



**Parasha Shemot**

January 18, 2025

*Torah:* Exodus 1:1-6:1

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

**See message notes [beitshalom.us](http://beitshalom.us) for parasha specific messages**

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Matthew 5:21-32

**Specific to today's message**

### Disciples of Yeshua 12

*Shabbat shalom mishpacha!* This is a continuation of Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount, a time of basic teaching for His disciples, but also heard by the crowds surrounding them. In the King James version of verse 21, Yeshua is said to have made this statement: 21 "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:21 KJV). But that's not what the Greek says. We can call this a misunderstanding because we don't know the intent of the translators, but this misunderstanding is based on a mistranslation of Exodus 20:13, which says, "You shall do no *ratzach* (רָצַח), no murder. The verse reads לֹא תִרְצַח ה', *lo trazach*, no murder. It does not say, "You shall not *harag* (הָרַג), meaning kill." In Hebrew, there is a clear distinction between these two words. *Ratzach* means pre-meditated murder, while *harag* can mean anything from justifiable homicide, manslaughter, and accidental killing to the taking of the life of an enemy soldier in war. The Greek language also has separate words for "murder" and "kill." *Skotóno* means "kill in war," but the Greek word for murder used in Matthew 5:21 is *phoneuó* (fon-yoo'-o). The early translators should have been able to interpret this correctly even without knowledge of Hebrew. Most translations have now changed this to read, "You shall not commit murder." But the damage has been done, and in the minds of many, it is still "you shall not kill." We must respect human life, but ADONAI allows the killing of those who are trying to kill you.

22 *But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment.* (Matthew 5:22a TLV). The Greek word used here is *orgizó* (or-gid'-zo), which means "to make angry." The person described would have committed some offense against his brother and been subject to judgment. In this case, it probably would have been the judgment of the *Beit Din*, the local synagogue court. There were three courts in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel: the *Beit Din*, meaning House of Judgment, the two or three-member court of the synagogue; the Lesser *Sanhedrin* in major cities with twenty-three judges; and the Great *Sanhedrin* in Jerusalem with seventy-one judges. The *Beit Din* of a local synagogue would settle a dispute such as the one to which Yeshua referred in Matthew 18: 15 "Now if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault while you're with him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take with you one or two more, so that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand.' 17 But if he

*refuses to listen to them, tell it to Messiah's community. And if he refuses to listen even to Messiah's community, let him be to you as a pagan and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17). Messiah's community refers to every synagogue's two or three-judge court, the Beit Din. This individual would have been angry with his brother over something. The brother would have tried to restore him through the first two steps, going to him personally and then going to him with a friend. The final step was to bring him before the judges in the synagogue. He was thrown out of the synagogue if he did not listen to the rabbinic judges. This procedure applies to us today when settling disputes. First, seek to restore your brother. If that doesn't work, take someone with you to entreat him. If that doesn't work, ask the rabbis to step in and settle the situation. Regarding the situation in Matthew 18, Yeshua added these words: 18 "Amen, I tell you, whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven. 19 Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:18-19 TLV). This is the same principle that Yeshua gave His disciples in Matthew 16, the "keys to the kingdom," binding and loosing. In this case, it refers to the judges of the Beit Din who make decisions affecting disputes who bind and loose. And the next verse is also related to it: 20 "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst." (Matthew 18:20 TLV). This is referring to the decision made by the two or three judges, but it doesn't mean that Yeshua is not where two or three individuals are gathered praying. He is there, even when one person prays. However, in the context of this verse, Yeshua will guide the two or three rabbinic judges in settling disputes.*

Going back to Matthew 5, 22 *"And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca' shall be subject to the council;" (Matthew 5:22b TLV). Matthew, the author of this verse, used the Aramaic word raca. It means empty head, worthless, fool, or imbecile. Yeshua meant that whoever says to his brother, "You imbecile," will be subject to the Sanhedrin, the high court of Israel. The TLV has translated the Greek sunedrion (soon-ed'-ree-on) as "council." This would have been an escalation of anger that may have been slander.*

22 *"And whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be subject to fiery Gehenna." (Matthew 5:22c TLV). The Greek word translated as "you fool" is móros, and it means dull, stupid, or foolish, the root word of moron. Yeshua seems to have been demonstrating how anger can escalate; to the synagogue court, then to the Sanhedrin, and finally, to ADONAI's judgment. Yeshua used the trash dump fires in the Gehinnom Valley near Jerusalem, as a visible illustration of ADONAI's judgment. The Greek is geenna (gheh'-en-nah). This is Yeshua's warning against using abusive language and insults, with His point being that unless we deal with anger, it can even escalate to murder.*

23 *"Therefore if you are presenting your offering upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." (Matthew 5:23-24 TLV). Yeshua continued His discussion of anger. A person who wishes to make a gift to ADONAI but realizes that he has offended his brother is not spiritually prepared to give it. ADONAI does not desire our gifts if our hearts are not right. Through Hosea, ADONAI said: 6 "For I delight in loyalty and not sacrifice, knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6 TLV). Yeshua's words were about the one bringing the offering who realized that he had offended his brother. Our relationship with Yeshua is a mockery if we say we serve Him but ignore our sins. We must ask forgiveness and be reconciled with Him. Forgiving our brother or sister in our minds is also not enough; it is*

better to reconcile with them in person. Yeshua said: *“First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering.”*

In Matthew 6, Yeshua taught His disciples how to pray. In the same vein as this discussion, He said, *12 “And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”* (Matthew 6:12 TLV). He followed it up with: *14 “For if you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions.”* (Matthew 6:14-15 TLV). We must recognize that our relationships with our brothers and sisters can significantly affect our relationship with ADONAI.

*25 “Make friends quickly with your opponent while you are with him on the way. Otherwise, your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the assistant, and you will be thrown into prison.”* (Matthew 5:25 TLV). This is the same principle discussed in Matthew 18 a moment ago. Yeshua most likely meant, “If you happen to run into the one with whom you have a dispute, settle it then,” in this case, owing someone money. If you don’t pay, you may be found guilty by the *Beit Din*, the synagogue house of judgment, a court which, in Yeshua’s day, had the power to imprison. *26 “Amen, I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid back the last penny!”* (Matthew 5:26 TLV).

*27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 And if your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body be thrown into Gehenna. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body go into Gehenna”* (Matthew 5:27-30). Yeshua used the same approach that He did with murder. He said: “You have heard it said,” referring here to the *Torah* in Exodus where it says: *14 “Do not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14 TLV). Yeshua went to the root of the problem, sexual lust, something which must be dealt with before it leads to adultery. He may have also been referring to Exodus 20:17, which says, “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife.” According to Leviticus 20:10, the penalty for adultery was death. Yeshua said: *28 “But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* In Yeshua’s day, a man or woman could not be condemned in court for impure thoughts, but Yeshua told them and is telling us that in “His court,” before His judgment seat, we can be judged. He tells us it is better to deal with it here and now rather than wait until we stand before Him. He is not suggesting that we gouge out our eye if it looks with lust or that we cut off our hands. He said these are the parts of our body that sin in this way and that we must control our thoughts, which control them. Job sets the righteous example for us: *1 “I made a covenant with my eyes not to pay attention to a virgin”* (Job 31:1). Yeshua said that we should deal with these sinful, lustful thoughts before they lead to adultery and *Gehenna*, a guilty verdict by His judgment. Just as anger is a sin, so are lustful thoughts.

Yeshua continued: *31 “It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”* (Matthew 5:31-32 TLV). By saying a certificate of divorce, Yeshua was referring to this command given by Moses: *1 “Suppose a man takes a wife and marries her. Now, if she doesn’t find favor in his eyes because he has found something indecent in her,*

he is to write her a certificate of divorce, hand it to her, and send her out from his house” (Deuteronomy 24:1 TLV). But it wasn’t Moses who commanded this, it was ADONAI. Moses made no laws and commanded no *mitzvot* that weren’t from ADONAI. Yeshua was not saying that a man giving his wife a סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת, *seper keriput*, a certificate of divorce, was not lawful. It was lawful. The Aramaic term גֵּט, *get*, identifies the actual written certificate of divorce, a document usually written in Aramaic.

Because many men in that day had misused their power over their wives by unjustly divorcing them, Yeshua was defining what “something indecent in her” was. Yeshua ruled that “something indecent” could only be sexual immorality. In effect, Yeshua said, “I *asar*; I bind these words: “*I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*” It was the only ground that allowed a man to marry another without committing adultery. This was only addressed to the men because they had control over their wives. Women could not instigate a divorce. We discussed binding and loosing, *asar* and *hittir*, last *Shabbat*. *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai* were two schools of Judaic study in Israel in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries. While *Rabbi Hillel* died around 10 CE, *Shammai* lived when Yeshua made these statements. Their “houses of study” were still active and continued to influence their followers. Years before, *Hillel* and *Shammai* had debated Deuteronomy 24:1, the grounds for giving a *get*, a divorce. *Hillel* took the position that a man could divorce his wife for the most minor of offenses, even something as small as “burning his dinner.” *Shammai* said that divorce should only be for serious cases of immorality, such as adultery. Yeshua’s statement meant that He *asar*, He “bound,” making a ruling much like *Shammai*’s. Some say that Yeshua was most like *Shammai* in all His rulings on the *Torah*, but in reality, it was *Shammai* who was more like Yeshua, the only righteous Judge.

It’s challenging to understand Scripture just by reading it in a language into which it has been translated. We must dig deeper and consider the actual language in which it was originally written. The interpretation I am about to give you is not mine but one based on the study of a man who has spent many years studying the synoptic Gospels. David Bivin, one of the authors of the book, “*Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*,” has many years of study in Israel with a focus on the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He is a member and present head of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, a study organization that has operated for over sixty years. Dr. Bivin has been there for over forty years. His book, which I read in 1983, was one of my first ventures into understanding Jewish things. I had the opportunity to meet him in 2003 when our *Beit Shalom* group visited a Messianic synagogue in Jerusalem.

Yeshua elaborated on His statements from Matthew 5 in Matthew 19:9. This is Dr. Bivin’s explanation. 9 “*Now I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, **and** marries another, commits adultery*” (Matthew 19:9 TLV). This verse is difficult to understand and is widely misunderstood in Yeshua’s greater body. The Greek word translated as “and” is *kai*. This small word makes a big difference. The Greek *kai* and the English “and” do have the meaning of “and,” but Yeshua was likely teaching in Hebrew or Aramaic. The word which He most likely would have used is the conjunction *vav* (ו). *Vav* has a much wider range of meanings than the Greek *kai* and the English “and.” Its meanings also include the words then, therefore, since, while, but, and so. In Hebrew language study, it is called “the *vav* of purpose.” A demonstration of how it works is found in Exodus 7:16. Regarding Pharaoh, ADONAI told Moses: 16 “*You are to say to him: Adonai, God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, ‘Let My people go, **so** they*

*may serve Me in the wilderness, and behold, you have not listened*” (Exodus 7:16 TLV). This verse's “*vav* of purpose” is translated as “so.” We can see this in the word וַיַּעַבְדֵנִי, *v'ya'avduni*; “**so** they may serve me.” It could also have been translated as “and they may serve me,” but that wouldn't make much sense. “So” is the better translation. We can understand Yeshua's words as “Anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality with the *vav* of purpose meaning, ‘so’ to marry another, commits adultery.” In other words, if you have a pre-meditated purpose of divorcing your wife to marry someone else, you commit adultery by marrying again.

There is something similar in Luke 16: 18 “*Everyone who divorces his wife **and** marries another commits adultery*” (Luke 16:18a TLV). Considering the *vav* of purpose, what Yeshua most likely would have said is: “Everyone who divorces his wife so that he can marry another is committing adultery.” “So” would have been the *vav* of purpose. But what about the second half of this verse, which says: 18... “*And he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery*” (Luke 16:18b TLV). This is the verse that most people have trouble with. The question is, would Yeshua have condemned the newly married husband to “living in adultery” just because he married a divorced woman? If you take this verse at face value as read in English, the divorced woman must remain single, or she will enter into adultery with her next husband and also cause him to sin. In trying to understand this, David Bivin was joined by Shmuel Safrai, also a Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research member, to propose another possibility for understanding the second part of this verse. It is called the “Hebraic doublet.” The doublet says something one way in one part of a sentence and then says the same thing slightly differently in the second part. If Yeshua was using the doublet, He would have said it one way in Luke 16:18a and said a similar thing in a different way in Luke 16:18b. There is a good example of this in Psalm 119: 15 “*I will meditate on Your precepts (pikkudim), and regard Your ways (orach) [English-path].*” (Psalm 119:15 TLV). The psalmist says that he will keep ADONAI's *Torah* in two ways: He will follow His precepts and his ways (His path). Looking at Luke 16:18 a and b as a doublet, we can understand it this way: (a) ‘Everyone who divorces his wife to marry another commits adultery, and (b) everyone who marries a woman divorced from her husband because of her adultery commits adultery.’ In this case, the reason for divorcing is to marry another.

Yeshua vigorously defended marriage. He was not for divorce for any reason but did allow re-marriage except in the case of purposeful divorce for adultery. In Matthew 19 we read: 3 *Pharisees came up to Yeshua, testing Him and saying, “Is it permitted for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”* 4 “*Haven't you read?,*” He answered: “*He who created them from the beginning ‘made them male and female’* 5 *and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’* 6 *So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate*” (Matthew 19:3-6 TLV). Yeshua clearly states that marriage is to be permanent: “*Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.*” If a man divorced his wife just to be able to marry another whom he desired above his current spouse, Yeshua emphasized that he committed adultery. In Yeshua's day, a woman couldn't divorce her husband to marry another, but today she can, and it now applies to her. “Every man who divorces his wife (to marry another) commits adultery, and every woman who divorces her husband (to marry another) commits adultery.” According to David Bivin's understanding, the innocent spouse in such a relationship is not made into an adulterer if he or she remarries unless he or she marries someone who had been divorced because of adultery. There is no doubt that Yeshua wished married couples to

remain together, but there are situations in which divorce is necessary. Take, for example, a physically abusive spouse. The abused partner can divorce the abuser and remarry and not be guilty of adultery. Neither will the abuser if they seek to remarry.

With these things in mind, let's look again at Yeshua's words in Matthew 5: 31 *"It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'* 32 *But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"* (Matthew 5:31-32). Looking at this statement in the way that we have just understood, Yeshua most likely meant: "Everyone who divorces his wife to marry another commits adultery, and whoever marries a woman whose husband divorced her because of her sexual immorality commits adultery." If this is a correct understanding, and I believe it is, the millions of former spouses today who were divorced for trivial reasons are free to remarry. What about the adulterers in these cases? They do not have to remain separated from ADONAI. Adultery is forgivable to a follower of Yeshua who sincerely repents.

This is just one of many spiritual questions we can only fully understand by delving into their Hebraic foundation. Understanding the *Torah* is sometimes tricky, especially when original Hebrew and/or Aramaic speakers have their thoughts represented in Greek and then translated into a third language. As we study the Sermon on the Mount, it is as if we, Yeshua's *talmidim*, His disciples of today, were sitting at His feet as He gave His message on the mountain. Today, we have seen that His words, "bind and loose" and "where two or three are gathered," have meanings derived from Yeshua's 1st-century Judaism. He has given us these understandings to use in our lives and to share with others. We will conclude our look at the Sermon on the Mount next *Shabbat* and then begin to look at *Sha'ul*, Yeshua's greatest interpreter of *Torah*. Study to show yourself approved! *Shabbat shalom!*