



## **Parasha Pinchas**

July 11, 2020

*Torah:* Numbers 25:10-30:1.

*Haftarah:* 1Kings 18:46-19:21

*Ketuvim Sh'lichim:* Hebrews 11:32-39.

*Shabbat Shalom mishpacha.* The *parasha* for today is *Pinchas*. It is named for the son of *El'azar*, who himself was the new High Priest. What he did was described in last week's *parasha*, *Balak*. His actions brought him a reward from ADONAI, a covenant of *shalom*; and other benefits too.

Here are the other subjects found in this *parasha*. ADONAI commanded *Moshe* and *El'azar* the *kohen*, Aaron's son, to take a census of the men twenty years of age and above who could serve in the army. The total was 601,730 men. This census was also for the purpose of dividing the Land of Canaan by lottery among the tribes and families of Israel. At this time, none of the Israelites who came out of Egypt in the Exodus remained alive except Moses, Joshua and Caleb. The Levites were also counted and numbered 23,000, but they were not counted for the purpose of inheritance. They were not to receive a land inheritance, but a set number of towns and surrounding pastureland.

The five daughters of *Tzelof'chad* went before Moses and asked to be allowed to inherit the portion of the land belonging to their father who died without having sons. ADONAI accepted their claim and it became *Torah* law for inheritance.

Moses was told to go up on the mountain and view the Land, after which he would be gathered to his ancestors because of his rebellion in striking the rock for water rather than speaking to it. ADONAI also told him to place some of his spirit on Joshua and to lay hands on him, that is, give him *s'micha*, ordination, before *El'azar* the *Kohen Gadol*. And, it was done, except that it was not yet time for Moses to see the Land and to die. That would occur 15 *parshiyot* later, right before Israel entered into Canaan.

The final subject of this *parasha* is a detailed list of the daily offerings and additional offerings, sacrifices, which were to be brought on *Shabbat*, the head of the month, *Rosh Chodesh*, and the festivals of *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot* and *Shemini Atzeret*.

What we find in this *parasha* also brings up the concept of keeping *Torah*, *Torah* obedience. Within *Parasha Pinchas* we find both narrative and laws, but laws which cannot be followed today. Why not? Because the carrying out of these laws requires several things. All of the laws found in this *parasha* require a Tabernacle or a Temple, a Levitical priesthood and being present in the Land of Israel. Having a Temple in which to offer the sacrifices is necessary, having a priesthood in order to mediate them is as well and being in Israel, the only place in which the Temple could exist, is required. This gives us a beginning understanding about what is to be observed and why? *Shabbat* is the only *moed* listed here which can be observed outside the land of Israel, but only without the sacrifices.

To understand what we are to observe and why we are to observe it, we must first understand *Torah* itself. What is it? Many today understand it as laws which have no application to them, laws which have passed away with the “old Testament.” But for us, *Torah* is much more than that. It is understanding, both broad and narrow, upon which Yeshua based most of His teaching. It’s important and we can’t just throw it out. ADONAI gave it to us for a purpose. *Torah* is first the five books of Moses, but it also has the wider understanding as all of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. Within it we find a number of different things. There are the commandments, ADONAI's *mitzvot*. There is also a history of the people of Israel, the Jews. In Hebrew, the word *toledot* describes the history, the stories, and the genealogy which are also included. Also very important, and a part of ADONAI's teaching and instruction to us, are the messages of the Prophets of Israel. And lastly, we find the "wisdom" books such as Proverbs, Psalms, and other books of history. Within Messianic Judaism, we also consider the writings of Yeshua’s followers, the *Ketuvim Sh’lichim*, as *Torah*, teaching and instruction which also contains laws.

With regard to which laws apply to other members in the Body of Messiah, it is their prerogative to decide that themselves. *Torah* as I have described it is for those who have accepted these things as being ADONAI’s rules for them. Those who do not believe it is for them have the right to follow the pattern established by their leaders. In Matthew 16, Yeshua gave the authority to leaders in His *ecclesia*, His body of believers, to bind and to loose, and saying that what they bound or loosed would be bound or loosed in heaven. Binding is Yeshua’s blessing upon something which is not to be permitted and loosing is His blessing upon something which is permitted. This authority has been given to the leaders of His various groups of followers. I have no authority to tell other leaders in Yeshua’s body what they should or should not do. That is directly between them and Yeshua.

While I do not have authority to interpret *Torah* for others, I do have the authority to interpret it for *Beit Shalom*. It is based upon the authority given me through my *s’michha*, my ordination, as congregational leader. How I interpret it is based upon doing my best to read and understand *Torah* without cultural bias as I seek the original Hebrew intention combined with its recognized modern usage. I do all of this aided by the *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit. My purpose as congregational leader is to be the spiritual leader of those whom ADONAI has called to be a part of this congregation. For those outside our congregation who may watch or read this message, my hope is that they would understand why we follow *Torah* and that through this message our theology of following *Torah* would be demystified. And, that they would also gain an understanding of our wider theological approach. Those who are members here also understand that I am not infallible in my interpretation. I do my best with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Also, with regard to our members, I do not demand obedience. I teach and interpret as best I can, but do not follow anyone around to make sure they are obedient to an interpretation. Nor, do I question members to find out if they are being faithful to our doctrine. My belief is that they are and my hope and prayer is that as well. They are all faithful followers of Yeshua and are also guided by the Holy Spirit.

To begin to understand *Torah* as it applies to us, we first must understand what it isn’t. The word *Torah* does not mean “law,” but rather, “teaching and instruction.” Being obedient to it as “laws” was never, even in the Sinai Desert, intended to be a means of salvation. The teaching and instruction portions of *Torah* showed the ancient Israelites how to follow the Laws which were imbedded within. Salvation, limited atonement, as it was known in those days, depended only on the mercy of ADONAI and the actions of the Mediator, the High Priest, as he

followed *Torah* to make atonement for the nation. What happened on *Yom Kippur* with the sacrifice of a goat each year was a limited year to year atonement and also a shadow of what was eventually to come through ADONAI's perfect sacrifice, His Son Yeshua. And, it had to be repeated year after year as opposed to the eternal atonement we can now receive through Yeshua's personal sacrifice. But, keeping laws never brought about salvation.

Many times *Sha'ul* has been misunderstood with regard to *Torah*. What did it mean to Paul? The term *Torah* for *Sha'ul* as a Jew, was all of ADONAI's revealed will in the universe. Everything needed was there. *Torah* was the totality of Scripture. He explained this to his disciple Timothy when he said: *16 All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness,..* (2Timothy 3:16 TLV). When he wrote this, he was referring to the Hebrew Bible, because it, the revealed Word of ADONAI, the *Torah*, the *Nevi'im*, and the *Ketu'vim*, together making up the *Tanakh*, was the only Scripture at that time. It was through the *Tanakh* that Yeshua's disciples recognized and trusted Him as Messiah, it was how the Jews at the Temple Mount on *Shavuot* knew Yeshua was their *Mashiach* and it was also the way that Cornelius and his household came to trust in Yeshua. Beginning some 500 years after Yeshua, the writings of His disciples became *Torah*, a part of the total *Torah*, Genesis to Revelation. It does not make any sense today to throw away that portion of the Bible upon which Yeshua's early followers based their faith for the first 500 years.

The original intention of *Torah* was not to provide a means of salvation, but was to be a rule of life for those who were already redeemed. The only word in Greek that *Sha'ul* had to convey all the meanings of *Torah* in Hebrew was the word "*nomos*," "Law" in English. And it is partly because of this difficulty that some have largely misunderstood his letters. Another major difficulty in understanding his letters is the negativity of the word "Law" when it is substituted for *Torah* and the fact that "Law" suggests legalism and not the teaching aspect of *Torah*.

We find in *Sha'ul's* letters several different usages of the meaning of Law. Sometimes it's good; sometimes it's bad. He writes: *1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. 2 For the law of the Ruach (Spirit) of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and death* (Romans 8:1-2 TLV). The Law of sin and death or the *Torah* of sin and death, is some men's attempt to use obedience to Law to obtain right standing with God. But, following this negative law, the law of sin and death, only leads to death; spiritual death. You can't do it; it's not possible to keep laws for salvation.

There are two other ways that *Sha'ul* used the word Law, or *Torah*. When *Sha'ul* speaks of the *Torah*, Law, in the "context of salvation," that is, justification or right standing before ADONAI, he very clearly states that *Torah* keeping, Law keeping, will do you no good. Romans 3:20 is an example of this: *20 For no human, on the basis of Torah observance, will be set right in His sight—for through the Torah comes awareness of sin* (Romans 3:20 TLV). Attempting to be saved by keeping the Law is as foreign to us as Messianic followers of Yeshua as it is to the Church. We fully understand and embrace the reality of God's salvation by grace through faith in Yeshua as our only righteous sacrifice.

Here's another way that *Sha'ul* uses the word *nomos*. When he speaks of the Law in the "context of believer's conduct," that is, sanctification or right living before ADONAI, then, he affirms the value and validity of ADONAI's *Torah*. For this purpose, "he says *Torah* is good!!" Writing to the Romans, he said: *8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the Torah. 9 For the commandments—"You shall not commit*

*adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and any other commandment—are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fullness of the Torah (Romans 13:8-10 TLV). Keeping these commandments brings us closer to our goal of being like Yeshua. Of course we want to keep them and all of the others that we can.*

Here is another statement made by *Sha'ul*, this one to Timothy, which also helps us to understand the concept of Torah obedience: *8 But we know that the Torah is good if one uses it legitimately (1Timothy 1:8 TLV). What he means is that it's good if we use it the way that it is intended to be used. This we need to remember; that we are only to use Torah in the way that it is intended. From these verses, it is clear that Sha'ul teaches that Torah is not intended for salvation and so, we don't use it for that. But we also understand that Sha'ul teaches that Torah is intended for the determination of our conduct, the way which we act before our Messiah and our G-d and we use it for that. We want to be obedient so that our actions are pleasing to Him. Our obedience is an expression of our love for ADONAI and His Son our Messiah.*

In Romans 3 *Sha'ul* speaks about *Torah* and its relationship to salvation. He said: *28 For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance. 29 Is God the God of the Jewish people only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. 30 Since God is One, He will set right the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah (Romans 3:28-31 TLV). We understand that *Torah* is for today, but it is not intended for salvation. We also understand that *Torah* is for today and it is intended for the determination of our conduct before our Messiah and our G-d. Let's don't throw it all out just because some have misunderstood what *Sha'ul* actually meant. Let's look at it one more time so that it can sink in. *Torah* is not a way to obtain salvation, redemption, but it is a way of life for those who are already redeemed. When we understand this, we can see that *Torah* is not to be the center of a believer's life. It is Yeshua our Messiah who takes the center stage in the life of his followers. Here is what we are to understand: first comes our redemption from slavery (that is, we get saved) and then comes to us the guidebook for the redeemed community; (or, the Manufacturer's Handbook). Doris Day sang this song: Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage; you can't have one without the other. Unfortunately, today many do not look at it that way. But, the analogy is true. Salvation and holiness do go together like a horse and carriage; you can't have one without the other!*

Today, many people who hear the word *Torah* immediately think 613 *mitzvot*, 613 laws. *Rabbi Simlai* was apparently the first to propose this categorization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, but it was largely popularized by Maimonides in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. But today, even for orthodox and ultra-orthodox Jews, 613 *mitzvot* are impossible. When the Temple was destroyed in the year 70 CE, a large percentage of the *mitzvot* were eliminated, someone has said that 342 were eliminated at that time. That's over half! Let's just say that those are inactive today. Whether or not they will ever become active again is up to ADONAI. Even if the Temple is rebuilt after Yeshua returns, we have no way of knowing what He will require at that time. We only know what we understand today. There are a limited number of *mitzvot* which we can keep and as Messianic followers of Yeshua, it is our responsibility to know what they are.

Mary Louise and I were discussing keeping *Torah* the other day. She felt that it was love for ADONAI and Yeshua which motivated her to be obedient. I agree with that too. Yeshua said: 37 ... “*You shall love Adonai your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with*

*all your mind.* 38 *This is the first and greatest commandment*” (Matthew 22:37b-38 TLV). But, the words which Yeshua said next brings in a second motivating factor. He said: 39 *And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* 40 *The entire Torah and the Prophets hang on these two commandments*” (Matthew 22:39-40 TLV). We understand that as we love our neighbor as ourselves, it is also love which motivates. But, do we understand what He meant by saying that “all of the *Torah* and Prophets hang on these two commandments?” We can if we understand that love is the basis for ADONAI’s giving of the *Torah* and the Prophets. Because of ADONAI’s great love for us, He gave us the *Torah* and the Prophets as a guide for our lives. The *Torah*, along with the writings of Yeshua’s disciples, are guides for our daily walk with Yeshua and the Prophets call us to repentance and give us hope for the future. The implication regarding this is that if we love ADONAI with all our heart, mind and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, we will also be obedient to His commandments. Yeshua said: 15 *“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments”* (John 14:15 TLV). His and the Father’s commandments are one and the same.

Two reasons for keeping *Torah* are love and obedience. Let’s look at one more; faith, or trust. Often we misunderstand what these words mean. In the *Tanakh*, the word faith comes from the Hebrew word *emunah* and in the writings of Yeshua’s disciples, from the Greek word *pistis*. *Pistis* is usually translated into English as faith or trust. These two words mean that our belief is not based on what we can see with our eyes, but on spiritual hope imparted through Scripture and our understanding of who ADONAI and Yeshua are. *Sha’ul* said: 7 *For we walk by faith, not by sight* (2Corinthians 5:7 TLV). Faith here is walking not by sight. But, in the Hebrew sense, faith, *emunah*, has additional meaning. It means faithfulness. Obeying *Torah* demonstrates faithfulness on the part of the one keeping it. In the Hebrew *Mechon Mamre* Bible, Habakkuk 2:4 says: 4 *Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the righteous shall live by his faith.* Strong’s Concordance describes *emunah*, the word translated as “faith” in this verse as: firmness, steadfastness or fidelity. What do those three mean in summary? They mean faithfulness. Habakkuk said: “The righteous shall live by his faithfulness.” So, a third reason for keeping *Torah* is our faith, our belief that it is right for us to do and also our desire to be faithful.

We have identified three reasons for following *Torah*. There may well be more, but we will not go further today. In our *parasha*, *Pinchas* and his act of faithfulness stand out. Here is some background about him and the situation. At the time of *Parasha Pinchas*, Israel had been in the wilderness for more than 39 years. The first generation which came out of Egypt had rejected ADONAI’s plan to take them into the land of milk and honey and He condemned them to die in the desert. On this day, all of the older generation except Moses, Joshua and Caleb have died. ADONAI has also placed His judgment upon Moses and Aaron for their lack of faith and disobedience in following His commands. At the time of *Pinchas*’s action, Aaron has already died. Now, an unknown person comes on the scene. And as we see in every society there are sometimes those who are “unknown” who rise to the surface to do great things.

That is what happened with *Pinchas*. Although he was the grandson of Aaron the High Priest and the son of *El’azar* who was now the High Priest, *Pinchas* had not even been heard from before. The situation at that time was that the men of Israel were whoring with the women of Midian and ADONAI was very displeased. Those foreign women were enticing the Hebrew men to attend feasts for the Midianite gods and to offer sacrifices to them and because of His anger over this, ADONAI caused a plague to begin. While Moses and the

people were before the Tabernacle praying about this, a prince from the Tribe of Simeon brought a Midianite woman right through their midst and took her into a tent. Recognizing what was happening, *Pinchas* took a spear, went into the tent and pierced them both through as they lay on the ground. And the plague was stopped. Righteous anger rose up in *Pinchas* as he saw this man having sexual intercourse with this pagan woman at the same time that all of Israel was on their faces in prayer before the Tabernacle.

We know very little about *Pinchas*, actually only one thing before today. Here, in the Book of Numbers, we are told that he is the son of *El'azar* the *kohen*. According to *Rashi*, *Rabbi Shlomo Ytizchaki*, the medieval French rabbi of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there is more to understand. Take it with a grain of salt, but according to him, even though he was the son of a priest when this event happened, *Pinchas* was not a *kohen*. He was not a priest and as things were, he was not ever going to be a priest. His father *El'azar*, Aaron's son, was a priest, at the time of this *parasha*, the High Priest. All we know about *Pinchas* before this day is found in Exodus 6:25. It tells us that *El'azar* his father was married to one of the daughters of Putiel, whom the rabbis understand to be Jethro, the father in law of Moses. Eliezer's uncle Moses was married to another of Jethro's daughters. This means that Moses nephew *El'azar* was also his brother in law (smile) and Moses sons Gershom and Eliezer and *El'azar's* son *Pinchas* were double first cousins. *Pinchas* was the son of one of Jethro's daughters, but that was not the reason he was not a priest. According to *Rashi*, the problem was that *Pinchas* had already been born at the time of the appointment of his father *El'azar* as a priest. According to *Rashi*, the rule was that only sons born to priests after their appointment as priest would become priests after him. During the time that Moses was dealing with Pharaoh in Egypt, Exodus 6:25 tells us *Pinchas* was there too. This son of *El'azar* had already been born and he came out of Egypt with the others in the Exodus. And according to *Rashi*, that left *Pinchas* out of the priesthood. We don't know if that is totally true, but it is interesting.

But, this we do know. Because of *Pinchas's* response to the situation, ADONAI rewarded him with a covenant of *shalom* and also a covenant of everlasting priesthood for his family. ADONAI said: *12 So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of shalom! 13 It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael*" (Numbers 25: 12-13 TLV). Even though he didn't start life as a priest, he became one by special appointment. And, he was also the ancestor of the High Priest Zadok, who became the pattern of righteousness for generations of priests after him. We next see *Pinchas* in Numbers 31 in relation to the battle in which Israel defeated the Midianites. And, *Pinchas* entered the land of Caanan along with all of the other Israelites. We know this because we find him in the Book of Joshua, chapter 22. It was his father *El'azar* the high priest who along with Joshua led Israel into the land of Caanan. Later, *Pinchas* became the third high priest, succeeding his father *El'azar* in the land of Israel as found in Judges 29:28.

Today as we look at our nation and see the signs of the times which *Yeshua* prophesied happening and what also appears to be the moral collapse of our society, we have for our hope the end of the age and the return of *Yeshua* our Messiah to deliver us. Today we face some of the same challenges that Israel faced in *Pinchas's* day as they were getting ready to fight the battles necessary to possess the land of Israel. In *Parasha Pinchas*, they were dealing with a pagan people, people who used sex in a manner opposite to that prescribed by ADONAI. They were also going in to Caanan to do battle with a people who rejected ADONAI's

authority, a people who followed other gods, false gods, a people who sacrificed human beings to their gods, and a people who used sex in their pagan religious rites. These were people who were doing things which *ADONAI* called abominations. In a similar way we seem to be preparing to fight the battle which will lead to our Messiah's return. We see those abominations today. This does not mean that we are to kill those who don't follow *ADONAI*. On the contrary, we are to love those who reject *ADONAI*. In spite of their rejection of Him He loves them just as much as he loves us. We are about to engage in a great spiritual battle and we are being prepared for it.

In our *haftarah* reading for today we saw that Elijah ran for his life. After such a mighty victory over the prophets of *Ba'al* through *ADONAI's* power, Elijah then ran like a scared child. Even the great prophets had their own human moments. But whether or not we have our moments of fear, that same kind of faithfulness which Elijah first exhibited before the prophets of *Ba'al* is required of every follower of *Yeshua* today. When we chose to trust and follow Him we also accepted the responsibility to serve Him in any way that He chooses to use us.

Most of us, Jew and Gentile, were not born into the priesthood. But just as *ADONAI* gave a special ordination to *Pinchas* we also have been given a special ordination. *Shimon Kefa* tells us how in his first letter. He said: *4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua* (1Peter 2:4-5). We who follow *Yeshua* our High Priest, Jew and Gentile, male and female, are *ADONAI's* priesthood for this generation. And, because we have trusted *Yeshua*, our priesthood is a special appointment from *ADONAI*, just like *Pinchas's*.

Returning to our discussion of *Torah*, we conclude with these thoughts. In Messianic Judaism, we have borrowed some terminology from Orthodox Judaism. One term is *halakha*, a Hebrew word meaning "how we walk." It is derived from the word *halak*, meaning walk and refers to our spiritual walk. Basically, our *halakha* is a reference to our theology; that we believe in salvation by faith through *ADONAI's* grace and that we additionally believe that we are to be obedient to the commands which at this time in history we can obey. This is an over-simplification. There is much more to it. Check our Statement of Faith on our website for more information. But, the point is, that everyone has a *halakha*. Traditional Jews, Messianic Jews and Gentiles and also Christians have a *halakha*. At the present time, each group is faithful to their own *halakha*, how they have determined that they are to understand and follow Scripture. And, each group has been given the right to do this. When *Yeshua* returns, we will have a final determination of what His *halacha* is. And, we pray that we will have been mostly correct in ours.

At our Zoom meeting this past Thursday, there was some discussion about the ancient paths as mentioned by Jeremiah: *16 Thus says Adonai: "Stand in the roads and look. Ask for the ancient paths— where the good way is— and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls"* (Jeremiah 6:16a TLV). What are the ancient paths, the good way? How are we to walk in it? The word walk in this verse is *ū·lō·kū*, which is derived from the root *halak* meaning "to walk" The things that we have described today, the ways that we follow *Torah*, are the ancient paths, our *halakha*. Many of the Jews in *Yeshua's* day had it mostly right with regard to *Torah*, but when He died, they veered off the path and rejected Him. After the destruction of the Temple, those who did not follow *Yeshua* chose a *halakha* for themselves based upon

three things which they invented and not based upon the blood sacrifice commanded by *Torah*. They chose to base their salvation upon keeping *Torah*, upon *Tefillah*, prayer, and upon *Tzedakah*, the giving of alms. These “three Ts” are all good things, but are not a means of salvation. This is not a condemnation of traditional Jews because our constant prayer is for the scales to be lifted from their eyes and that they might see their brother Yeshua, whose blood sacrifice paid for their sins. They have in their *halakha* a portion of the ancient paths, *Torah*, *Tefillah* and *Tzedakah*, but are lacking the most important thing, the need for a blood sacrifice for sin. ADONAI spoke to Moses and said: *11 For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life* (Leviticus 17:11 TLV). Their realization of the need for Yeshua’s blood sacrifice plus the ancient paths will move them in the right direction.

We are called to be the *Pinchas*’s of this generation. Do not be afraid, but be encouraged! ADONAI said in Deuteronomy 31 (6; 8) that He would never leave us or forsake us. His Son, *Yeshua* our Messiah is coming soon! *Hallelujah! Shabbat shalom!*