



Parasha Ki Tetze

August 21, 2021

Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

Isaiah 54:1-10

Galatians 3:6-14

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *parasha*, *Ki Tetze*, means, “When you go,” and the verse continues “out to war against your enemies....” It covers a wide variety of topics. Most of them were only meant to be active either under the direct kingship of ADONAI and/or when there is a Tabernacle or a Temple. Today, ADONAI does not expect us to have the community stone our rebellious sons as provided for in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Well, maybe our rebellious congregants. We wouldn’t have nearly as many divisions and probably quite a few less congregations. ☺ But in all seriousness, there is a very important subject in this *parasha* and we will focus on it today.

This important subject in this *parasha* will help us to understand some of the circumstances surrounding Yeshua’s sacrifice as well as, possibly a greater appreciation of what He did for us. The two verses that I’m about to read to you, the two that were read in the Torah service, have to do with how the Judean religious authorities dealt with Yeshua’s body after He had died: 22 “Suppose a man is guilty of a sin with a death sentence and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree. 23 His body is not to remain all night on the tree—instead you must certainly bury him the same day, for anyone hanged is a curse of God. You must not defile your land that Adonai your God is giving you as an inheritance” (Deuteronomy 21:22-23 TLV).

To help us understand some of the circumstances after Yeshua’s death, we first need an understanding of how these verses were carried out in the Israel of Moses’ day? Verse 22 says “hang on a tree,” but we note that hanging was not a method of execution according to *Torah*. That wasn’t how he died. There were two methods of execution for Israelites, stoning and burning. And, there were only two specific crimes which required burning. You can read about them in Leviticus 20:14 and 21:9. Stoning was the major method of capital punishment. Also, note that verse 22 does not legislate that an executed individual “is to be hung on a tree.” This verse is not saying “to” hang him on a tree. It says “and you hang him on a tree” meaning that this was “when you hang him on a tree.” Hanging an executed criminal on a tree was already a practice in Israel. Do you remember the man who gathered wood for a fire on *Shabbat*. We presume that he was hung on a stake. If a person was executed, he or she was to be hung on a tree. Why were they hung on a tree? It was because the picture of this gruesome sight before Israel was a vivid reminder of what would happen to those who violated ADONAI’s laws which carried a capital penalty. Hanging them on a tree was to discourage the people from committing these criminal acts themselves. And, it was a terrible sight; a body impaled upon a stake and seen by all. But, the body was not to remain on the stake all night, but was to be buried that same day. After execution occurred and the body was placed on the stake, it was to be taken down and buried before sundown. Proper treatment of the corpse was important not only because Israel was a civilized society, but also because ADONAI required it. It was against His nature. Even though the criminal got

justice, ADONAI's impartial and fair justice, the executed person was still created in ADONAI's image.

Now, let's go to the 1st century. Were the Judean leaders considering these verses in *Torah* when Yeshua and the two criminals were each placed on a tree, a stake? *31 It was the Day of Preparation, and the next day was a festival Shabbat. So that the bodies should not remain on the execution stake during Shabbat, the Judean leaders asked Pilate to have the legs broken and to have the bodies taken away* (John 19:31 TLV). The Judean authorities did have the three bodies removed before sundown, but were they in compliance with the commandment in Deuteronomy 21, verses 22 & 23? Not according to what we just read in John 19:31. It says that they took the bodies down "because they didn't want them on the stake during *Shabbat*." They actually did what *Torah* commanded, but for the wrong reason.

The Romans placed their condemned on a stake in order to execute them rather than after they were dead. This very barbaric process also had the same effect as Israel's hanging on a tree, it tended to deter crime. But unfortunately, they did it for many mundane reasons and not just capital crimes. It was most frequently used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates and slaves. Rebels would think about it twice. The practice was introduced to the Romans by the Phoenicians in the 3rd century BCE and it was abolished in the 4th century. Yeshua came right in the center of this Roman practice, executing by hanging on a tree. Yeshua's ancestor David prophesied 900 years earlier: *15 "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjoined. My heart is like wax— melting within my innards. 16 My strength is dried up like a clay pot, my tongue clings to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death. 17 For dogs have surrounded me. A band of evildoers has closed in on me. They pierced my hands and my feet. 18 I can count all my bones. They stare, they gape at me. 19 They divide my clothes among them, and cast lots for my garment"* (Psalm 22:15-19 TLV). The Romans also did not usually take the bodies down the same day, sometimes leaving them for days to rot and be eaten by animals. Yeshua suffered a humiliating and painful death for our sins.

But, there is an even more important message for us regarding these two verses in Deuteronomy 21. *Sha'ul*, in writing to the Galatians, said: *13 "Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")"*— (Galatians 3:13 TLV). Deuteronomy states: *23...for anyone hanged (**on a tree**) is a curse of God* (Deuteronomy 21:23b TLV). We understand what *Torah* tells us about a person who hangs on a tree. He is cursed, and *Sha'ul* tells us that Yeshua, by hanging on a tree, took the curse for us. But, what is *Torah's* curse? The answer to that question is also found in the Book of Deuteronomy: *26 'Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.' Then all the people are to say, 'Amen.'* (Deuteronomy 27:26 TLV). And, the people of Israel did say "amen" to that statement. Israel agreed that they would be cursed if they did not uphold, that is, do, the words of this *Torah*. What they were agreeing to, was to continue in the Levitical system of Tabernacle worship under the provisions of *Torah*. But, after they said they would, they didn't. Here is an interesting Scripture: *17 The entire assembly who had returned from the captivity made sukkot and dwelt in the sukkot. Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day Bnei-Yisrael had not done so—and the joy was very great* (Nehemiah 8:17 TLV). It had been almost 800 years since Joshua's time and they had not kept *Torah* regarding Sukkot until now, about 525 BCE. The Hebrew of this verse actually says *Yeshua ben Nun*, יֵשׁוּעַ בֶּן-נוּן, indicating Yeshua is a form of *Yehoshua*, Joshua. Many times Judah and Israel failed to follow *Torah* and ADONAI punished them as He said He would. He punished them by placing a curse on them.

We usually think of curses as something evil. But, what is a curse when ADONAI places it? The answer is justice, His judgment for wrongdoing. If He places a curse, it is deserved. We can define a curse as “evil or misfortune which comes upon someone in response to something.” To be cursed according to this verse in Deuteronomy means that ADONAI would cause something to happen to an Israelite or Israelites who failed to uphold the *Torah*. The curse is that they would be separated from ADONAI. That was the “curse of *Torah*.” It applied both to individuals and to all of Israel if they left ADONAI’s sheepfold. If they were not obedient to *Torah* and did not bring the necessary sacrifices or did not accept the atonement of *Yom Kippur*, they would have been under the curse of *Torah* and both physically and spiritually separated from ADONAI. They would have been outside of “Israel,” the community of ADONAI’s people. This did not mean that they were no longer in His plan. Scripture confirms that even when Judah was defeated, the Temple destroyed and they were taken into Babylonian captivity, ADONAI continued to love them and to move toward their restoration. Our *haftarah* reading today confirms that ADONAI did divorce Israel, but took her back. 7 “For a brief moment I deserted you, but I will regather you with great compassion. 8 In a surge of anger I hid My face from you a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,” says Adonai your Redeemer (Isaiah 54:7-8 TLV). But, what many people don’t realize today is that if they have not trusted Yeshua, they are under G-d’s curse; not under His curse for evil, but because He loves them. Outside His covering, they are under the curse of eternal separation from ADONAI. There is a very simple way to reverse the curse; trust in Yeshua!

“Upholding the words of *Torah*,” as regards the curse, had to do with the relationship which Israel had with ADONAI at that time. The basis of their relationship with Him in that day was completely different than it is today. *Sha’ul* explained this to the Galatians: 12 *However, Torah is not based on trust and faithfulness; on the contrary, “the one who does these things shall live by them”* (Galatians 3:12 TLV). *Torah* was not based on faith and they had to do these things to live under ADONAI’s plan! It was His requirement. But make no mistake. Even though they had to do these things, their obedience did not bring redemption. *Sha’ul* explained, that under *Torah*, a code word for the Levitical system which was in operation during the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple, an Israelite had to continue to follow the provisions of *Torah* to remain in right relationship with ADONAI. They had to offer sacrifices for daily disobedience to *Torah* and also accept the annual spiritual sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*. Their limited atonement came for this, not from their obedience. If they did not do these things, uphold *Torah*, they received the “curse of the *Torah*” from ADONAI.

But, as you here know, *Torah* is not just laws. We understand it as “teaching or instruction,” that is, how we are to live according to the way that ADONAI desires. It was not just laws, but the way to live as ADONAI wished us to. It was ADONAI’s way, through the teaching found in the commandments and laws, of showing Israel how to remain in covenant relationship with Him. The *Torah* of Tabernacle and Temple days also included sacrifices which were necessary to keep the relationship. If an Israelite decided not to follow ADONAI’s teaching, including being obedient to His laws, he came under the curse of not following *Torah*; the curse of separation from ADONAI and being outside the community of Israel. He was then on his own in a hostile world; no longer under ADONAI’s spiritual and physical protection.

When Yeshua died on the “tree” by becoming a curse for us, He freed us from the curse of *Torah*. He took the curse for us! When He died on the stake, the cross, ADONAI changed the system. By initiating the New Covenant through Yeshua’s death, He changed the way

that Israel and individual Israelites would forever maintain a covenant relationship with Him. From Yeshua's death forward in time, it was no longer a year to year group atonement and a covering of sins based upon the Levitical High Priest's sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*. After Yeshua's death, it became the individual and personal responsibility of an Israelite to maintain the covenant relationship himself. 13 *"Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')— 14 in order that through Messiah Yeshua the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so we might receive the promise of the Ruach through trusting faith"* (Galatians 3:13-14 TLV). The individual covenant relationship with ADONAI through His New Covenant with Israel also became available to Gentiles through Yeshua's sacrifice. The blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles is that they would receive the same blessing which Abraham received, the Good News of Messiah through faith. 8 *The Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the Good News to Abraham in advance, saying, "All the nations shall be blessed through you."* 9 *So then, the faithful are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one* (Galatians 3:8-9 TLV). As a result of this, all Gentiles who have trusted Yeshua are spiritual descendants of Abraham. And, we can call him *Avraham aveinu*, Abraham our father along with his physical descendants, the Jews, even though we are not physically descended from him. And, Yeshua confirmed that Abraham had seen Him when He said to the Judean leaders: 56 *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled"* (John 8:56 TLV). What *Sha'ul* didn't say to the Galatians, because his message was specifically to them and to other Gentiles, is that trusting faith, the blessing of Abraham, also came to the Jews through Yeshua's sacrifice on the tree. According to Romans 1:16-17, it came by faith to the natural sons and daughters first, but equally to the Gentiles.

Trusting faith, the new way of being right with ADONAI, was "trusting in Yeshua's sacrificial death as payment of sin's penalty for us. But, the New Covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah, also provided a new way of following *Torah* for us. 32 *"But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people"* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). ADONAI's *Torah* has already been imprinted on our hearts, those of us who have trusted in Yeshua and will be imprinted on the hearts of all Israel "after those days" when all Israel is saved.

After Yeshua's death, the "curse of the *Torah*" was no longer in effect for Jews and Gentiles who trusted in Him and had His *Torah* written on their hearts. When ADONAI's instructions to us are written on our circumcised hearts, we should have only one response; follow them! Speaking to Jews, *Sha'ul* said: 25 *"Circumcision is indeed worthwhile if you keep the Torah; but if you break the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision"* (Romans 2:25 TLV). Circumcision is the sign of the Covenant, and *Sha'ul* chastised the Jews of the Roman congregation who were violating *Torah*. In other words, he said, "your physical circumcision, although present, doesn't represent what circumcision is meant to represent. It has become uncircumcision because it doesn't represent your true spiritual condition because you have denied *Torah* and the Covenant." Then, he goes on to say: 26 *"Therefore, if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision"* (Romans 2:26 TLV)? Even though Gentile males are not a part of the Covenant with Abraham or bear its sign, circumcision, if they keep the righteous decrees of *Torah*, they become Covenant members through their obedient circumcised hearts. *Sha'ul* spoke to males, but it is clear that this also applies to females.

Jeremiah 31:32, the New Covenant of salvation for us, is also a promise that ADONAI will write His *Torah* on the hearts of “all Israel.” It says: 32... *“I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart”* (Jeremiah 31:32b TLV). This is a reference to the coming salvation of all Israel which *Sha’ul* prophesied in Romans 11, salvation through the New Covenant. The New Covenant was put into effect by cutting the covenant with Yeshua’s body and blood. With this covenant in effect, it was no longer necessary for the people of Israel to have the Levitical High Priest sacrifice animals for them in the Temple in order to remain in relationship with ADONAI. The system changed. When Yeshua died on the stake as a sacrifice for our sins, He filled three roles, played three positions, a triple threat. ☺ Number 1, He was the blood sacrifice. His death permanently paid the sin price for our soles. But, number 2, He was also the sin. The TLV says: 21 *“He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2Corinthians 5:21 TLV). Yes, Yeshua was a sin offering for us, but I think a better understanding of *Sha’ul*’s intention in this verse is that Yeshua actually became sin for us. The Greek word *hamartia* (ham-ar-tee'-ah) means sin. Yeshua became sin by taking our sins. He had all of our sins placed on Him and became sin. Number 3, Yeshua’s third role was as the “High Priest after the order of *Malkitzedek*.” As the writer of Hebrews said: 6 *“But now Yeshua has obtained a more excellent ministry, insofar as He is the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted on better promises”* (Hebrews 8:6 TLV). This better covenant, the New Covenant, means that we are no longer under “the Curse of Torah.”

Understanding Scripture correctly helps us to understand the nature of the “Curse of Torah,” or the “Curse of the Law,” as some choose to call it. They call it “the Curse of the Law” because “law,” “*nomos*,” is the only Greek word available to represent this principle if a person’s focus is primarily upon the New Covenant Scriptures. But, it is very clear that when “the Curse of the Law” in Galatians 3 is referred to, it is in reference to Deuteronomy 27: 26 *‘Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.’ Then all the people are to say, ‘Amen.’* (Deuteronomy 27:21 TLV). But, because the Greek word is *nomos*, most Bibles today render Galatians 3:13 as “the Curse of the Law,” even though it is a reference to something written in the *Torah* in Hebrew. The Tree of Life Version correctly renders Galatians 3:13 as “the Curse of Torah,” a clear reference to Deuteronomy 27.

There is no question about it! We are no longer under “the Curse of the Torah!!” We are now under grace; the graceful gift of salvation which ADONAI gives us when we have trusting faith in His Son Yeshua’s sacrificial death. But, because we are no longer under “the Curse of the Torah,” is *Torah* no longer applicable for us? There are those who say that. They say that *Torah* is no longer applicable and that “the Law” has been done away with because we are now under grace. We have studied the Bible and we know that is not true. *Sha’ul* told us the truth. He was a man who had a personal encounter with Yeshua and received revelation directly from Him. He wrote to the congregation at Rome, a group which included both Jewish and Gentile followers of Yeshua. He said: 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). The Scriptures let us know what sin is so that we can avoid it. According to John in 1John 3:4, sin is the violation of *Torah*. In Romans, a few verses later *Sha’ul* confirmed this by saying: 28 *“For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance”* (Romans 3:28 TLV). No one can achieve righteousness before ADONAI by *Torah* observance. Our righteousness comes “apart” from *Torah* observance through trusting faith in Yeshua’s sacrifice. After saying these things, *Sha’ul* presented his conclusion: 31 *“Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah”* (Romans 3:28 TLV). What *Sha’ul* has shown us, is that even

though we are no longer under “the Curse of the Law,” which was applied under the Levitical system of dealing with sin, the *Torah*, the teaching and instruction of ADONAI in the Scriptures, has not been done away with. It is through *Torah*, its teaching and instruction, that we learn what G-d requires of us.

We, the Jews and Gentiles who follow Yeshua through Messianic Judaism, understand that the *mitzvot*, the commandments of *Torah*, have not been done away with. But, the number that we can observe today has been greatly reduced because there is no longer a Temple and a Levitical priesthood and also because those of us in the United States and other parts of the world are not physically in Israel. But, even so, there are still more than 120 different commands in the five books of Moses which we can, and believe we should, observe. That’s for us. We are not the judges of anyone else. Every person must stand before Yeshua and make their own decision. ADONAI has given us free will and we each have a G-d-given right to choose how we will follow Him. Ultimately, He is our judge and will determine whether or not our decision regarding obedience is correct.

But, there’s much more to it than that. *Torah*, teaching and instruction, as a principle of knowing ADONAI’s will for us, is found throughout not only the Hebrew Scriptures, but also the whole of Scripture; from Genesis to Revelation. This means that we must also learn from ADONAI through his *mitzvot*, His commandments, in the other parts of Scripture as well as in the five books of Moses and the rest of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. In the writings of Yeshua’s followers, the *Ketuvim Sh’lichim*, the New Covenant Scriptures, the word rendered “commandment” is found 67 times. The Greek word is *entolē* (en-tol-ay'). But, because it’s only written there 67 times, that doesn’t mean that there are only 67 commands in the writings of Yeshua’s followers. They have been counted and there are 1,050 *entolē*, 1,050 things which followers of Yeshua are instructed to do. What this means to a follower of Yeshua, is that even though we are no longer under “the Curse of the Law,” we are expected to obey the *entolē*, the commandments found in the *B’rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant Scriptures as well as those in *Torah*. To be able to do this, we must be students of the Word. *Sha’ul* taught us: 15 “*Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth*” (2Timothy 2:15 TLV).

What should our response be to Him who took the curse for us? Some want “cheap grace,” fire insurance, and continue to live the way that “they” want. What should our response be to Him who has taken the curse for us and given us the promise of eternal life and the right to rule and reign with Him for eternity? We could be here all day and night quoting Scripture to show what He requires of us and what we should do in gratitude. But, we can make it simple. We should seek to be as much like Yeshua as we can. The key words are love, forgive, serve, obey and trust. If we do our best to follow His example in each of these areas and the others shown in Scripture, we will be prepared to receive that which Yeshua taught about the most. He taught the most about ADONAI and His Kingdom. If you add it all up, that is what He taught the most. That’s where we’re going to spend the most time. Our time here on earth is but an eye blink in time. Do we really grasp the seriousness of what we’re doing? What we do on earth prepares us for His coming kingdom and eternity.

But, “The Curse of the Law” should cause no fear in us. What it is and the fact that it has no hold on us, has been fully established in our study today. We are not under Law. We are under grace. But, we are still expected to be obedient to ADONAI’s Word. The word “obedience,” when used in regard to following *Torah*, is not a negative word. “Obedience” is our proof to ADONAI that we love Yeshua. When we love ADONAI our G-d with all our heart,

mind and soul and love our neighbor as ourselves, we will also be obedient to everything else which He has asked of us. Being obedient to *Torah* is our way of showing our Messiah that we are His disciples. Because Yeshua loves us, He endured a bloody and painful sacrificial death to liberate us from *Torah's* curse! Praise Him for His amazing grace! *Shabbat shalom!*