



Parashiyot Acharei Mot/Kedoshim

May 10, 2025

Torah: Leviticus 16:1-18:30; 19:1-20:27

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha-specific messages

Haftarah: Ezekiel 22:1-19; Amos 9:7-15

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Galatians 3:6-14

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 26

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha! Once again, we are faced with understanding *Sha'ul*, whom *Shimon Kefa* has said is difficult to understand. (2 Peter 3:15-16). The question of salvation and its relationship to the Law, the *Torah*, inevitably emerges in his letters. Writing the congregation in Galatia, *Sha'ul* said: *10 For all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse—for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah."* (Galatians 3:10 TLV). He was quoting Deuteronomy and specifically, one of the curses uttered by Israel on *Har Eval*, Mount Ebal. After entering Canaan from their wilderness journey, ADONAI commanded that blessings and curses be proclaimed. Six of the tribes stood on Mount Gerizim and proclaimed twelve blessings, and six tribes stood on Mount Ebal where the Levites proclaimed twelve curses, and the people answered, Amen. *Sha'ul* referred to this curse: *10 For all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse—for the Scriptures say, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah."* (Deuteronomy 27:10 TLV). *Sha'ul's* use of this verse has caused significant confusion and misunderstanding among Yeshua's followers. Many have developed a fear of the "curse of the Law" by believing that being obedient to the *Torah*, ADONAI's Laws in the Books of Moses, will cause one to be under that curse. According to that understanding, an individual who strives to adhere to ADONAI's commandments in the *Torah* is effectively subjecting themselves to the "curse of the Law," and incurring its associated consequences. This is a misunderstanding of what *Sha'ul* was explaining.

Here is the background. After leaving Egypt, ADONAI required Israel to be obedient to the Covenant He would establish with them, and they agreed. At Mount Sinai, after Moses relayed ADONAI's message of "listen to my voice and keep my covenant," to Israel, this was their reply: *8 All the people answered together and said, "Everything that Adonai has spoken, we will do."* (Exodus 19:8a TLV). Three days later, ADONAI gave them the Ten Commandments, which served as a preamble to the complete laws that were presented afterward. Adhering to ADONAI's Laws was never about salvation. But Israel had agreed to keep His Laws, and the curse on Mount Ebal was about being faithful to their promise.

ADONAI said, "Cursed is anyone who does not keep doing them." *Sha'ul* interpreted this to mean that those who depend on the works of the *Torah* for their salvation are subject to ADONAI's curse. But obeying laws cannot provide salvation, and even under the First Covenant, law-keeping wasn't for atonement. Israel's year-to-year atonement was based upon ADONAI's mercy in accepting the daily sacrifices and the annual sacrifices of *Yom Kippur*. Obeying the Law, the *Torah*, was Israel's obligation as covenant members, laws which showed them how ADONAI wished them to live. *Torah*, meaning "teaching and instruction,"

was how Israel learned to live under a righteous G-d. But faith also underlaid everything, a trust that ADONAI would do for them everything He said.

Even in the 1st century, Jews did not rely on obeying the *Torah* for their salvation. *Sha'ul* explained: *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). The purpose of the *Torah* is to teach us what sin is so that we can obey it and avoid wrongdoing, because violating the *Torah* is sin. *Yochanan* wrote: *4 Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah — indeed, sin is a violation of Torah.* (1 John 3:4 CJB). If Israel's salvation depended upon their following *Torah*, then no Israelite was ever saved because it is humanly impossible to be perfect and never sin. Some Jews may have developed that idea, but if they did, it was their idea, not ADONAI's.

While we understand that a person can never be saved by obeying the *Torah*, the perception by some Christians is that today some people are seeking to be saved in that way and, in doing so, receive the curse of the *Torah*. But we are no longer under the Sinai Covenant, and the way a person is atoned for, the way they are saved, is different. The animal sacrifices that provided limited atonement for Israel under the First Covenant are gone, but a sacrifice is still necessary. ADONAI made that clear. He said: *11 For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives—for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life.* (Leviticus 17:11 TLV). ADONAI requires the shedding of blood for the covering of sin, and under the New Covenant, Yeshua is that sacrifice. His atonement is not limited, but complete and eternal, rather than being year to year as it was under the First Covenant.

Sha'ul continued his explanation: *10 For all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse—for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is everyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah.”* (Galatians 3:10 TLV) and quotes Deuteronomy again: *13 Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”)—* (Galatians 3:13 TLV). Yeshua's sacrifice provided even more for us than we realize; He also took a curse intended for us. ADONAI's words given through Moses are very clear: *22 “Suppose a man is guilty of a sin with a death sentence and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree. 23 His body is not to remain all night on the tree—instead you must certainly bury him the same day, for anyone hanged is a curse of God. You must not defile your land that Adonai your God is giving you as an inheritance”* (Deuteronomy 21:22-23 TLV). There were two methods of execution for Israelites: stoning and burning, and only two specific crimes required burning. (Leviticus 20:14 and 21:9). Stoning was the primary method of capital punishment. Verse 22 does not tell Israel that an individual designated for execution is to be executed by hanging. Hanging by the neck was not a method of execution according to the *Torah*. The phrase “and you hang him on a tree” indicates that his hanging on a tree would take place following his execution. Here is an example of a capital crime. During Israel's time in the Wilderness, a man gathered wood for a fire on *Shabbat*, and he was stoned to death at ADONAI's command. (Numbers 15:32-36). While the scripture here doesn't state it, following his execution, his body would have been hung on a tree, a stake. Why did ADONAI command this be done? It is because this gruesome sight served as a vivid reminder of the consequences faced by those who violated ADONAI's laws requiring death. It was a terrible sight. But consider the possibility that ADONAI gave this command so that Yeshua could fulfill it for us. But He also commanded that the body was not to stay on the stake all night; instead, it was to be taken down and buried before sundown that same day. Proper treatment of a corpse was necessary not only

because Israel was a civilized society, but also because ADONAI required it. It was against His nature to allow the abuse of the bodies of His created beings. Even though a wrongdoer received ADONAI's fair and impartial justice, the executed person was created in His image, and his body was given due respect.

Now, go to the 1st century. After the death of Yeshua and the two thieves, the Judean religious authorities had a problem with their bodies. They did not want to leave them on the stake overnight. *31 It was the Day of Preparation, and the next day was a festival Shabbat. So that the bodies should not remain on the execution stake during Shabbat, the Judean leaders asked Pilate to have the legs broken and to have the bodies taken away.* (John 19:31 TLV). Their reason for following the *Torah* may not have been correct, but they did obey. Rome's barbaric execution method, crucifixion, had the same effect as the *Torah's* requirement: bodies on stakes tended to deter crime. However, the Romans used the cross for both ordinary and minor purposes, not just for capital offenses. It was frequently used to punish political or religious agitators and slaves. Rebels would think twice about rebelling or angering the Romans. The Phoenicians introduced crucifixion to the Romans during the 3rd century BCE, and it was discontinued as a method of execution in Rome by the 4th century CE, a period of around 700 years, a very short window in the expanse of time. Yeshua came in the center of the time that this method of capital punishment, crucifixion, hanging on a tree, was used. And ADONAI likely chose this time for His Son to die for our sins, a time when hanging on a stake was the capital punishment, so that He could take the curse for us. If He had been executed any other way, and at any other time, He couldn't have taken the curse. Nine hundred years earlier, Yeshua's ancestor David prophesied of His death: *15 "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are disjointed. My heart is like wax— melting within my innards. 16 My strength is dried up like a clay pot, my tongue clings to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death. 17 For dogs have surrounded me. A band of evildoers has closed in on me. They pierced my hands and my feet. 18 I can count all my bones. They stare, they gape at me. 19 They divide my clothes among them, and cast lots for my garment"* (Psalm 22:15-19 TLV). ADONAI gave David a perfect picture of the entire event. Yeshua suffered a humiliating and painful death for our sins. The Romans did not usually take the bodies down the same day, sometimes leaving them for many days to rot and be eaten by animals. That was what they would have done to Yeshua's body had not Joseph of Arimathea intervened. (John 19:38).

Referring to Deuteronomy 21, *Sha'ul* wrote: *13 "Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")"*— (Galatians 3:13 TLV). The *Torah* states: *23...for anyone hanged (**on a tree**) is a curse of God* (Deuteronomy 21:23b TLV). *Sha'ul* tells us that Yeshua, by hanging on a tree, hung on the tree for us, a punishment we deserved under the First Covenant. Under the First Covenant, Israel agreed that they would be cursed if they did not "*uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.*" This meant that they agreed to continue in the Levitical system of Tabernacle worship under the provisions of the *Torah* by obeying the associated commands. However, after they said they would, they didn't, many times! Here is but one example: *17 The entire assembly who had returned from the captivity made sukkot and dwelt in the sukkot. Since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day Bnei-Yisrael had not done so—and the joy was very great* (Nehemiah 8:17 TLV). It had been almost 800 years since Joshua's time, and they had not kept the *Torah* regarding *Sukkot* until they returned from the Babylonian captivity. (about 525 BCE). It is incomprehensible to us that they had not obeyed that command for eight hundred years. But Judah and Israel disobeyed many times, failing to

follow the *Torah* that they had agreed to. And ADONAI punished them as He had said He would. What is the curse of the *Torah* that was imposed for this transgression? Although the scripture does not provide a direct answer, it collectively indicates that the curse entails a separation from ADONAI, a fate significantly more severe than physical death.

We usually think of curses as something from the Evil One, *HaSatan*. But what do we consider a curse when ADONAI places it? The answer is justice, His judgment for wrongdoing. If ADONAI places a curse, it is deserved. A curse can be defined as a form of evil or misfortune that befalls an individual because of specific actions. To receive the curse according to this verse in Deuteronomy meant that ADONAI would cause something to happen to the Israelites who failed to uphold His *Torah*. The result of ADONAI's curse is that they would be separated from Him. Separation from ADONAI was the "curse of *Torah*." It applied both to individuals and to all of Israel if they violated ADONAI's First Covenant. This did not mean that they were no longer in His eternal plan. Scripture shows that even when Judah was defeated, the Temple had been destroyed, and they were taken into the Babylonian captivity, ADONAI continued to love them and to move toward their restoration.

"Upholding the words of the *Torah*," regarding the curse, had to do with the relationship that Israel had with ADONAI at that time. The basis of their relationship with Him under the First Covenant was different from our relationship under the New Covenant. *Sha'ul* explained this to the Galatians: *12 However, Torah is not based on trust and faithfulness; on the contrary, "the one who does these things shall live by them."* (Galatians 3:12 TLV). By *Torah*, *Sha'ul* meant the First Covenant. Under it, Israel's relationship with ADONAI was not based on faith; they were required to obey His *mitzvot*. But even though they had to obey, it was not their obedience that provided their atonement. Under the system that was in operation during the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple, an Israelite had to continue to follow the provisions of the *Torah* to remain in right relationship with ADONAI. They had to offer sacrifices for daily disobedience to the *Torah* and accept the annual sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*. Their limited atonement came from this, not from their obedience to *mitzvot*, laws. If they did not uphold the *Torah*, they received the "curse of the *Torah*" from ADONAI.

But as we know, the *Torah* under the New Covenant is not just about keeping laws. We understand the word to mean "teaching and instruction," that is, it teaches us how we are to live in the way ADONAI desires, something that does involve obeying specific commands. But their number today has been reduced by more than two-thirds because there is no Temple and no Levitical Priesthood. Commands requiring either of those elements are currently inactive. The *Torah* was not and is not just laws, but the way that ADONAI wishes us to live. When Yeshua died on the "tree" by becoming a curse for us, He freed us from the curse of *Torah*. He took the curse for us! When He died on the tree, the cross, ADONAI changed the system. By initiating the New Covenant through Yeshua's death, He changed the way that individual Israelites would now maintain a covenant relationship with Him. From Yeshua's death forward in time, it was no longer a year-to-year group atonement and a covering of sins based upon the Levitical High Priest's sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*. After Yeshua's death, it became the responsibility of each Jew to maintain the covenant relationship himself. And the same is true for Gentiles who enter the New Covenant. *13 "Messiah liberated us from Torah's curse, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')— 14 in order that through Messiah Yeshua the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so we might receive the promise of the Ruach through trusting faith"* (Galatians 3:13-14 TLV). Gentiles can receive the same blessing that Abraham received, the Good News of the Messiah through faith. *8 The*

Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the Good News to Abraham in advance, saying, “All the nations shall be blessed through you.” 9 So then, the faithful are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one (Galatians 3:8-9 TLV). As a result of this, all Gentiles who have trusted Yeshua are spiritual descendants of Abraham, and we can call him *Avraham aveinu*, Abraham our father, along with his physical descendants, the Jews, even though we are not physically descended from him. According to Romans 1:16-17, “the blessing of Abraham” was given by faith to the natural sons and daughters first, but equally to the Gentiles.

Trusting faith, the new way of being right with ADONAI under the New Covenant, was “trusting in Yeshua’s sacrificial death as payment of sin’s penalty. *Sha’ul* wrote: 11 *It is clear that no one is set right before God by Torah, for “the righteous shall live by emunah.”* (Galatians 3:11 TLV). *Eemunah* means faith. But the New Covenant also provided a new way of following the *Torah*. 32 *“But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people”* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). ADONAI’s *Torah* has been imprinted on the hearts of those of us who have trusted in Yeshua, or at least the desire to obey the *Torah*. After Yeshua’s death, the “curse of the *Torah*” was no longer in effect for Jews and Gentiles who trusted in Him and had His *Torah* written on their hearts. When ADONAI’s instructions to us are written on our circumcised hearts, we should have only one response: obey them!

There is no question about it! We are no longer under “the Curse of the *Torah*!!” We are now under grace, the gracious gift of salvation which ADONAI gives us when we have trusting faith in His Son Yeshua’s sacrificial death. But, because we are no longer under “the Curse of the *Torah*,” is *Torah* no longer applicable to us? *Sha’ul* told us the truth about this. He had a personal encounter with Yeshua and received information directly from Him, truths that he passed on to us. To the congregation in Rome, He said: 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). The Scriptures tell us what sin is so that we can avoid it. Salvation is only through trusting in Yeshua, but after entering the New Covenant by faith, we must be obedient to our Father’s commands. *Sha’ul*’s letter to the Romans illustrates that while we are no longer subject to the Curse of the Law associated with the Levitical system for addressing sin, the *Torah*, which encompasses the teachings and instructions of ADONAI found in the Scriptures, remains in effect. It is through *Torah*, ADONAI’s teaching and instruction, that we learn what He requires of us. *Sha’ul* introduced the Book of Romans with this statement: 5 *Through Him (Yeshua) we have received grace and the office of emissary (Apostle to the Gentiles), to bring about obedience of faith (obedience of ADONAI’s Laws based upon our faith) among all the nations (among all the Gentiles) on behalf of His name.* (Romans 1:5 TLV). He considered “bringing about the obedience of faith among the Gentiles” so crucial that he also concluded his letter to the Roman congregation with the same statement: 25 *Now to the One who is able to strengthen you according to my Good News and the proclamation of Yeshua the Messiah, according to the revelation of the mystery (that Gentiles can enter the Jewish New Covenant by faith in Yeshua) which has been kept secret for long ages 26 but now is revealed and through the Writings of the Prophets has been made known to all the nations (the Gentiles), according to the commandment of the eternal God (ADONAI commanded it) to bring about obedience of faith (obedience of His Laws based upon a Gentile’s faith)—* (Romans 16:25-26 TLV). The Complete Jewish Bible renders it as “faith-based obedience.” It is clear from this that Yeshua

made *Sha'ul* the Apostle to the Gentiles to teach them to be obedient to the *Torah* after they had come to faith. A more complete discussion of faith and the *Torah* can be found in Disciples of Yeshua 16 and 17, February 15th and 22nd, 2025.

What many people don't realize today is that if they do not trust in Yeshua, their spiritual choice leads to separation from ADONAI in the same way as being cursed. ADONAI doesn't curse those who do not choose Him and His Son Yeshua, but by rejecting Him, they bring the same consequences upon themselves, eternal separation from the presence of ADONAI. *Sha'ul* wrote: *2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and death.* (Romans 8:2 TLV). There are many laws, some good and some bad. The law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua is very good, and through it we live in relationship with and enjoy the blessings of ADONAI. This is the opposite of the "law of sin and death." The meaning of this law is that anyone who sins without a blood sacrifice for their sin—and we all sin—dies a spiritual death, which is an eternal separation from ADONAI. After their physical death, their existence for eternity is in the blackness of Hell, complete separation from the light of ADONAI. Eternity is a very long time. There is a very simple way to avoid the curse of eternal separation: trust in Yeshua, who took the curse for us! *Shabbat shalom!*