



Parasha Shemini

April 26, 2025

Torah: Leviticus 9:1-11:47

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha-specific messages

Haftarah: 2 Samuel 6:1-7:17

Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 11:1-36

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 24

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Today, we return to *Sha'ul's* letter to the Roman Congregation. While we understand that he is considered Yeshua's Disciple to the Gentiles, he was even more concerned about the state of the eternity of his fellow Jews. He wrote: *1 I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected His people whom He knew beforehand. Or do you not know what the Scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?* (Romans 11:1-2 TLV). After defeating the Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah was frightened of Ahab and Jezebel and ran for his life. Hiding in a cave on Mount Horeb, he said to ADONAI: *10 "I have been very zealous for Adonai-Tzva'ot," he said, "for the children of Israel (of the Northern Kingdom) have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword—and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it!"* (1 Kings 19:10 TLV). Writing the Roman congregation, *Sha'ul's* thoughts, like Elijah's, were on disobedient Israel, however for *Sha'ul*, it was the Jews of "all Israel" who had not trusted in Yeshua. *18 But I say, have they never heard? Indeed they have, for "Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."* *19 But I say, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, with a nation empty of understanding I will vex you."* (Romans 10:18-19 TLV). This explains that the Jews of the 1st century did understand what ADONAI called them to do, but chose not to obey. Moses relayed these words of ADONAI: *21 "They made Me jealous with a non-god. They vexed Me with airy (foolish) idols. So I will make them jealous with a non-people. With a foolish nation I will vex them."* (Deuteronomy 32:21 TLV). And *Sha'ul* continued ADONAI's words: *21 But about Israel He says, "All day long I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and contrary people."* (Romans 10:21 TLV). (From Isaiah 65:2). *Sha'ul* concludes that Israel has heard, but that they are rebellious, a people who follow their own ideas. That is why he was so concerned for his brother and sister Jews.

They understood yet disobeyed, but G-d has not rejected them despite their disobedience. Elijah thought he was the only faithful one in the fight against Ahab and Jezebel. But ADONAI revealed to him that there were 7,000 faithful who had not bowed their knee to *Ba'al*. (1 Kings 19:18). *Sha'ul* understood that the same thing was true regarding Yeshua with his brothers and sisters. He continued: *5 So in the same way also at this present time there has come to be a remnant according to God's gracious choice.* (Romans 11:5 TLV).

Sha'ul concluded that the Jews of the 1st century were just like the Israelites of the Northern Kingdom in Elijah's time, and there was a remnant in the 1st century, just as in Elijah's time.

Does the statement, "according to G-d's gracious choice," mean that G-d chose those to be saved? No, definitely not. This is just another way of saying what *Sha'ul* wrote a few chapters ago: *29 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.* (Romans 8:29 TLV). Predestined means that ADONAI foreknew, knew in advance, what was in their hearts and what they would ultimately do. Before the earth's foundation, he knew that *Sha'ul*, *Kefa*, *Ya'acov*, *Yochanan*, and tens of thousands of other Jews in the 1st century would trust Him. But ADONAI didn't cause them to trust Him. If He brought about their salvation, we don't have free will. But there's much more to it than that. *Sha'ul* also explained this to us: *3 For through the grace given me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think—but to use sound judgment, as God has assigned to each person a measure of faith.* (Romans 12:3 TLV). Of course, we should not think more highly of ourselves than we should and should use sound judgment, but the last statement is what we are looking for. If ADONAI has assigned a measure of faith to every person, this statement means that every Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, or Jew has a G-d-given measure of faith. And so does each of us. But an individual must choose to use it. Whether Jew or Gentile, each of us must make our own decision: *9 For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* (Romans 10:9 TLV). We must confess and believe. Each individual makes their own decision. But we cannot make that decision, cannot choose Yeshua, without our measure of faith from ADONAI to assist us. But every person has this faith. ADONAI gave it to everyone to reveal Himself to each of us. He doesn't cause us to choose Him, but because He loves us so much, He wants us all to be saved. *9 The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you—not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9 TLV). According to this verse, if ADONAI caused us to be saved, everyone would be. But He doesn't cause us to be saved; not everyone is. The central portion of the decision comes from us. We must overcome our stubborn nature and submit to Him. But *Sha'ul* has made it clear that our salvation is by grace, ADONAI's grace, His loving kindness and mercy toward us: *6 But if it is by grace, it is no longer by works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.* (Romans 11:6 TLV). Salvation is by grace, ADONAI's grace, which includes our G-d-given measure of faith. There is no way that a person can be saved by *Torah* keeping or works of any kind. However, after trusting in Yeshua comes the works, the *Torah* keeping, the works of a living faith, as Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* explains: *17 So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.* (James 2:17 TLV).

Referring to the people of Israel of the 1st century, who understood ADONAI's Words but disobeyed them, *Sha'ul* said: *8 just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes not to see and ears not to hear, until this very day."* (Romans 11:8 TLV). That same disobedience is in the Jews of today, and we now begin to understand why "all Israel" is still in disobedience. This is not a criticism of our Jewish brothers and sisters, whom we love. We understand why they are hesitant, but we wish they would turn to Yeshua now. ADONAI has an everlasting love for His people, but they are stubborn, and He chose to overcome their stubbornness by making them jealous. *19 But I say, did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, with a nation empty of understanding I will vex you."* (Romans 10:19 TLV). (From Deuteronomy 32:21). I don't believe I would be in error by saying that ADONAI was referring to us, the people of the many

different ethnicities of the world, Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua and become covenant partners of ADONAI's New Covenant. We are the non-nation prophesied by ADONAI, a non-nation of people of every kind and color worldwide. ADONAI told this to Israel when they were in the wilderness. His vexation of Israel is coming to its fulfillment now in the Last Days. Vexing means annoying, and ADONAI is annoying Israel with Gentiles who follow the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who have trusted in Yeshua.

However, *Sha'ul* says this situation is not permanent: *11 I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their false step salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke Israel to jealousy.* (Romans 11:11 TLV). We are the provokers, the Gentile followers of Yeshua who are fulfilling the righteous requirement of ADONAI's Law: *3 For what was impossible for the Torah, since it was weakened on account of the flesh, God has done. Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering, He condemned sin in the flesh— 4 so that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Ruach.* (Romans 8:3-4 TLV). The Greek says, "the righteousness of the Law." The *Torah* of the First Covenant did not fulfill the "righteousness of the Law" because Israel broke it (Jeremiah 31:31b). Because of this, ADONAI gave us the New Covenant, which, through Yeshua's death, condemns the sin of the flesh and the "righteousness of the Law" is fulfilled. We enter into this relationship with ADONAI and Yeshua by our trusting faith. The Law is righteous when it is observed in faith in Yeshua, something that "all Israel" has not done. Right now, they follow the Law, the *Torah*, without righteous faith in Messiah Yeshua. This means that the "righteousness of the Law, the *Torah*," has not been fulfilled in them. What do they lack? Only trusting in Yeshua. But then *Sha'ul* says: *15 For if their rejection leads to the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?* (Romans 11:15 TLV). Life from the dead hints not only at their salvation as an act of ADONAI, but also at a coming awakening. They have rejected Yeshua so that we Gentiles could be reconciled to ADONAI, but their acceptance, which is coming soon, will be "life from the dead," spiritual life, eternal life, for "all Israel." And that time will also be fantastic for everyone else in Yeshua's body. The acceptance of Yeshua by the Jews of the world, "all Israel," will also lead to revival among the unbelieving Gentiles of the world, Gentiles who are now in many false religions. We know ADONAI has always planned to reconcile "all Israel" to Himself through Yeshua. That's on our schedule for next *Shabbat*. But an important question is: "Did ADONAI prevent the Jews who rejected Yeshua from being saved to save the Gentiles?" No, definitely not. That is not ADONAI's nature.

Here is the answer: *15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it does not depend on the one who wills or the one who strives, but on God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I raised you up—to demonstrate My power in you, so My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.* (Romans 9:15-18 TLV). Did ADONAI harden Pharaoh's heart and the hearts of the Jews who have not trusted Him? The answer is no. This is a misinterpretation of the Hebrew: *20 But Adonai hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let Bnei-Yisrael go.* (Exodus 10:20 TLV). The Hebrew word translated as hardened is *va'y'chazak*, *וַיַּחֲזַק*, from the word *chazak*, *חָזַק*, meaning "to be or grow firm or strong, strengthen." ADONAI didn't harden Pharaoh's heart. He strengthened the resolve already in his heart, so Pharaoh did precisely what he had intended in his heart. The same is true of the Jews who rejected and are presently rejecting Yeshua. ADONAI strengthened their

hearts, their will to pursue their desires. *Sha'ul* continued: *18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens (**sklērynei**) whom He wills.* (Romans 9:18 TLV). The Greek word *sklērynei* (sklay-ri'-nay), from *sklérunó* (sklay-roo'-no), is the same word used in the Greek translation of Exodus 10:20 in the Septuagint, the LXX: *20 But Adonai hardened (**sklérunó**) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let Bnei-Yisrael go.* (Exodus 10:20 TLV). ADONAI granted Pharaoh and the Jews who reject Him exactly what they wanted and continue to desire. He didn't harden their hearts but strengthened their will to do what was already in their hearts.

But even though they have been given “eyes not to see and ears not to hear,” they do have ADONAI's measure of faith. That is how the tens of thousands of Jews in the 1st century and the tens of thousands of Jews in our century came to trust in Yeshua. First, they considered the truth, and the Holy Spirit confirmed it to them, which was followed by their own trust, bolstered by their G-d-given measure of faith. Yeshua is available to any Jew today willing to consider Him in the light of ADONAI's Word. That is our prayer, that they would become a part of the remnant of Israel ahead of the salvation of all Israel. If they have the courage to ask ADONAI if Yeshua is the Messiah, His *Ruach HaKodesh*, His Holy Spirit, will confirm it. Then they must act.

Continuing to discuss ADONAI's plans for His chosen nation Israel, *Sha'ul* wrote: *16 If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.* (Romans 11:16 TLV). The firstfruit refers to the firstfruit barley offering given during *Chag HaMatzot*, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which we commemorated just a little over a week ago on 16 *Nisan*: *18 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael. Say to them: When you enter the land to which I am taking you, 19 and you eat some of the food of the land, you are to offer a portion to Adonai. 20 You are to offer a cake from the first of your ground-up meal as an offering from your threshing floor—so you are to lift it up. 21 Throughout your generations to come, you are to give this offering from the first of your ground-up meal.* (Numbers 15:18-21 TLV). This took place the day after the Passover meal was eaten. The *kohanim* presented ADONAI with a cake made from the firstfruit of the barley harvest, a harvest which began during that week, the week of the Festival of Unleavened Bread. *Sha'ul* compares the firstfruit of barley to the rest of the grain offering. If the firstfruit, the small cake offered during the Festival of *Matzah*, is holy, so is the whole lump, the entire portion of barley dough from which the firstfruit was removed. And he compares the root of a tree to its branches. If the root is holy, then its branches must be holy because they grow from the root and the root supports them. Just as the firstfruit and the root are holy, set apart for ADONAI, so are the whole lump of barley and all the branches of the tree. However, *Sha'ul* spoke not of barley and trees but of people. This is his metaphor about the Israel of the New Covenant. Even though the firstfruit, the Jews like *Kefa*, *Yochanan*, and *Sha'ul*, who had trusted in Yeshua, were holy and set apart for Him, the rest of the dough- those Jews who had not yet chosen Yeshua- were also holy. Even though they have not yet trusted, they are holy, set apart by ADONAI, who knows they will accept Yeshua.

Then *Sha'ul* revealed the type of tree in the metaphor: *17 But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who support the root but the root supports you.* (Romans 11:17-18 TLV). In these verses, he speaks specifically to Gentiles, the wild olive branches, while explaining that the Jews who rejected Yeshua are the natural branches that were broken off. We Gentiles who have been grafted into the Jewish olive tree are not to boast of our righteousness or to speak ill of the natural branches that were broken off. Through

ADONAI's love and grace, we Gentiles have been grafted into a holy root, and it is the Jewish root that supports us.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 True enough. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. (Romans 11:19-20a TLV). That is the difference. We have been grafted in because of our faith in Yeshua and our trust that His death paid the price for our sins. However, due to their nonbelief in Yeshua, they have been broken off. They are not a part of the metaphorical olive tree of the New Covenant. But then Sha'ul says: 20 ...Do not be arrogant, but fear— 21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. (Romans 11:20b-21 TLV). Those who have trusted and remain grafted onto the olive tree by faith must be careful. ADONAI will also break us off for unbelief, just as He did the natural branches. 22 Notice then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell; but God's kindness toward you, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off! 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of that which by nature is a wild olive tree, and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? (Romans 11:19-24 TLV). We pray for "all Israel" to be grafted back into their olive tree, but until that day arrives, our prayer is also for the salvation of the Jewish firstfruits, the remnant. ADONAI can graft the natural branches back when they abandon their unbelief, and He can also graft back wild olive branches- Gentiles who initially trusted Yeshua but were broken off due to their unbelief.

Even though his name is not mentioned, all this olive tree business concerns *Avraham aveinu*, Abraham our father. He is the root, the absolute root of the olive tree, although we would add Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's twelve sons as the patriarchs also forming the root. Both the natural and grafted branches grow from Abraham. The natural branches are Abraham's physical descendants, and the grafted-in Gentiles are Abraham's spiritual descendants. In His plan, we see G-d's great love for all His creation, both Jew and Gentile. Because Abraham believed in ADONAI, ADONAI chose his descendants to be His special people who would carry His *Torah* to the Gentiles as a nation of priests. (Exodus 19:6). But ADONAI loves all His creation, including the Gentiles, equally, and even before the earth's foundation, He planned for them to be grafted into Abraham's tree. He chose to do it through *Avraham* because of his faith. Because Abraham had faith that ADONAI is the only true G-d and believed in Him, ADONAI made a covenant with him, promising a national homeland for his descendants, the land known as Canaan at that time. However, the blessing for the Gentiles was to come through Abraham's descendants, promising that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through them. 3 *"My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* (Genesis 12:3 TLV). Right now, many are blessed by ADONAI because they have blessed Israel and the Jews of the world, but G-d curses many more because they have cursed Israel. However, the curse can be reversed, and we pray that many currently cursing Israel will turn to Yeshua in the coming days.

But what about the olive tree? How can a person be grafted onto it? *Sha'ul's* metaphoric olive tree is a faith tree through and through. Bloodlines and physical descent have no part in this tree. Abraham, the root, was established by faith, and every branch growing on it, whether Jew or Gentile, remains on it by faith. The faith is in Yeshua and His sacrifice on the Tree, a different kind of tree. Instead of being metaphoric, the tree on which Yeshua died was real, and His death was a genuine death that brings real life. Faith, trust

in Yeshua as a sacrifice for our sins, allows us to remain grafted onto the olive tree, but we can be broken off for unbelief. Unbelief in Yeshua's atoning death is truly heartbreaking, and it has even affected some of our former brothers and sisters here who have been cut off from the life-giving tree. We pray that they will repent and return so they may be grafted in again if they have not strayed so far that they cannot return. (Matthew 12:31-32) (Hebrews 6:4-6).

ADONAI said: *by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* (Genesis 12:3 TLV). "You" is the Jews, and this verse means that all the families of the earth will be blessed by and through Abraham's descendants. Many of Abraham's descendants have blessed us in the past and continue to do so. But "you" also refers to just one of Abraham's descendants, Yeshua of the Tribe of Judah. *Sha'ul* wrote to the Galatian congregation: *6 It was the same with Avraham: "He trusted in God and was faithful to him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness. 8 Also the Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Avraham in advance by saying, "In connection with you, all the Goyim will be blessed." 9 So then, those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Avraham, who trusted and was faithful.* (Galatians 3:6, 8-9 TLV). By this, *Sha'ul* explained that ADONAI informed Abraham about the Gospel, the *Besorah*, the Good News, in advance. Abraham knew and trusted in his descendant, Yeshua, whom he saw in his distant generation. In Galatians 3, *Sha'ul* used the same words that ADONAI used in Genesis 12. He said, "In connection with you, all the *Goyim*, all the Nations, will be blessed." "You" refers to Abraham and his descendants, but it can also refer to Yeshua, who confirmed this Himself. He told the Scribes and Pharisees: *56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled."* (John 8:56 TLV). The "Blessing of Abraham" is the blessing of salvation through Yeshua.

This past Thursday, we commemorated *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Memorial Day. We remember not only the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis, but all those murdered by evil men through the centuries. It's not easy to be ADONAI's chosen people because they are the targets of *HaSatan*, the Accuser of the Brethren. (Revelation 12:10). Today, we are witnessing the highest level of antisemitism since World War II, and it is being perpetrated by men and women influenced by *HaSatan*, either directly or through his demonic spirits. We stand firmly with our brothers and sisters, the Jews of the world, praying not only for their protection, but also for their redemption. *Sha'ul* wrote: *1 I tell the truth in Messiah—I do not lie, my conscience assuring me in the Ruach ha-Kodesh— 2 that my sorrow is great and the anguish in my heart unending. 3 For I would pray that I myself were cursed, banished from Messiah for the sake of my people—my own flesh and blood, 4 who are Israelites.* (Romans 9:1-4a TLV). We have not been called to that level of anguish, but we join *Sha'ul* in his prayer for his Jewish brothers and sisters, that even now there would be many firstfruits of the Jews as we await ADONAI's day of salvation for all Israel. We will continue with Romans 11 next week. *Shabbat shalom.*