers, love each other deeply, with all your heart. You have been born again not from some seed that will decay, but from one that cannot decay, through the living Word of God that lasts forever. For all humanity is like grass, all its glory is like a wildflower – the grass withers, and the flower falls off; but the Word of Adonai lasts forever. Moreover, this Word is the Good News which has been proclaimed to you. [1Kefa 1:17-25]

Notice that Kefa jumps ahead to the Last Days (acharit-hayamim) when Yeshua is revealed. At this point we have been purified, and we may be surprised to see that we have been purified by our obeying the truth, which results in our love for others. It is at that point that we are born again to a new life and have a body which is incorruptible. We have eternal life because our lives are rooted in the Word of God which is eternal. Many want to separate the written Word from the living Word, but that is not for us to do. God has joined the two together in Scripture. Our faith in one results in obedience to the other. Without the two together there is no purification from sin.

God has done amazing things on our behalf. The joy that this ought to produce in our lives must result in action. The works we do today are preparing us for a day when we will have to make an account for all that we did and did not do. By God's mercy, it is that day when we receive our inheritance, the keys to the Kingdom, a state of holiness, and our salvation from sin. It is then that we become the person God has created us to be. We must all understand that faith may have us on the road to righteousness, but none of us are there yet. We are all a work in progress. Through patience and love, we help each other to get ready for that glorious Day of the Lord.