



Parshiyot Behar/Bechukotai

May 24, 2025

Torah: Leviticus 25:1-26:2; 26:3-27:34

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha-specific messages

Haftarah: Jeremiah 32:6-27; 16:19-17:14

Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 14:1-23

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 28

Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha! When I began my study of the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith in 1983, which eventually led me into Messianic Judaism, one of the first resources I had was a book entitled, *Understanding The Difficult Words of Jesus*. (Destiny Image Publishers, Inc., 1983, by David Bivin and Roy Blizzard). It is still a good book for Yeshua's followers to read because it opens our eyes to the Jewishness of the Gospels. The "difficult words" are Hebrew idioms, words hidden in the Gospels for two thousand years.

But there are many more hidden idioms and Hebraisms throughout the rest of the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. The verse about Yeshua's disciples at *Shavuot* is a powerful witness of ADONAI's moving among His people on that crucial day. *2 Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.* (Acts 2:2 TLV). We wouldn't suspect that the words "house" would have any other meaning than a house in Jerusalem, usually thought to be the Upper Room, but in 1st century Judaism, house had another meaning when it had the definite article "the" before it. The Greek in this verse is *holon ton oikon*, meaning "all the house." The Hebrew word for "the house" is *habayit*. In the 1st century, that's what Jews called the Temple. And they also had a name for the place where it was located. The Temple Mount was called *Har Habayit*, "the mountain of the House." Isaiah wrote: *2 It will come to pass in the last days that the mountain of Adonai's House will stand firm as head of the mountains and will be exalted above the hills. So all nations will flow to it.* (Isaiah 2:2 TLV). The Hebrew is *הַר בֵּית יְהוָה har beit ADONAI*. We see that happening today. In just about one week, tens of thousands of Jews and some Gentiles will flow to the Mountain of ADONAI's House for *Shavuot*. The House, the Temple, will not be there when they gather at the Western Wall, but *Har Habayit*, the Mountain of the House, still is. The Temple Mount remains a powerful symbol of ADONAI's presence, even though it currently has two abominations standing on it. Micah prophesied the same: *1 But at the end of days the mountain of Adonai's House (Har Habayit ADONAI) will be established as chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills. Peoples will flow up to it.* (Micah 4:1 TLV). And the number of people who flow to it will only increase as we draw nearer to Yeshua's return. In the 1st century, when the mighty rushing wind of ADONAI's *Ruach* filled "the house" where Yeshua's disciples were sitting, they weren't in the Upper Room. They were on the Temple Mount, where G-d's *Torah*-keeping people would have been on the Day of *Shavuot*. This Hebraism is hidden in plain sight, and there are many other words in the Writings of Yeshua's followers hiding Hebraic truths. In our previous messages, we have explored some of the ways that *Sha'ul* interpreted the *Torah*. There are many more difficult passages that we need to understand, and today we will consider several more of his "difficult words."

The interpretation of Romans 10:4 depends upon your view of the *Torah*. If you think it is not for today, you will agree with this translation: *4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* (Romans 10:4 KJV). This is usually interpreted to mean that Christ ended the validity of the law. But if you believe that the *Torah* is for us today, you will agree with this: *4 For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting.* (Romans 10:4 TLV). But the translators of the King James Version approached the Law with an antinomian perspective, and their translation is biased. Many believe that when Yeshua died, he ended the observance of the Law. However, as we have seen, *Sha'ul* does not convey the idea that the *Torah* has ended. The Greek word *telos* in Strong's Online Concordance tells this: **5056** *télos* (a neuter noun) – properly, consummation (the *end-goal, purpose*), such as *closure* with all its results. The Tree of Life Version correctly interprets this verse: *4 For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting.* The goal of the *Torah* is to lead one to righteousness through Yeshua, who is pictured throughout the *Torah*, which is precisely what it did for Yeshua's disciples and other followers in the 1st century. *Sha'ul* does not imply that the *Torah* has ended and makes a powerful affirmation regarding its ongoing efficacy: *30 Since God is One, He will set right the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah.* (Romans 3:30-31 TLV). Their theology, that Yeshua's death ended the observance of the Law, dictated their word choice for the King James translators.

We understand that the intention of the *Torah* under the First Covenant was not to provide a means of salvation but rather to serve as a way of life for those who had already been redeemed. Before Yeshua's death on the cross, the Jews of His day were a redeemed people because ADONAI redeemed Israel from Egypt and entered a covenant with them. As a redeemed people, they had to follow the *Torah* of the covenant. And, if they offered the appropriate sacrifices and as long as the High Priest took their sins to ADONAI for forgiveness on *Yom Kippur*, they continued to be a part of the redeemed community. In this system, which ADONAI established, they received yearly atonement, but keeping the *Torah* had no part in it.

Here is another difficult-to-understand statement from *Sha'ul*: *1 "Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of disputes about opinions."* (Romans 14:1 TLV). Who is the one weak in faith? *Sha'ul* never visited the Roman congregation before he wrote this letter, but he seems to know something about them. Priscilla and Aquilla had been members of that congregation before they met him, and possibly shared information with him. They were in a group of Jews expelled from Rome in the year 49 by the Emperor Claudius. (reported by the Roman historian Suetonius). To understand whom *Sha'ul* refers to as the weak, we must know something about the makeup of the congregation. We view a congregation as one unified group gathered, like we are here, but the congregation in Rome is thought to have consisted of several distinct groups of Jews and Gentiles. *Sha'ul's* letter would have circulated among the groups making up the congregation. His use of Jews and Greeks throughout his letter indicates that both were present. Verses 18-25 of chapter 2 suggest that some Jewish individuals in the congregation may not have known Yeshua. This shows that the combined congregations of Rome possibly included believing Jews, non-believing Jews, believing Gentiles, and possibly non-believing Gentiles. Author Mark Nanos suggests in his book, *The Mystery of Romans*, that the weak are Jewish attenders of the synagogue who had demonstrated a genuine faith in the God of Israel, but who were still in the process of being convinced that Yeshua was the promised Messiah. There were likely

Gentiles in a similar situation, G-d Fearers who worshipped the G-d of Israel, but had not yet trusted in Yeshua.

With our understanding that this was a mixed group, *Sha'ul* wrote: 2 *“One person has faith to eat anything, but the weak eats only vegetables.”* 3 *Don't let the one who eats disparage the one who does not eat, and don't let the one who does not eat judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.”* (Romans 14:2-3 TLV). At first glance, one might assume this relates to eating kosher. Tim Hegg, in his book *Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Volume 2*, provides insight into these verses and believes that rather than a kosher versus non-kosher argument, this seems to be between vegetarianism and those who eat meat. For those who consumed meat, the issue appears to have been whether it had been offered to idols and whether the animal had been slaughtered according to the prescribed Jewish method and had its blood drained. In the Roman common meat market, meat was not slaughtered according to the Jewish way, but meat slaughtered in the Jewish manner was locally available. However, some believers apparently purchased their meat from the local meat market. Three or four years earlier, regarding the meat offered to idols, *Sha'ul* had written: 13 *“For this reason, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I do not cause my brother to stumble.”* (1 Corinthians 8:13). His message to the Corinthians in this verse was that it is all right to eat meat offered to idols because idols are nothing, but he said: “Don't eat meat offered to them if it causes your brother to stumble or causes his faith to be affected.” The “weak” ones may have rejected meat from the common meat market because of the possibility that it may have been offered to idols or because it had not been slaughtered in the Jewish way. Because their faith was “weak” in this regard, this person ate only vegetables at their communal meals. The others in the Roman congregation, those who ate the meat without question, could not judge whether a person was correct in their decision not to eat meat and to eat only vegetables. The point *Sha'ul* was making was for one group not to judge the other, and not whether eating or not eating meat was correct. With these things in mind, consider this way of understanding this verse: 2 *“One person has faith to eat anything (**meat offered to idols**), but the weak (**those who had questions about the origin of the meat**) eats only vegetables.”* (Romans 14:2 TLV).

Sha'ul continued: 5 *“One person esteems one day over another while another judges every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes that day does so to the Lord. The one who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who abstains, abstains to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.”* (Romans 14:5-6 TLV). To all appearances, this may seem to be a discussion about whether to observe the seventh day as the Sabbath. However, in his letters, *Sha'ul* clarifies that he upholds the *Torah*, which includes observing *Shabbat*. It must be something else. The words “eats” and “abstains” in verse 6 are clues. The most likely possibility is that this discussion is related to fast days, which were a part of Jewish faith in the 1st century, and about which Yeshua spoke in His Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 6:16-18). He said: “When you fast.”... *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* explains that “the close contextual association with eating suggests that Paul has in mind a special day set apart for observance as a time for feasting or as a time for fasting.” (Everett Harrison, 1976, Vol. 10, p. 146). *Sha'ul* wasn't discussing the Sabbath, but rather other days during which fasting or abstaining from certain foods was practiced. Here is Tim Hegg's interpretation of these verses: “5 One person esteems one (**fast**) day over another (**fast**) day while another judges every (**fast**) day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes that (**fast**) day does so to the Lord. The one who eats (**chooses not to fast**), eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who abstains

(by fasting), abstains **(fasts)** to the Lord, and he gives thanks to God.” (Romans 14:5-6). In the 1st century, there were numerous fast days: *Yom Kippur*, the four fasts commemorating the destruction of the First Temple (*Tisha B'Av* [the ninth of *Av*], the Fast of *Gedalia*, the Tenth of *Tevet*, and the Seventeenth of *Tammuz*), the Fast of Esther and other fasts associated with historical events and individuals. If Hegg is correct, and I believe he is, the point of these verses is not to judge each other about when or whether you fast. Some fast days were based on scripture, but some were not. To fast on *Yom Kippur* was interpreted to be a *Torah* command, but regarding the others, *Sha'ul* indicated that it was a personal decision.

Sha'ul continued: 14 “I know, and am persuaded in the Lord Yeshua, that nothing is unholy in itself; but it is unholy for the one who considers it unholy. 15 For if your brother is grieved on account of food, you are no longer walking according to love. Do not destroy by your food the one for whom Messiah died.” (Romans 14:14-15 TLV). This continues to be a discussion about food, but not whether it was kosher or not. We know that *Sha'ul* only ate foods that were kosher according to the written *Torah*. *Koinon* (koy-NON), the Greek word used here, can mean unholy, common, or unclean. The context is given in verse 15, the words “on account of food.” This continues to be about “not causing your brother to stumble” about what you eat or how you speak to another about what he eats. *Sha'ul* appears to mean, “Meat or other food which is clean according to the *Torah* requirements is not unclean, but if one considers it unclean, then to him it is unclean. Don't grieve your brother because of your liberty to eat food approved by *Torah* as you please.” This would include meat offered to idols and other meat not slaughtered in the prescribed Jewish way. But this food, the meat, was not unclean according to the *Torah*. *Sha'ul* would never advocate the eating of non-kosher foods. Ritual slaughter, the way an animal is to be killed and prepared for eating, is described in Tractate *Chullin* of the *Mishnah*. This requires that a Jew only eat meat slaughtered in the prescribed manner by a *shochet*, a ritual slaughterer. Although this was not written until more than 130 years after *Sha'ul's* death, a similar requirement existed in the Oral *Torah* during his time and was rigorously followed by traditional Jews. But it was not a requirement for Messianic Jews, who followed the requirements in the written *Torah*, which does not describe how to slaughter. By eating meat offered to idols, *Sha'ul* demonstrated that he did not follow the requirement of ritual slaughter in the Oral *Torah* but based his beliefs about meat solely on the written *Torah*. This is a further confirmation that Yeshua's disciples did not adhere to the Oral *Torah*.

Colossians chapter 2 presents four more challenges to understanding *Sha'ul*. In verse 8, he writes: 8 See that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men and the basic principles of the world rather than the Messiah. (Colossians 2:8 TLV). This is straightforward and understandable without needing advanced interpretation. Philosophy is translated from *philosophia* (fee-lo-so-FEE-ah), meaning love or pursuit of wisdom. Since *Sha'ul* has clearly shown that he derives his understanding from the *Torah* and the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, he can only be referring to human wisdom, which is devised by the mind of man. Empty deception, translated from *kenēs apatēs* (keh-NASE ah-PAH-tase), is a caution against the worthlessness of something promoted by trickery or fraud. The traditions of men could relate to pagan beliefs promoted in idol worship by these former pagans. The fundamental principles of the world are derived from *stoicheia tou kosmou* (stoy-KHI-ah toe KOS-mo). This indicates that the essential components of worldly knowledge is the world's explanation, rather than the truth of the Messiah's death as the payment for our sins. *Sha'ul* was speaking out against worldly knowledge as a substitute for scriptural knowledge and faith.

In verses 9-13, he describes what Messiah Yeshua's death provided for us, leading to this: *14 He wiped out the handwritten record of debts with the decrees against us, which was hostile to us. He took it away by nailing it to the cross.* (Colossians 2:14 TLV). You may have heard it said that the Law was nailed to the cross, thus rendering it unnecessary for followers of Jesus in the New Covenant. However, that's not what *Sha'ul* said. The Greek *cheirophonon* (khay-RO-grah-fon) means "a legal document," referring to a legal bill of charges detailing our sins, sins which condemned us. *Dogmasin* (DOG-mah-seen) is a decree declaring us guilty of our sins. Yeshua never nailed anything to the cross. This is *Sha'ul's* metaphor for what He did for us by dying on the cross as the sacrifice for our sins. We can make another metaphor that portrays Yeshua as a judge. When He died, He hammered down His gavel and declared us not guilty of all the charges against us. It was our list of sins that Yeshua nailed to the cross. What is sin? It is the violation of ADONAI's Laws. (1 John 3:4). We were all guilty, but ADONAI declares us not guilty when we trust in Yeshua. Our sins are forgiven up to that point, but the truth is that even after trusting in Yeshua, even the best of us continue to sin. But we are freed from our sins when we sincerely repent and ask His forgiveness. The Law was not nailed to the cross. The *Torah* remains in effect and is the instrument that identifies any guilt that we may incur after our initial declaration of innocence by Yeshua.

After explaining that Yeshua wiped out the bill of charges of our sins, *Sha'ul* says, "therefore:" *16 Therefore, do not let anyone pass judgment on you in matters of food or drink, or in respect to a festival or new moon or Shabbat.* (Colossians 2:16 TLV). The Greek words *brōsei* (BRO-say) and *posei* (POH-say) mean just that, the food that you eat or the liquid that you drink. *Heorté* (heh-or-TAY) means either feast or festival. *Neomēnias* (noo-may-NEE-as) means "new moon," referring to a ceremony concerning the time of the first of a new month. Lastly, *sabbatōn* (SAB-ba-ton) refers to the Hebrew Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. How you understand this depends upon your view of the *Torah*. Those who approach this from an antinomian position assume that *Sha'ul* is telling the people of the Colossian congregation not to let Judaizers, those who supposedly were trying to entice people into traditional Judaism, convince them that they should obey the *Torah*. But it is the reverse that is true. *Sha'ul* was not an antinomian. That is a given for us, established over and over. He obeyed the *Torah*. He advised the Colossians not to allow those who oppose adherence to the Law to judge their commitment to following the *Torah*. Essentially, he said: Don't let them judge your *brōsei* (BRO-say) and *posei* (POH-say), what you eat or drink, by following the kosher laws in Leviticus 11. Then, he said: Don't let them judge your keeping of ADONAI's *heorté* (heh-or-TAY), His *moedim*, His festivals, that are detailed in Leviticus 23. He said: Don't let anyone judge you concerning *Neomēnias* (noo-may-NEE-as), that is, *rosh chodesh*, the New Moon, which is described in Numbers 10 and 28. And he said: Don't let anyone tell you that you are not to keep ADONAI's *Shabbat*, which He gave in His Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11. The Letter to the Colossians was probably written around 60-62 CE when *Sha'ul* was in prison in Rome. His statement intended: "Don't let those against the *Torah* judge you concerning your obedience to ADONAI's *Torah*. To the Roman governor Felix, while imprisoned at Caesarea Maritima, he said: *14 "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets."* (Acts 24:14 TLV). And He had written to the Philippians: *6 ...; as for Torah righteousness, found blameless..* (Philippians 3:6b TLV). This doesn't mean that he never disobeyed *Torah* or sinned, but that he upheld the purpose of the *Torah*. *Sha'ul's* testimony was that he believed he was to obey ADONAI's *Torah*.

Then he wrote: *17 These are a foreshadowing of things to come, but the reality is Messiah.* (Colossians 2:17 TLV). What is foreshadowing? It is a shadow of something that will become the final reality. One example is the Egyptian Passover. It foreshadowed Yeshua's fulfillment of Passover by His death as our Passover lamb. *Shavuot*, the Pentecost of *Torah* at Mount Sinai, foreshadowed the *Shavuot* following Yeshua's death on the cross, during which the *Torah*, previously written on stone, was inscribed on hearts by the *Ruach Kodesh*. Yeshua embodies the fulfillment of *Shabbat* through the eternal Sabbath rest we receive when we trust in Him. (Hebrews 4:9-11). The only commands we follow in the *Torah* today are active ones. We continue to obey the kosher laws and to keep *Shabbat*, but because the New Moon and the Festivals require sacrifices, they can no longer be fully observed. However, we do commemorate them, looking forward to their restoration. They will be restored in the *olam habah*, the world to come, when we live under King Yeshua's reign. Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, all commands that require either the Levitical priesthood or the Temple for their execution are impossible. The kosher laws, *Shabbat*, and many other remaining commands are still in effect and serve as standards for the judgment of sin. (1John 3:4).

But we don't judge others and their interpretation of Scripture. Yeshua has allowed all His followers to make binding decisions regarding their interpretation of scripture (Matthew 16:19), but He is the judge who will ultimately judge everyone in the end. (2 Corinthians 5:10). We and our brothers and sisters are responsible for our decisions. We all see "through a glass darkly," and will have to answer for our errors just like every person who calls on the name of Yeshua. As His disciples, our focus is on learning the truth because Yeshua told us: *31, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples. 32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!"* (John 8:31-32 TLV). We don't seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but to learn more to be better servants of Yeshua. We must strive to remain in His Word, seeking the truth. We won't fully understand it until Yeshua returns and reveals it to us, but now we must continue to try to understand and walk in even the difficult passages of scripture. And just as the intention of the *Torah* under the First Covenant did not provide a means of salvation for Israel, but was a way of life for them who had already been redeemed under the terms of the First Covenant, so also, under the New Covenant, the *Torah* provides no salvation, but is a way of life for us after we have trusted in Yeshua's sacrificial death. *Sha'ul's* difficult words point to this truth. *Shabbat shalom!*