



Parasha Bereshit

October 26, 2024

Torah: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8

Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5 - 43:10

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha specific messages

Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 8:31-39

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 1

Shabbat Shalom mishpacha. Today, as we restart our *Torah* cycle with *Bereshit*, “In the beginning,” we are beginning a new message series entitled “Disciples of Yeshua.” It will be open-ended, taking as long as necessary to cover the major points of our faith. As we begin, we must define Messianic Judaism, a modern phenomenon that reappeared after 2000 years of dormancy. I believe our Judaism is the Judaism of Yeshua and His Jewish and Gentile disciples of the 1st century. Interestingly, it reformed at the same time Yeshua’s prophecy about Jerusalem was being fulfilled and the Messianic faith of Yeshua’s early disciples was once again in synagogues. After 2000 years (1967, Luke 21:24), Jerusalem was no longer under Gentile control. In my mind, it is the Judaism of Yeshua and His early Jewish and Gentile disciples of the 1st century. After the 1st century, some of His Gentile followers began to change essential components of the faith. Our belief system is essentially the Judaism of Yeshua and His early disciples, but now without the Temple. This directly relates to our understanding that “the *Torah*,” meaning “teaching and instruction, is our prime directive. Simply put, we are to obey the *Torah's* commands wherever they are found in the Bible. The Bible clearly states that and has no bias against *Torah* obedience. While Genesis through Deuteronomy is *Torah* in its initial form, *Torah* is now found throughout the canonized Christian Bible, Genesis through Revelation. Yeshua’s disciples faithfully obeyed the *Torah* of Moses as it related to the Temple as long as it stood, but not the whole *Torah* after it was destroyed. That was for two reasons: there was no Temple or priesthood to enable certain commands, and they now had a new High Priest, Yeshua. Even though He became High Priest following His death on the cross, Yeshua’s disciples continued to attend the Temple and, in one case, even paid for sacrifices to be offered. (*Sha’ul*; Acts 21:24). In the year 70, the Temple was destroyed, and the priesthood was dispersed. Today, we are to obey the *Torah* commands from Genesis through Deuteronomy that do not depend on the Temple or Levitical priesthood just as readily as we obey the commands of Yeshua Himself. This is because Yeshua said 18 “Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the *Torah* until all things come to pass.” (Matthew 5:18 TLV). While all of the commands of the *Torah* and Prophets are still in the book, some can’t be carried out today. Yet, we obey ADONAI’s commands, which can be obeyed without the requirement of the Temple or the Levitical priesthood. Yeshua obeyed all of them, and He is our perfect example. He did not fulfill them to eliminate His followers need to obey, as some have said. Some years ago, a movement among Jesus’s followers used the slogan WWJD meaning, “What would Jesus do?” Not all of the necessary questions were asked of Him. No

one asked if He would eat a pork chop or shellfish or about the Sabbath. A better campaign slogan would be WWYD; “What would Yeshua do?” We know the answer. He would eat kosher and keep the seventh day Sabbath. He has never changed; ADONAI says “I change not!” (Malachi 3:6).

To whom is our study directed? It is to those already in Messianic Judaism and to those whom ADONAI is calling to Messianic Judaism. While we welcome interactions with our brothers and sisters in the Church, we are not called to engage with them other than on things we already agree on. If they ask questions, we can answer, but our instruction is only directed to those who choose to come to us. Our congregation is but a tiny part of Messianic Judaism, itself a small part of Yeshua’s wider Body, His Ecclesia, His community of followers. As Messianic followers of Yeshua, we firmly believe our teachings reflect true Biblical faith, but we have not been called to teach them to the Church. Why? As you will see in a moment, the Church must determine its own teachings. However, we do believe Messianic Judaism is called to teach those within Rabbinic Judaism and is a significant purpose of our re-establishment as a Movement after two thousand years. I humbly point out that Messianic Judaism is “the elder brother,” having been born more than forty years before Rabbinic Judaism. As the elder brother, we continue to care for and reach out to our brothers and sisters in the other Judaisms. We hope and pray that they will come to know their *Goel Yisra’el*, their Kinsman Redeemer, Yeshua, and the understanding that the *Torah* still requires blood (Leviticus 17:11) to cover sin. Today, Yeshua’s blood is the only blood that ADONAI approves.

What is Messianic Judaism? Simply, it is the branch of Judaism under the rulership of King Yeshua, our Messiah. This faith began with Yeshua’s disciples in the 1st century and has continued through the centuries with the believers who followed them. It began when Yeshua first called His disciples. During His time with His disciples and the first eight or ten years after His death on the cross, the Messianic group was composed of only Jews, born Jews, and Gentile proselytes. Yeshua’s movement continued under Jewish leadership until the early 2nd century when Gentiles began to outnumber Jews and took over the leadership.

We look slightly differently at the name of the Messianic Scriptures, which the Church calls “the New Testament” or “the New Covenant.” We do not argue with that but prefer in our congregation to call these writings *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua’s *Shlichim*, His Apostles. When we speak of the *B’rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant, we mean the actual covenant cut by Yeshua on the cross, ADONAI’s active redemptive covenant today. *Sha’ul*, Paul, wrote a major portion of the *Ketuvim Shlichim* and is a primary source of information for our congregational faith. In Messianic Judaism, we call him by his Hebrew name. All Jews, both then and now, have two names, one in Hebrew and one in the language of the nation where they live. While his Hebrew name *Sha’ul* was given to him at his *B’rit Milah* (his circumcision) at eight days of age, as a Roman citizen, he was also given the Latin name, Paulus.

He wrote: *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.* (Romans 1:16 TLV). The Good News, *Besurat HaGuelah*, is more completely described as *Besurat HaGeulah HaMalchut shel Yeshua HaMashiach*, the Good News of the Kingdom of Yeshua the Messiah. It’s not just about getting saved, but that is an essential first step. It’s also about becoming a part of His Kingdom and our relationship with eternity. *Mashiach* means “anointed.” Yeshua is our anointed Savior and King. The Good News, the Gospel, is about Yeshua’s

Kingdom, both in heaven and on earth. This verse means that the Good News part of it, the truth that Yeshua is G-d's only begotten Son who is the only way to eternal life, was given first to G-d's chosen people, the Jews. It is given equally to the Gentiles but through the Jews. Speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Yeshua said: 22 *"You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."* (John 4:22 TLV). But the Good News is much more than salvation. It is the revelation of the total and complete gift of G-d, both here on earth, in heaven, and ultimately, in the world to come on the new earth, where we will reign with our Messiah Yeshua for eternity.

But why is the Good News to the Jew first? It's because in the progression of the spiritual events of the 1st century, the Jews were the first ones saved. We hear Yeshua's words regarding worship: 24 *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:22 TLV). Yes, of course, but we also worship ADONAI in physical ways. We worship Him as covenant members responsible for covenant loyalty, through obedience to the *Torah*, through our praise and worship and also the good works we do in the world. But that is only a part of how we worship Him. Because G-d is Spirit, our basis of relationship with Him must be spirit to spirit, G-d's *Ruach*, His Spirit, to man's spirit. This spiritual relationship can only come through a relationship with His Son, Yeshua. Once that relationship is established and His Spirit dwells in us, we worship ADONAI through understanding the truth of His Word, the *Torah*, which is revealed in the Bible from Genesis in the *Torah* of Moses through the Revelation of *Yochanan*, John. *Torah* means "teaching and instruction" and teaches us how flesh and blood can serve a holy, supernatural G-d. Every book of the Bible is anointed truth written by Jewish authors inspired by ADONAI.

Why to the Jew first? There are more reasons. To begin with, the Jews are a "chosen people," chosen by ADONAI to be His instrument for revealing Himself to the Nations. Messiah Yeshua is a Jew, not was, but is a Jew. He had to be a Jew and, second, a descendant of King David to be the *Goel*, the Kinsman Redeemer. It was to His kinsmen that Yeshua first revealed the Gospel. *Sha'ul* asks the question: 1 *Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?* (Romans 3:1 TLV). The phrases in this verse are examples of Jewish parallelism; both statements mean the same. The "advantage of being Jewish" is parallel to "the benefit of those who are called "the circumcision," the Jews. What is the advantage? *Sha'ul* answers: 2 *Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God.* (Romans 3:2 TLV). A Jewish author wrote every Bible book except the two written by Luke. Luke was a Gentile but most likely also a proselyte, and there is no question that he wrote with Jewish understanding. *Sha'ul* continued regarding the advantage of being Jewish: 4 *... To them belong the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Torah and the Temple service and the promises.* 5 *To them belong the patriarchs—and from them, according to the flesh, the Messiah, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen.* (Romans 9:4b-5 TLV). The Jews are a special group in G-d's eyes, and because they are, they have suffered much persecution throughout the centuries. But, even though ADONAI chose none of the other people groups of the earth, He loves every person He created equally and has provided a way for everyone to become covenant members of the same covenant that He made with Israel in the flesh, the Jews. It was through His choosing them to be "priests to the nations" (Exodus 19:5) that His eternal plan is revealed, that "the seed of Abraham," (Genesis 22:18) Yeshua, would bless the nations.

5 *"Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine."* (Exodus 19:5 TLV). Some might say that Exodus 19:5 was not fulfilled because Israel was not faithful. But I believe

that they were and it has been fulfilled through the centuries. There has always been a faithful remnant, even during the time that Israel was being punished for idolatry and deported to Babylon. ADONAI said: 2 ... “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. 3 Again I will build you, so you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel!” (Jeremiah 31:2b-3a TLV). Even though Israel had just whored with false gods, ADONAI called them “virgin,” an expression of His love for them. Later in this same chapter, ADONAI revealed through Jeremiah that He would make a new covenant with Israel (31:30) because they broke the one He made with them at Sinai. (31:31). The New Covenant cut with Yeshua’s blood is today’s active covenant. It is our Jewish brothers and sisters who have trusted in Yeshua and over the years obeyed the *Torah*, who are keeping the covenant today and upholding Exodus 19:5. There remains a righteous remnant of *Torah*-faithful Jews today, Jews who worship ADONAI through His New Covenant.

What is it that *Torah*-faithful Jewish followers of Yeshua do that identifies them as upholding the covenant? *Torah* is about obeying ADONAI’s commands, which He said through Jeremiah that He would write on the hearts of those in covenant with Him. (31:32). Yeshua’s Jewish followers obey His lawful commands to the best of their ability and repent, asking for forgiveness when they fail. And that includes the Gentile members of the New Covenant like me and many of you, the thousands who have been called to stand alongside Yeshua’s Jewish covenant members as a part of Messianic Judaism.

How do we know when we fail in our covenant-keeping? Yeshua’s disciple *Yochanan*, tells us: 4 *Everyone practicing sin also practices lawlessness—indeed, sin is lawlessness.* (1 John 3:4 TLV). Interestingly, the Hebrew equivalent of *anomia* (an-o-mee-ah), the Greek word for lawlessness, is *chamas*, a word similar to the Arabic word used by Israel’s modern enemies, *Hamas*, meaning “zeal.” Used frequently to mean “violence,” *chamas* also means “lawlessness.” *Strong’s Online Concordance* states that *chamas* means “to treat violently or (to) wrong.” I believe that John meant that sin is doing violence to ADONAI’s laws, disobeying them, which the Complete Jewish Bible unequivocally states: 4 *Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah — indeed, sin is violation of Torah.* (1 John 3:4 CJB). By understanding that *Torah* means “teaching and instruction” how to live according to ADONAI’s laws, logically, violating them would be sin and require repentance. What about people who claim to know Yeshua but continue to sin without repentance? Again, *Yochanan* has the answer: 9 *No one born of God practices sin, because God’s seed remains in him. He cannot sin, because he is born of God.* (1 John 3:9 TLV). Practices is the key word, the unrepentant continuation of sin. Many people say that they have trusted in Yeshua, but the reality is that they are not in covenant with Him, as evidenced by their continued sinning and lack of repentance or remorse for their deeds.

How do we know what are ADONAI’s laws? We must first know where to find them to understand what they are. We know that the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, are the primary law-giving parts of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, and while not primarily law-giving, the *Nevi’im* and *Ketuvim*, the Prophets and Writings, do contain some laws. Jewish and Christian authorities have canonized the *Tanakh*, and we begin with it as the initial source of ADONAI’s laws. For followers of Yeshua, the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of His disciples, the Books of Matthew through Revelation, have been canonized and contain laws. These we consider authoritative for us.

How many laws are there? In the 3rd century, *Rabbi Simlai* said that there were 613 commands in the *Torah*, and that idea was built upon in the 12th century by *Rabbi*

Maimonides. This continues to be the belief within Rabbinic Judaism today. While that seems very many laws to keep up with, the number of laws in the writings of Yeshua's followers is even greater. Someone has counted, and there are 1,050. Are we held accountable for violating these laws? My opinion is yes. Concerning the laws in the five books of Moses, there are not 613 laws that can be kept today, and ADONAI does not hold us responsible for laws we cannot keep. We cannot keep all 613 because many require the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood to be carried out. Since we have neither, approximately two-thirds of the 613 are still on the books, so to speak, but are inactive. Why are they inactive today? We know that ADONAI caused the First Temple to be destroyed, but what about the Second Temple? ADONAI used the Babylonians to punish Israel the first time, which we can verify in Scripture. But did He use the Romans to punish Israel a second time? We can only speculate since there is no Scripture to verify it, but the reality is that there is no Temple and Levitical Priesthood today. If those elements were necessary for worship today under the New Covenant, would not ADONAI have restored them? The truth is that ADONAI has made a New Covenant with Israel, a covenant with a new High Priest, Yeshua, and under this covenant, He does not require us to consider those laws which formerly operated under a different priesthood. What about the 1,050 laws of the *Ketuvim Shlichim*? We are responsible for them, but that does not mean we must search out each one and meticulously keep track of each. It has to do with our circumcised hearts and how we desire to follow Yeshua. If we desire to follow Yeshua and the *mitzvot*, the laws of the *Torah* that we can obey, we will also wish to obey everything that Yeshua and His disciples commanded in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. It's a general heart attitude. If our hearts are turned to obedience, we will have repentant hearts and seek daily forgiveness for our shortcomings. We also have the Holy Spirit living within us, and ADONAI will impress upon our open hearts the areas in which we fail. We know that we will ultimately have to stand before Yeshua and be judged for everything we have done in our lifetime, good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10). If we understand that we are responsible for obedience and that disobedience is sin, we will strive to live holy lives, set apart to serve ADONAI and His Son Yeshua faithfully. Even after trusting in Yeshua, we are sinners and sin often. But we remain righteous through *teshuvah*, repentance, and asking for and receiving *selichah*, forgiveness. It's not about legalism but about obedience to the Holy Spirit. *Sha'ul* wrote: *6 He also made us competent as servants of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Ruach. For the letter kills, but the Ruach gives life.* (2 Corinthians 3:6 TLV). Keeping laws never saved anyone, and *Sha'ul* did not believe his salvation depended on law-keeping before he met Yeshua on the road to Damascus. Before Yeshua's sacrifice, law-keeping was a matter of covenant responsibility, but forgiveness and atonement came through repentance and the sacrificial system. Now, with Yeshua, law-keeping remains our covenant responsibility, but we are justified by our trust in His sacrifice for us. This is a most essential point, one which is misunderstood by many.

ADONAI wants us to have a relationship with others who are a part of His Commonwealth of Israel. We should love and seek the best for all who are part of it and have personal relationships beyond our individual group. All Jews are a part of the Commonwealth of Israel through their covenant ADONAI made with Abraham. Through this covenant, they are the inheritors of the physical Land of Israel. Some Jews are covenant members of ADONAI's New Covenant, but most are not. Even so, we have love for them and a loyalty to them, recognizing them as our neighbor commanded by ADONAI to be loved (Leviticus 19:17-18, and we pray for them regularly). Within Yeshua's Body and between His followers, we are called to have an even greater love for each other. Yeshua gave us a "new commandment" to love fellow believers in the way He loves us. (John 13:34-35).

As Messianic Jewish followers of Yeshua, what is the extent of our relationship with Jesus's followers in the Church? Of course, it is to love each other but also to have fellowship with each other and recognize each other as called and committed to the service of the Messiah. Despite our differing interpretations of Scripture, we should respect one another's sincere commitment to understanding ADONAI's Word. Yeshua specifically addressed this question of differing views. When He asked His disciples, "Who do the people say the Son of Man is," they gave several answers. His more pointed question was, "Who do you say I am?" *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter, answered: 16 ..., "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16b TLV). Yeshua blessed him because of his answer and said, 19 "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 16:19a TLV). We understand that Yeshua didn't just give these keys to Peter but to him as being representative of leaders then and now within Yeshua's Ecclesia. The Kingdom of Heaven is Yeshua's movement, everything He does on heaven and earth. What are the keys to it that He has given us? The keys are authority, authority to make binding decisions for those in our leadership's charge. Yeshua said: 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 16:16b TLV). His words have been largely misunderstood. They are not magic phrases to deliver healing or to command demons. They are legal terms used by Jewish rabbis a generation before Yeshua. His disciples understood what He meant. They knew about *Rabbi Hillel* and *Rabbi Shammai* and their interactions. The Greek words *deo* and *luo*, meaning forbid (or bind) and permit (or loose), represent the Hebrew *asar* and *hitir*, words used to render *halakhic* rulings. To understand what Yeshua meant, we must understand to what He was referring. Then and now, rabbis make rulings for their followers. The whole of it is called *halakha*, the collective authoritative renderings for their group. Derived from *halakh*, meaning walk, *halakha* determines what their followers can or cannot do, essentially, "their spiritual walk," the way Scripture is interpreted. *Shammai* would sometimes "bind," while *Hillel* would "loose," and *Hillel* would sometimes "bind," and *Shammai* would "loose." The result was that their followers would obey according to their ruling. This system continued even after their deaths with *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, the houses of *Hillel* and *Shammai*, the organizations of their followers of succeeding generations. Yeshua's disciples understood what He meant by binding and loosing. They understood that it meant they could interpret Scripture and make *halakhic* decisions for Yeshua's followers, which continues that way today. As an ordained congregational leader, I have Yeshua's authority to bind or loose for those in my charge, but not to bind or loose for those in someone else's charge. And we generally see it as a larger picture, with Messianic *halakha* and Christian *halakha*. The end result is that each of us who issue rulings, interpretations, and ways to understand Scripture must stand before Yeshua at the judgment. The meaning of Yeshua's words about binding and loosing, is that we have His authority to interpret *Torah* and teach our congregation, but not to exercise authority over someone else's.

The purpose of our journey of understanding is to grow spiritually as disciples of Yeshua. ADONAI made this statement several times: 2 "*Speak to all the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: You shall be kedoshim, for I, Adonai your God, am holy.*" (Leviticus 19:2 TLV). Because we serve a holy G-d, we must be *kedoshim*, holy ones. That is our goal. Yeshua said: 15 "*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*" (John 14:15 TLV). We say we love Him, but the proof of our love is in our obedience. His commands and ADONAI's commands are the same. Saying that followers of Yeshua are sinners is reality. Each of us sins, but our goal is to sin less and less, becoming more like Yeshua, what theologians call the process of sanctification. While we cannot reach the perfection of our Messiah, we can and should

strive to be more and more like Him daily. When we do this, we also fulfill ADONAI's command to "be holy." We continue next week. *Shabbat shalom!*