



Parasha Vayechi

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Torah: Genesis 47:28-50:26

Haftarah: 1Kings 2:1-12

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha specific messages

Ketuvim Shlichim: Matthew 5:17-26

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 11

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Last *Shabbat*, our message focus was *Chanukkah*. Today, we are returning to our previous subject, the Sermon on the Mount. Yeshua's words, 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), set us on a path of examining our most basic beliefs. Who is Yeshua that He could make such a bold claim? And we found out. He is the Creator who first spoke light and everything else into being. Also, in the past message, we considered the *echad* nature of ADONAI and the names we are to use to refer to Him and to Yeshua.

In examining these Scriptural concepts, we do it for ourselves and not any other part of Yeshua's body. We already know how we believe the Scriptures. We sincerely believe they're the fundamental truth of our existence as they were initially written. Nowhere in the Hebrew texts or the Greek texts is the *Torah*, Law, spoken of as not for us today. We also believe ADONAI's written Scriptures are the only source of truth. We cannot depend upon any non-canonized Gospel, the Book of Enoch, the Oral Torah (which became the written *Mishnah*), the *Talmud*, or any tradition of man; only the canonized Scriptures, Genesis through Revelation, is our authority. With this in mind, we look further at Yeshua's words.

The King James version puts verse 17 this way: 17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." (Matthew 5:17 KJV). The word destroy in Greek is *kataluo* (kat-al-oo'-o), meaning "to destroy or overthrow." The word translated fulfill is *pleroo* (play-ro'-o), meaning "to make full, to complete." The understanding passed down by the King James translators is that by completing the Law, Jesus ended the Law. But there is a problem with using the word "law" in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua's followers. The Greek word for law is *nomos*, meaning "anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law, or a command." Even a custom! That's very broad. The problem is that the word Law does not adequately express the meaning of תורה, *Torah*, the Hebrew word meaning "teaching or instruction" and there is no other word in Greek to express it. *Torah* is derived from the Hebrew root ירה, *yarah*, meaning "to shoot an arrow or to direct," implying instruction pointing the way to a goal of understanding. Greek is a very expressive language, but unfortunately, it does not have a word expressing the meaning of *Torah*. But *Torah* is what Yeshua, as a Hebrew speaker, would have said. He most likely spoke Aramaic as His daily language. It was the language the Jews learned in their captivity in Babylon and then brought back to Israel. He may have said *targum*, the

Aramaic word meaning “translation,” which expresses the word *Torah*, but whatever He said, His disciples understood what He meant. He spoke about the validity of the *Torah* for His followers, teaching and instruction that includes laws. Even if the everyday language was Aramaic, there is no question that the language of the synagogue and the Temple was Hebrew. The people may not have used Hebrew as an everyday language, but it was used every *Shabbat* in the synagogues.

Yeshua’s disciples were fishermen and common folk. The people in the Galilee were spoken of derogatorily regarding their education by the people of Judah and probably by some of the Scribes and Pharisees, at least, their words implied to Yeshua that His disciples were unlearned. The Hebrew term is *am-Haaretz*, meaning “people of the land.” The Sanhedrin used it to refer to Yeshua’s disciples *Kefa* and *Yochanan* (Peter and John) and in Acts 4:13 essentially called them simple and uneducated country bumpkins. They didn’t think these Galileans could understand the finer points of the *Torah*.

In English, the Hebrew word *Torah* literally means “teaching or instruction.” This creates a problem in the Greek of the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, where *nomos* is translated as “Law” because that’s the only Greek word to render it. That creates a big problem when it comes to understanding, and it has conditioned many of Yeshua’s followers for hundreds of years to have a knee-jerk reaction every time they hear the word “Law.” In their minds, it almost comes down to this; “law is bad.” But that’s not what Yeshua, who proclaimed the validity of the *Torah*, intended.

The *Torah* is teaching and instruction for righteous living and contains laws. When Yeshua said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the *Torah*, that is, to abolish the Law, but to fulfill,” the general Christian understanding is that by fulfilling it, he abolished it. The Greek word *pleroo* (play-ro'-o), rendered as “fulfill” in English, may be understood in Hebrew as *L'kiyyem* (לקיים) *et haTorah*, “to comply with the *Torah*,” and it usually refers expressly to “obeying the *Torah*.” There is evidence in the *Mishnah* and other rabbinic writings that the opposite was true for the word “abolish.” A rabbi who misinterpreted the *Torah* was said to be “abolishing it.” A rabbi who correctly interpreted it was said to be “fulfilling it.” By using the terms “abolish” and “fulfill,” Yeshua used Hebrew idioms to tell his disciples that he was sent to interpret the *Torah* correctly. It is impossible to understand every verse in the writings of Yeshua’s followers just from the Greek or English words alone. You must know that some phrases are Hebrew idioms and then learn what they mean. The Hebrew idioms in Matthew is another bit of evidence suggesting that this book was originally written in Hebrew.

When He referred to the *Torah*, we must also understand that Yeshua was not only speaking about the Ten Commandments but also about endorsing the ongoing, unchanging authority and validity of the whole *Torah* of Moses, which was in effect at that time. And He said this in the strongest possible language. We have many examples in the Psalms expressing the goodness of the *Torah*. David wrote: 8 *The Torah of Adonai is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of Adonai is trustworthy, making the simple wise. 9 The precepts of Adonai are right, giving joy to the heart. The mitzvot of Adonai are pure, giving light to the eyes.* (Psalm 19:8-9 TLV). The words, *Torah*, testimony, precepts and commandments are: *Torat* (תּוֹרָה), *edut* (עֵדוּת), *pikudei* (פְּקֻדֵי), and *mitzvot* (מִצְוֹת). These words express the thoughts that ADONAI’s commands are perfect, trustworthy, right, and pure, and His desire is for us to follow them. As followers of Yeshua, we must remember when we interpret the Gospels and the epistles that the *Torah* is the eternal Word of ADONAI, and we can’t go about picking and choosing which commands we want to keep and which we decide to throw out.

Yeshua continued: 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 5:1:18 TLV). The Greek word underlying “smallest letter” is iota, a tiny Greek letter, usually translated in English as “jot.” *Torah* refers to the *Torah* of Moses, the only written *Torah* in existence, and because Yeshua was talking about the *Torah*, it was the *yod*, the smallest Hebrew letter in the alefbet. He pointed out that the *Torah* was so important that even the smallest letter would not be removed. But He went even farther than that, to something even smaller. The Greek says, “Not even a *keraiia* (ker-ah'-yah), a ‘little horn’ would be removed.” This is sometimes rendered as a “stroke” or a “title” in Christian Bibles. The underlying Hebrew is *kotz*, sometimes translated as “thorn.” Yeshua’s words here remind us of the care with which the *Sofer*, the Jewish scribe, would take in copying each letter of the *Torah*. Even the slightest mistake would invalidate the whole sheet of animal skin, and the *Sofer* would have to begin again. The same was true with the *kotz*, the tiny decorative mark on some letters. If a *Sofer* smudged it, he would have to start with a fresh sheet of parchment. Yeshua’s words meant that he upheld the correctness of the *Torah* and would not change even one small letter. He stressed to His disciples that neither a *yod* nor a *kotz* would pass from the *Torah* until everything that must happen has happened or “until all things come to pass.” Some interpreters have tried to find a way to make Yeshua’s words fit into their antinomian theology. Some say that the words “until all things come to pass” meant that the *Torah* was coming to an end, and that end came when Yeshua died on the stake and said, “It is finished.” Others say this had to do with Yeshua’s perfect obedience being finished, and thereby, “all things had come to pass” when He had perfectly obeyed everything. Others would say that the *Torah* remained until the destruction of the Temple. But, none of these ideas can be true, because the phrase “until all things come to pass” is parallel to the phrase “until heaven and earth pass away.” All things don’t come to pass until heaven and earth pass away. In more straightforward English, we can say, “The authority of the *Torah* will continue as long as we stand on the earth and see the heavens.”

None of this is intended to criticize Yeshua’s followers, who understand this differently than we do. But there is no question that we know it differently. There can be no question that the Bible is a Jewish document from Genesis to Revelation. Not only was it written by Jews, but its content is thoroughly Hebraic. It is best understood by paying attention to the Jewish idioms and methods of thought, as well as the Jewish Biblical exegesis, which interprets its themes. I pray that Bible readers in Yeshua’s larger body would read with these things in mind and seek to understand what the writers initially meant rather than trying to find some modern way of putting it which takes them further from the truth of their original meaning. *Torah* states: 2 *“You must not add to the word that I am commanding you or take away from it—in order to keep the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am commanding you.”* (Deuteronomy 4:2 TLV). (also Deuteronomy 12:32). ADONAI only wishes what He has inspired in His writers and has been confirmed as Scripture to be followed. While we strictly follow these words within our Messianic Jewish faith, we also understand that some of Yeshua’s followers have different beliefs. It is not our place to prescribe what they should obey and they must decide for themselves how to interpret Scripture.

We believe mankind has been given “free will,” the absolute right to make his own life choices, a belief not only found within Messianic Judaism but also in conservative traditional Judaism. This is introduced to us in the creation story as shown through Adam’s and Eve’s free choice to disobey ADONAI: 6 *...So she took of its fruit and she ate. She also gave to her husband who was with her and he ate.* (Genesis 3:6b TLV). Their free will got all of us, their descendants, into the fix we are in today. Moses’ words also show this truth: 19 *“I call the*

heavens and the earth to witness about you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live,..” (Deuteronomy 30:19 TLV). *Uvacharta* (וּבַחַרְתָּ) *bachayim* (בְּחַיִּים), “choose life” are words by which we must live. This means free will. We can choose. But even before we can choose life, we must choose G-d, recognizing that He is G-d. Only after we recognize ADONAI as the Creator of heaven and earth can we look further to the *chayim*, the life, that we can receive from Yeshua, the Son of G-d. Following these choices, many more remain. We must also choose how we will understand every verse of the Scriptures. Yeshua gave each of us that free-will choice.

13 When Yeshua came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13 TLV). They responded what they had heard, saying that some said He was Yochanan the Immerser or Elijah or Jeremiah or another prophet. But Yeshua became more pointed in his question and asked: 15 ..., “But who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15b TLV). There was only one right answer: 16 Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” 17 Yeshua said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven!” (Matthew 16:16-17 TLV).

All of this took place in the region called Caesarea Philippi. We were privileged to visit where that discussion took place on our congregational trips to Israel. Each time, it was an awe-inspiring experience, almost as if we were standing exactly where the disciples stood to hear Yeshua’s words. During Yeshua’s time, Caesarea Philippi was ruled by Herod Philip, the son of Herod the Great, who had named it after Caesar Augustus. But it was a more ancient site and originally was named Pnias after the Greek god Pan. It is currently called Banias according to the Arabic pronunciation. It lies at the base of Mount Hermon, where the Banias Spring emerges from the mountain. To the left of the spring is the cave, which was dedicated to Pan at the time of Yeshua, the goat-footed god who played the pan pipes.

After *Shimon Kefa*’s response that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of the Living G-d, Yeshua said to him: 18 “And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it.” (Matthew 16:18 TLV). We can almost see Yeshua pointing to the pagan temple of the cave as He spoke against the gates of *Sheol*. *Hades* is the Greek term used in the Septuagint. Its Hebrew counterpart is *Sheol*. Both words refer to the realm of the dead. Yeshua said that His body of believers would not be defeated by death or evil and His words may have also been a reference to an individual’s overcoming death by trusting in Him as *Mashiach*. Yeshua said, “You, Peter, are *petros*,” *petros* meaning a small stone in Greek, “and upon this *petra*,” *petra* meaning a large rock or cliff, “I will build my *ekklésia*.” Peter was not “this rock,” as some groups claim. “This rock” represents the foundational truth that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God who possesses the authority as the *Mashiach* to build His *Ekklesia*, קהל, *qahal* in Hebrew. Both words mean assembly or congregation. Right then, the assembly consisted of His Jewish followers, but today, it includes His worldwide Jewish and Gentile followers. But even before that, the foundations of Yeshua’s *Ekklesia* existed.

More than thirteen hundred years earlier, following the Exodus, when Israel was gathered at Mount Sinai, ADONAI made a covenant with them which the rabbis have described as a *ketubah*, a marriage contract. The Covenant made at Sinai included limited atonement for Israel, the Jews who followed its precepts. We know that Yeshua, who created everything, was with the Father at that time, but we are not shown His presence in any of

the Scriptures of the *Tanakh*. Some say that when Moses and the others went up the mountain and saw G-d, they saw Yeshua: <11> 10 *They saw the God of Israel, and under His feet was something like a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the very heavens.* (Exodus 24:10 TLV). Saying it was Yeshua because “they saw G-d,” who is said to be invisible, is feeble circumstantial evidence. We are only told that who they saw was the אֱלֹהִים (*Elohei*), *Elohim* of *Yisra’el*. There is no Scriptural evidence to support such a claim. We also cannot say that the *malakh*, the messenger angel referred to as ADONAI who met with Abraham (Genesis 18:13), was the pre-incarnate Messiah. Nor can we say it about the *Malakh* who met with Sampson, the one who wrestled with Jacob, or the Captain of the Host who met Joshua. In one case, we are told more. The *Haftarah* reading for *Parasha Vayishlach* (Genesis 32:4-36:43) is Hosea 12:3-12. Verse 5, referring to Jacob, reads: 5 *Yes, he wrestled with the angel and won; he wept and sought his favor.* (Hosea 12:5a TLV). The Hebrew says מַלְאָךְ, *malakh*, meaning “messenger.” We are not told who the messenger was. If it was Yeshua in pre-incarnate form, ADONAI has reserved that information for Himself for now. Many mysteries in the Bible remain that will not be revealed until Yeshua returns, not the least of which is the *echad* nature of *YHVH*, ADONAI. Much of our understanding is only partial, and we must continually remind ourselves of *Sha’ul*’s words, which speak about the time of Yeshua’s return: 12 *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.* (1 Corinthians 13:12 TLV). All of today’s mysteries will become known then.

Can we then say Yeshua was the bridegroom of the symbolic marriage covenant with Israel, the leader of the *qahal*, the congregation in the wilderness? We can if we put it in the form of a *midrash*. We can do just as the rabbis have done. We can paint a word picture of ADONAI’s relationship with Israel from the time of Mount Sinai until now. *Messianic Midrash*: “Yeshua, ADONAI’s Son, is the bridegroom, the חתן, *chatan*, of the First Covenant and Israel was the *chalah*, כלה, the bride. But ADONAI said: 31 ... “*For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.*” *it is a declaration of Adonai.*” (Jeremiah 31:31b TLV). 30 “*Behold, days are coming*” —*it is a declaration of Adonai— “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—*” (Jeremiah 31:30 TLV). Yeshua said 20 ..., “*This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.*” (Luke 22:20b TLV). Yeshua, both Mediator and sacrifice of the New Covenant is our *chatan*. 7 *Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride (wife-guné [goo-nay']) has made herself ready, 8 She was given fine linen to wear, bright and clean! (That’s us!) For the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the kedoshim.*” **(The “holy ones.” We have been made righteous by Yeshua’s blood.)** 9 *Then the angel tells me, “Write: How fortunate are those who have been invited to the wedding banquet of the Lamb!” He also tells me, “These are the true words of God.”* (Revelation 19:7-9 TLV).” End *Midrash*. In our minimal understanding, Yeshua is the *chatan*, the bridegroom, of the Covenant at Sinai, at least in symbolism, and continues as the *chatan* of the New Covenant. The *qahal*, the congregation that began in the wilderness, has continued through the ages, but its membership changed when the covenant changed from the First Covenant to the New Covenant. When the New Covenant was cut, only those Jews who trusted in Yeshua continued as members of His *qahal*. Those Jews represented the *chalah*, the bride, a membership that ADONAI has also opened to the world’s Gentiles. Membership in Yeshua’s *qahal*, His *ekklesia*, remains open to those Jews and Gentiles who will trust in Yeshua’s personal sacrifice as the כפרה, *kapparah*, the atonement for our sins. This is the *ekklesia* that Yeshua told *Shimon Kefa* would be built upon the rock, the understanding that He is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God. Yeshua has been with the Father since before the earth’s foundation and will ultimately triumph over

HaSatan, returning to claim His kingdom as *Mashiach Ben David*, Messiah, Son of David. Yeshua is the *chatan*, the bridegroom, and we, everyone in His *ekklesia*, are His *chalah*, His bride.

Because *Shimon Kefa* understood who Yeshua was, He said to him: 19 “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid (**bind**) on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit (**loose**) on earth will have been permitted in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19 TLV). The keys to the kingdom of heaven are two kinds of authority given to leaders in the *Ekklesia*. One is the authority to forbid, אָסַר, *asar*, sometimes called “bind,” and one is the authority to permit, הֵתִיר, *hittir*, sometimes called “loose.” These two Hebrew words are keys used to establish *halakhah*. This term originates from the Hebrew word *halakh*, meaning “to walk,” and refers to “the way of walking,” a system of behavior rules based on rabbinic interpretations of the *Torah*. Binding and loosing were already in use by the rabbis of Yeshua’s day. When He spoke of binding and loosing, Yeshua referred to a practice that had been going on for several generations in Israel. The two greatest rabbis of that era were *Hillel* and *Shammai*. Examples from Jewish history show us how it was applied. Regarding a particular command in the *Torah*, we read that “*Rabbi Shammai* binds while *Rabbi Hillel* looses.” In other words, one took one point of view, and the other took another. Although they had different understandings of particular *Torah* points, each group remained accepted within the overall Judaism of that day. Yeshua gave each leader in His *Ekklesia* the authority to do the same, to decide how to interpret Scripture, something that had been done in Judaism for generations. Reading between the lines, we understand that Yeshua knew that a divergence of belief would come within His *Ekklesia* and He gave its leaders the “keys of the kingdom,” the authority to interpret the *Torah* for their respective groups. We value our Christian brothers and sisters' genuine desire to follow Jesus. We also acknowledge that Yeshua has granted Christian and Messianic Jewish leaders the freedom to interpret Scripture and establish *halacha* (rulings) that guide how each group follows Yeshua. We also sincerely wish to be in unity of spirit with them even though we understand some things differently. We are not judges of how Christians walk out their faith, nor are they judges of how we walk out our faith. We are all responsible to ADONAI for our decisions and must answer to Yeshua when we stand before Him. *Sha’ul* wrote: 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. (2 Corinthians 5:10 TLV). (also, Romans 14:10). This also means that we, as individuals, are responsible for every action we take in this life. Shouldn’t this spur us to seek a greater understanding of our faith and to act more faithfully? However, differing beliefs should not create disunity. We want to be united with our Christian brothers and sisters.

Does ADONAI really expect us to follow His rules? Yes, He does, but it isn’t a burdensome thing. *Torah* is good! The Psalmist wrote: 97 O how I love Your *Torah*! It is my meditation all day. (Psalm 119:97 TLV). But how can anyone keep the 613 commandments that the rabbis point out in the *Torah*? The good news is that there are not that many that we can keep today. Because the Temple was destroyed and the Levitical priesthood disappeared soon after, a large percentage of the 613 cannot be kept today. And some commandments are only to be kept if you are in physical Israel. This means that under the High Priesthood of Yeshua, a person living in the United States today is accountable for approximately 150 *mitzvot*. And that is not burdensome. Yeshua’s disciple John wrote: 3 For this is the love of God—that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. (1 John 5:3 TLV). That’s pretty clear. And it has nothing to do with salvation. It is we who are saved who are keeping the *Torah*. *Sha’ul* wrote: 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). Salvation only comes through the shed blood of Yeshua, by our faith, through ADONAI's grace and not through *Torah* keeping. We should obey the *Torah* because it points out sin. ADONAI said that we cannot eat the flesh of swine. If we do, for us, it is a sin. The Complete Jewish Bible puts John's comment about sin the best: *4 Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah — indeed, sin is violation of Torah.* (1 John 3:4 CJB). Yeshua said that not one *yod* or *kotz* of the *Torah* would pass away before all things come to pass. All things haven't come to pass and we can still look up and see the heavens. This means that the *Torah* remains relevant for us, and it is each individual's responsibility to adhere to it. *Shabbat shalom!*