



Parasha Metzora

April 9, 2022

Torah: Leviticus 14:1-15:33

Haftarah: 2Kings 7:3-20

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Romans 1:1-6; 16-17

Shabbat shalom mishpocha. Our *parasha* today is *Metzora*. Leviticus 14:2 says: “This is the *Torah* of the one with *tza’arat*,” the Hebrew actually says: “This is the *Torah* of *hametzora*.” They mean the same. *Hametzora*, meaning “the *metzora*,” is the name for a person with *tza’arat*, leprosy. Leviticus 15:2b says: “When any man has a fluid discharge from his body,..” “Fluid discharge” is translated from the Hebrew *zab*. We can sum up this *parasha* this way: chapter 14 deals with the physical and spiritual cleansing of *tza’arat* and chapter 15 deals with the physical and spiritual cleansing of *zabot*, emissions. We don’t have to deal with these things today as *Torah* because ADONAI has chosen to make these portions inactive. There is no Temple and no Levitical priesthood in order to carry out the requirements. But, there are lessons that we can learn from this *parasha*.

A person ritually impure from *tza’arat* was called a *tumah* (טֹמֵא) and was said to be: *tamei* (טָמֵא), ritually impure. A person with normal, ritual cleanness was called *taharah*, (טְהוֹרָה) and was said to be: *tahor* (טָהוֹר), ritually pure. We don’t have Biblical *tza’arat* today but we do have what could be called “spiritual *tza’arat*.” In Matthew 15, Yeshua referring to the question of eating with unwashed hands, said: 19 “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander. 20 These are the things that make the man unholy; but to eat with unwashed hands does not make the man unholy” (Matthew 15:19-20 TLV). The Greek word translated unholy is *koinoi* (koynoy) which comes from *koinoó* (koyno-o), meaning to make unclean, pollute or desecrate. Yeshua was referring to the ritual purity of the *Torah*. He did not say that ritual purity according to *Torah* had been done away with. In Matthew 5:17-18, He said that those words would remain in *Torah* until heaven and earth pass away. What He said was that “eating without ritual handwashing, a law added to *Torah* by the Pharisees, doesn’t make a person unclean.” But, the spiritual things, the wicked thoughts and wicked actions coming out of a person’s heart do make a person unclean! Yeshua said that evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander are the things that can make a person *koinoó*, spiritually unclean.

The title of my talk for today is “*Sha’ul* the Jew.” I chose that title to contrast with “Paul, the Christian,” the person that many in Yeshua’s body believe that he was. This is not a criticism of those who look at him in this way, but a desire for them to understand the truth, the truth which is clearly written in all of *Sha’ul*’s letters. Who was this man, *Sha’ul*?

He had an encounter with the people of Philippi (Acts 16:9-40) during his second journey. On his first *Shabbat* there, he met a woman named Lydia and witnessed to her and she and her family were all immersed. She invited *Sha’ul* and *Sila*, Silas, to stay at her house. A congregation formed in that city sometime after *Sha’ul* left. He really did not know the people, never having visited the actual congregation. Writing to them years later, he offered

this resume about himself: 5 .. “circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel; from the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the Torah, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting Messiah’s community; as for Torah righteousness, found blameless.” (Philippians 3:5-6 TLV). He said this, his resume’ of things in the flesh, after first giving his spiritual resume’, his testimony of faith in Yeshua, in verses 3 and 4. If he had known Marty Goetz’s song “A Jew Born Anew,” it would have been his testimony and he would have sung “Yes, through and through, I’m a Jew born anew.” Both of his resume’s were important. He had faith in Yeshua and worshipped in the Spirit, but also used his physical attributes to worship and serve ADONAI.

By saying that he was circumcised on the eighth day, he identified himself as a descendant of Abraham. When he had his *b’rit milah*, he was given the Hebrew name *Sha’ul*, but he also received a name in the vernacular of his residence. He was born in a Roman city in the Roman Empire and his secular name was the Latin, *Paulus*, shortened to Paul. He also identified himself as being of Israel, that’s what it actually says in the Greek, *Isra’el*, the descendants of Isaac’s son Jacob. He narrowed his identity down even further by saying that he was from the tribe of Benjamin, the tribe which remained in the alliance with the Tribe of Judah when the kingdom split after Solomon’s son became king. Then he said that he was “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” No one is certain of what *Sha’ul* meant by this. My thought is that he was expressing his zealousness as a Jew. With regard to the *Torah*, he was a Pharisee. In other words, he viewed the *Torah* as the Pharisees did. A point that is often missed here is that “he didn’t believe that *Torah* righteousness could save you,” and that was also the view of the Pharisees. Non-Messianic Pharisees believed that their atonement was in being a part of the Nation of Israel (according to them, Gentiles who became Jewish proselytes were saved; would be a part of the resurrection) even though they emphasized *Torah* and the traditions. Another belief of the Pharisees was the resurrection of the dead and in angels, something which the Sadducees, the priestly sect, did not believe. *Sha’ul’s* zeal for the *Torah* was shown by his fervor in persecuting the Messianic community, which at the time of the persecution, he believed were violating *Torah*. Finally, with regard to *Torah* righteousness, he said that he was blameless. I don’t believe that he meant that he did not sin. He is the one who taught us that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of G-d.” His intention was to follow *Torah* and he was blameless because he repented of his sins. *Sha’ul’s* spiritual resume’ was that he was a follower of Yeshua who worshipped in the Spirit. His physical resume’ identified him as an Israelite who upheld *Torah*.

He told the Philippians that he was an Israelite from the tribe of Benjamin, but speaking to the men of Jerusalem, he said: 39 “I am a Jewish man from Tarsus in Cilicia,..” (Acts 21:39b TLV). Why did he do that? Actually, they both mean the same. The Greek here is *Ioudaios* (ee-oo-dah'-yos) meaning “Jewish, a Jew or Judea.” He was an Israelite, but even though he was from the Tribe of Benjamin, he was also a Jew, the term used to refer to those remaining from the earlier southern kingdom of Judah. The Hebrew is *Yehudi*. In this sense, all Israelites of that era were Jews and it remains that way today. So, *Sha’ul* was a Jew. No question about it! He was not being untruthful to either group. In Jerusalem when a mob was threatening him, he was saying, “hey guys, I’m a Jew, a homie. I’m one of you.”

But, can he be made into a Christian in order to support Christian views? I don’t believe so. When *Sha’ul* said “I am a Jew,” he was declaring who he was theologically. That’s what his encounter with the crowd in Jerusalem was all about. The rumor had started that he had brought Gentiles into the Temple because he had been seen in Jerusalem with a Gentile earlier. His statement “I am a Jew” was to counter this and also the earlier accusation

that “he was teaching the Jews living in Gentile lands not to follow *Torah*, not to circumcise their children, or to follow the customs (Acts 21:21). It was because of this accusation that he paid for the sacrifices for three men and himself to undergo a *nazirite* vow in the Temple, something they were in the process of doing when he was taken into custody. He said, “I am a Jew. I have not done these things. I follow *Torah*. I encourage the *b’rit milah* for Jewish children and I observe the customs of the Jewish people.” Understanding that *Sha’ul* actually said this, how can people believe that Paul taught against *Torah*? Some do not know the truth and some disregard Scriptural truth in order to uphold their belief, their theology.

The only truth which we can verify as actual truth is that which is found in Scripture, Genesis to Revelation. Its truth can be twisted, but there is an actual, correct understanding of everything in the Bible. That is our goal. We don’t have all truth, but it is our goal. Truth cannot be verified as truth from any other source whether it be the *Talmud*, the Apocrypha, the Book of Enoch, any apocryphal gospel or any tradition of men. We agree with the statement, *sola scriptura*, a Christian position deriving from the Protestant Reformation. It is Latin meaning, “by scripture alone” and refers to the derivation of our doctrine and practice. *Sola* means “alone” and there are five doctrinal *solas* which came out of the Protestant Reformation. They are: (1) that Christians are saved by grace alone, (2) through faith alone, (3) in Christ alone, (4) as revealed by Scripture alone, and (5) to the glory of God alone. We agree completely with all five. These words are from *Beit Shalom’s* Statement of Belief: “Faith or trust in Yeshua as Messiah brings righteousness with G-d based solely on grace through faith.” Our belief is in agreement with *solas* 1, 2 and 3: “saved by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone. Regarding *sola* 4, “as revealed by Scripture alone,” our Statement of Belief says: “The Holy Scriptures as originally written are divinely inspired and without error. Consisting of the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible, which consists of the *Torah*, the Prophets, and the Writings) and the *Ketuvim Notzrim* (the Writings of the Followers of The Branch), the Scriptures are our final authority in all matters of faith and practice.” Not only do we state that, but we believe it and do our best to follow it.

We do observe a number of Jewish traditions in our services and in our personal spiritual walk, but only traditions which have their basis in the Scripture are observed as binding. We can learn from the Talmud and the ancient Jewish writings, but they are not our authority. Only the holy Scriptures are. The truth is that many within Yeshua’s body say “*sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone,” but do not follow it.

When Paul is looked upon as a Christian, many times his words are twisted to support an *antinomian* view of the Scriptures. *Antinomian* is a Greek word meaning “against law” and the usual Christian definition is: “one who holds that under the gospel dispensation of grace the moral law is of no use or obligation because faith alone is necessary to salvation.” But, the Bible itself is not antinomian. Yes, Paul does believe that faith alone is necessary for salvation, but he does not believe that the “Moral Law, “the *Torah*,” is of no use. And neither do we at *Beit Shalom*. Our Statement of Belief continues: “Faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to G-d’s *Torah* commandments are not mutually exclusive. Both are expected as our reasonable faith and practice as new creations in Messiah. As such, we observe and celebrate the Biblical Shabbat (Sabbath, the seventh day of the week), Holy Days, and Feasts of ADONAI, which He gave to Israel with their fulfillment in and through Messiah Yeshua. Biblical Judaism, the faith of the first-century followers of Yeshua, is our goal.” I believe that *Sha’ul*, Paul, also believed what was just stated and we will show it by examining some of his statements from the Book of Romans.

He begins in chapter 1 with this: *16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 In it the righteousness of God is revealed, from trust to trust. As it is written, “But the righteous shall live by emunah.”* (Romans 1:16-17 TLV). From “faith to faith” if you prefer. *Emunah* means faith or trust. This agrees with *solas* 1, 2 and 3, “saved by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone.” Although these verses don’t mention Yeshua by name, the preceding 15 verses of Romans 1 are all about Him and it is clear that *Sha’ul* means that “the righteous will live by faith in Yeshua.”

He continues: *12 For all who have sinned outside of Torah will also perish outside of Torah, and all who have sinned according to Torah will be judged by Torah.* (Romans 2:12 TLV). The congregation at Rome was not established by *Sha’ul* and its origin is unknown. One view is that it was founded by believers who returned to Rome after the *Shavuot*, the Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2. Some of *Sha’ul*’s statements in his letter to the Romans seem to indicate that the congregation was made up of believing Jews, believing Gentiles and also Jewish and Gentile seekers of Messiah. He may have gotten this information from Priscilla and Aquila, believing Jews who were forced to leave Rome during the reign of the Emperor Claudius. What this verse means for followers of Yeshua is that if you know *Torah*, you will be judged by *Torah*. But, how can *Torah* judge us if our salvation is by faith alone?

Let’s look further. *13 For it is not the hearers of Torah who are righteous before God; rather, it is the doers of Torah who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, do by nature the things of the Torah, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the Torah.* (Romans 2:13-14 TLV). How can the “doers of *Torah* be justified,” declared righteous, when *Sha’ul* said in chapter 1, “But the righteous shall live by *emunah*” faith. The answer is that they are “justified” because they have already trusted in Yeshua by faith, but are also called to be “doers of *Torah*” after salvation. We cannot ignore the context. Everything thus far is about those saved by faith – believers! This was also true for the Gentiles that *Sha’ul* was referring to. He meant those Gentiles who had trusted Yeshua and were following *Torah*, but had not converted to Judaism. Within the traditional Judaism of the day, these Gentiles were referred to as “proselytes at the gate,” “G-d fearers.” *Sha’ul* didn’t call them that, he called them Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua.

Our question is: how can doers of *Torah*, those who do their best to do what *Torah* says, be justified? The next two verses clarify this: *15 They show that the work of the Torah is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts switching between accusing or defending them 16 on the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:15-16 TLV). Regarding Romans 2:15, Believers saved by grace alone as in *solas* 1, 2 and 3, show their faith by the work of *Torah* written in their hearts, that is, obeying, being doers, of the *Torah*. Regarding the New Covenant, ADONAI said: *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). It is my firm belief that when we truly trust in Yeshua, that His *Torah*, His teaching and instruction found in Genesis through Revelation, is written on our hearts. Many who have trusted Him may not know that it is there, but His commands are! Then, verse 16 tells us that this judgment is of believers. Again, context. *Sha’ul*’s talking about believers. *16 ...on the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:16 TLV). *Sha’ul* spoke about this same thing to the congregation at Corinth: *10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one*

may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad. (2Corinthians 5:10 TLV). He also spoke of this in Romans 14:10-12. *Sha’ul* was talking about believers. As followers of Yeshua, we will one day stand before him to account for what we have done, both good and bad and will be judged by the *Torah*. This aligns with our Statement of Belief which says: “Faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to G-d’s *Torah* commandments are not mutually exclusive. Both are expected as our reasonable faith and practice as new creations in Messiah.” This means that we are saved by faith through G-d’s grace, but as *talmidim*, disciples of Yeshua, we are expected to follow in His footsteps, walking faithfully, as He did, to the best of our ability.

Continuing to teach about *Torah* observance and speaking specifically to the Jews at Rome, *Sha’ul* said: *17 But if you call yourself Jewish and rely upon the Torah and boast in God 18 and know His will and determine what matters because you are instructed from the Torah—* (Romans 2:17-18 TLV). *Sha’ul* was not speaking to Gentiles. The Greek really means “if you are called a Jew,” that is, if you are a Jew, and not some Gentile calling himself a Jew. He goes on to say that if this Jew violates *Torah* by stealing, committing adultery and so forth, their circumcision, that sign in their flesh which makes them a Jew (that is for males), has become uncircumcision. *Sha’ul* continues by saying: *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). If this person, a Jew by birth, does not purpose in his heart to keep the *Torah*, he (or she) is no longer spiritually a Jew. *Sha’ul* is not speaking about their failure in just one point of *Torah*, but their general approach to *Torah* and repenting when they fail. Why? *28 For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. 29 Rather, the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29 TLV). Also, see Deuteronomy 30:6. A Jew in ADONAI’s sight, a *Yehudi*, a praiser of ADONAI, is a Jew who has a circumcised heart. According to *Sha’ul*’s statement, ethnic Jews, Jews in the flesh, are not Jews according to ADONAI unless they have circumcised hearts. And, He is the judge of that.

But, this also applies to Gentiles. *26 Therefore, if the uncircumcised keeps the righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?* (Romans 2:26 TLV). The Gentile who is a follower of Yeshua who keeps the righteous decrees of the *Torah* will have his uncircumcision counted as circumcision. This does not make believing Gentiles into Jews. They are still Gentiles, but righteous before ADONAI because of their circumcised hearts. *Sha’ul*’s words about circumcised hearts are about the righteous decrees of the *Torah*. That’s what determines if a Jew or a Gentile has a circumcised heart. Those who keep the righteous decrees of the *Torah* have circumcised hearts in ADONAI’s eyes. But, this has nothing to do with salvation. Salvation is by faith through ADONAI’s grace and trusting in the sacrificial death of Yeshua and nothing else. But, after coming to faith in Yeshua, the choice is ours. We can be doers of *Torah* or non-doers of *Torah*. And, Yeshua will be our judge.

Romans 3: *1 Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God.* (Romans 3:1-2 TLV). There is a great advantage in being Jewish, but everyone isn’t. So, let those of us who aren’t give honor where it is due. ADONAI chose the Jews to be His priests to the nations and in doing so, entrusted them with the “sayings of G-d,” the Scriptures. *Sha’ul*, a trained *Torah* scholar, has the qualifications of *Torah* education which allow him to speak authoritatively regarding *Torah*. Speaking to the crowd after his arrest in Jerusalem,

Sha'ul said: 3 “I am a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, trained strictly according to the Torah of our fathers, being zealous for God just as all of you are today.” (Acts 22:3 TLV). Gamaliel, *Gamli'el* in Hebrew, the son of the great rabbi of a century before, Hillel, was the foremost *Torah* scholar in *Sha'ul's* day. Second to *Yeshua*, *Torah* was *Sha'ul's* life.

Sha'ul now returns to the subject of the only way of salvation: 21 *But now God's righteousness apart from the Torah has been revealed, to which the Torah and the Prophets bear witness—* 22 *namely, the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah Yeshua, to all who keep on trusting. For there is no distinction,* 23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* 24 *They are set right as a gift of His grace, through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 3:21-24 TLV). Trusting in *Yeshua* is G-d's righteousness apart from the *Torah*. The *Torah* can't save anyone. We have all sinned and can only obtain righteousness by trusting in *Yeshua*. This again, is agreement with *solas* 1, 2, and 3 and we wholeheartedly agree with them; salvation is only by faith through grace. *Sha'ul* concludes this discussion by stating it again: 28 *For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance.* (Romans 3:28 TLV). Although *Torah* observance has no power to bring righteousness, *Sha'ul* encourages us, *Yeshua's* followers, to be “doers of *Torah*, because they will be justified.

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 3:29-31 TLV). G-d will make righteous both Jew and Gentile by faith. But, that does not nullify the *Torah* and its purpose. As we have seen, we are to be doers of the *Torah* and that provides us with circumcised hearts.

What we do after we trust in *Yeshua* is important. When we stand before Him, we will be judged by how we have served Him after we trusted in Him. Regarding *Torah*, *Sha'ul* said: “On the contrary, we uphold *Torah*.” Regarding himself, he had said to the Philippians: “*in regard to the Torah, a Pharisee.*” *Sha'ul* had excellent credentials, having been trained by the great *Torah* scholar *Gamli'el*. When he was imprisoned in Caesarea, he said before the *Kohen Gadol* of Israel and the Roman Governor Felix: 14 “*But this I confess to you, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets.*” (Acts 24:14 TLV). Still in prison in Caesarea two years later, *Sha'ul* said to the new Roman Governor Festus: 8... “*I have committed no offense against the Torah of the Jewish people, or against the Temple, or against Caesar.*” (Acts 25:8b TLV). The outcome of examining the first three chapters of Romans plus some other statements made by *Sha'ul* is that he never spoke against following *Torah*. We will find even more evidence for this as we continue to study his writings. It doesn't matter which version of the Bible we use because we can verify everything by examining the underlying Greek. The TLV just makes it easier for those of us who are accustomed to a more Hebraic understanding, but we can show the same with any standard Bible version.

My desire is that all followers of *Yeshua* would critically examine the Scriptures and then draw their own conclusions. I pray specifically that they would not only accept the understanding that Jews wrote the Scriptures (under ADONAI's inspiration) and that in order to understand them, we must read them through Jewish eyes, that is, seeking to understand the various Jewish nuances and idioms that are present throughout the whole Bible. We are not judging others regarding what they believe. *Yeshua* has given His followers the right to

make rulings regarding how they will interpret Scripture. Yeshua said to His disciples: 19 “Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19b TLV). See our recent messages for a more complete description of this subject. But, essentially, forbid and permit, or bind and loose, are rabbinic terms which have to do with doctrinal issues. Those in leadership in Yeshua’s body have His authority to make these decisions for their flock. We do not judge the doctrinal position of others. He is the sole judge. Realizing that we will be held accountable for our decisions, we believe that it is imperative that we not only seek the truth, but teach what we believe to be the truth to the best of ability to discover it. We can’t depend upon what someone else says or what the majority says. The majority is not always right, just always larger.

Sha’ul didn’t seek to form a new religion as some say. Nor was he antinomian. He believed in the principles behind the five *solas*. He believed in the concept that (1) that Christians are saved by grace alone, (2) through faith alone and (3) in Christ alone. He made that very clear in Romans 1, 2 and 3. He also definitely believed in (4) as revealed by Scripture alone, and only supported his conclusions by Scripture from the Hebrew *Tanakh* and the Greek Septuagint, the only Scripture at the time of his writing. *Sha’ul* most certainly would have agreed with *sola* 5 which says (5) to the glory of God alone, that is, that our doctrines are based only upon Scripture to the glory of G-d.

Sha’ul has made it clear to us that salvation is by faith through grace alone, but that obedience is also required. He said: “do not be hearers of *Torah* only.” And most importantly, he exhorts us: “be doers of *Torah*!” *Shabbat shalom!*