



## **Parasha Ki Tetze**

September 6, 2025

*Torah:* Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

*Haftarah:* Isaiah 54:1-10

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Galatians 3:1-14

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Ki Tetze* means “When you go,” and continues “out to war against your enemies....” Most of the subjects in this *parasha* were intended to be active either under the direct kingship of ADONAI and/or when there is a Tabernacle or Temple and Levitical Priesthood. Today, none of this is in effect, and we do not expect our community to stone a rebellious son as ADONAI commanded in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Although most of the commandments in this *parasha* are not applicable under the New Covenant, aspects of specific commandments are essential for us to understand, especially those related to loving our neighbor as ourselves. But we also remember that ADONAI has never abolished His *Torah*. The *mitzvot* we cannot keep today are still a part of ADONAI’s *Torah*, but because there is no Temple and Levitical priesthood, they are inactive. Whether they will ever become active again depends on ADONAI. I doubt that the Temple will be rebuilt and the Levitical Priesthood reinstated before Yeshua’s return as our Messiah. The *B’rit Chadasha*, the New Covenant, is self-sufficient and does not require the inactive *mitzvot* to fulfill its promises. The New Covenant is the result of ADONAI’s plan He made in the beginning, the perfect final covenant for the people of Israel, the Jews of the world. However, many commands within the *Torah* still apply to us as New Covenant members, and it is our responsibility to understand which they are. Most of us understand the *Shabbat*, the kosher laws, and the *Moedim*, but there are others. I am available for anyone wanting to explore further on their own.

Some inactive verses also hold keys to understanding the verses in Yeshua’s disciples’ writings and are crucial for comprehending Yeshua’s sacrifice. 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). All verses are from the Tree of Life Version of the Bible. What were the thoughts of High Priest Caiaphas and his group of Judean leaders when Yeshua and the two criminals with him were crucified? They were hanging on crosses, in *Torah* understanding, trees, and the sunset was approaching. John revealed their thoughts: 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). The day was Passover, *Nisan* 14, a preparation day for the festival meal to be celebrated on the first *Shabbat* of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, which would occur after sunset that evening, *Nisan* 15. We assume that the Judean leaders made this request because they did not want to violate the *Torah*. By having their legs broken, they would have hastened their deaths, ensuring they would not stay on the crosses overnight. Pilate agreed, and after their deaths, the Judean authorities removed the three bodies in accordance with the commandment in Deuteronomy 21. They meticulously adhered to the *Torah* regarding this issue, yet they unjustly sentenced Yeshua, an innocent man, to death based on

fabricated accusations. This politically motivated execution was, in their view, necessary to uphold their corrupt system in collusion with the Romans.

However, there is an even more important message for us as covenant members of the New Covenant related to these words from the *Torah*. *Sha'ul*, in his letter to the Galatians, revealed it: 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). We understand what the *Torah* says about someone hanging on a tree. He is cursed, and Yeshua, by Himself hanging on a tree, bore the curse for us—sin’s curse—that we are powerless to deal with without supernatural help. What is the curse of the *Torah* that *Sha'ul* referenced in his letter to the Galatians? The answer to that question is also in the Book of Deuteronomy: 26 “*Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.*” Then all the people are to say, ‘*Amen.*’ (Deuteronomy 27:26). This is one of the curses that ADONAI commanded Israel to pronounce on Mount Ebal. The people of Israel said “amen” to it, agreeing that they would be cursed if they did not follow the words of the *Torah*. This curse was likely an additional motivation for the Judean leaders regarding those hung on a tree. They obeyed the *Torah* to avoid coming under this curse, but before and after that, they repeatedly disobeyed ADONAI’s other commands, and He punished them as He had warned.

What is a curse? One definition is “a declaration of evil or harm to a supernatural power to bring misfortune upon someone.” In this situation, the curse was placed by the supreme supernatural power, ADONAI, the G-d of the universe. Being cursed, according to this verse in Deuteronomy 27, meant that ADONAI would cause something to happen to the Israelites who did not follow His instructions after agreeing to obey these words of the *Torah*. The curse Israel faced for disobedience included crop failure, poverty, disease, military defeat, and ultimately, being uprooted from *Eretz Isra’el* and sent into exile. That was the “curse of the *Torah*.” This did not mean that they were no longer in ADONAI’s plan. Even though these curses came upon Israel, Scripture confirms that He continues to love them, brought them back from Babylonian captivity, and has said He will redeem them in the future.

However, for us under the New Covenant, more clarification is required. “Upholding the words of the *Torah*” had to do with the relationship that Israel had with ADONAI at that time. The basis of the relationship with Him at that time was completely different from what it is today. *Sha'ul* explained: 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). Israel had to obey these *mitzvot* to live under ADONAI’s first covenant, His requirement. *Sha'ul* explained that, under the *Torah*, which we can understand as his reference to the Levitical system in operation during the days of the Tabernacle and the Temple, an Israelite had to continue following the provisions of the *Torah* to remain in right relationship with ADONAI. That was then, but now we are no longer bound by the sacrificial system on *Yom Kippur* for atonement, and atonement in that way has become impossible due to the destruction of the Temple by Rome in 70 CE and the subsequent dispersal of the Levitical Priesthood. Now, under the New Covenant, our atonement is provided by trusting in Yeshua’s sacrificial death. He is the fulfillment of *Yom Kippur*. Under the New Covenant, the words “the *Torah*” take on a different meaning for us. It is “teaching and instruction” for us, including not only laws but also the way to follow ADONAI. It is currently ADONAI’s method, through the teachings found in His commandments and laws that do not require the Temple and Levitical Priesthood, to show Israel how to maintain a covenant relationship with Him. Under the *Torah* of the First Covenant, animal sacrifices were necessary to keep the relationship. If an Israelite chose not to follow ADONAI’s teachings, including being obedient to His laws, he

would come under the curse of not following the *Torah*: the curse of separation from ADONAI and being outside the community of Israel. He was then alone in a hostile world; no longer under ADONAI's spiritual and physical protection.

When Yeshua died on the “tree” by becoming a curse for us, He freed us from the curse of the *Torah*. Through Yeshua's death on the cross, ADONAI changed the way of atonement by establishing His New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:30) with the blood of His Son. Through the *B'rit Chadasha*, He changed the way Israel and individual Israelites both entered and maintained a covenant relationship with Him. From Yeshua's death forward, it was no longer a year-to-year group salvation and a covering of sins based upon the Levitical High Priest's sacrifice on *Yom Kippur*. It was now the personal responsibility of each Israelite to uphold the covenant relationship. 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). The individual covenant relationship with ADONAI that was available to Jews through His cutting of the New Covenant with Israel also became accessible to Gentiles through Yeshua's sacrifice. Through Yeshua's death on the cross, both Jew and Gentile can receive “the blessing of Abraham.” The blessing of Abraham for the Gentiles is that they would 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). As a result of this blessing, all Gentiles who have trusted Yeshua are spiritual descendants of Abraham. And Yeshua affirmed that Abraham had seen Him, the Messiah, when He said to a group of Pharisees: 56 *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and was thrilled”* (John 8:56).

What *Sha'ul* didn't tell the Galatians, because his message was specifically aimed at them and other Gentiles, is that trusting faith, the blessing of Abraham, also came to the Jews through Yeshua's sacrifice on the tree. He addressed this in his letter to the Romans, concluding with this: 29 *Is God the God of the Jewish people only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. 30 Since God is One, He will set right the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.* (Romans 3:29-30). There is only one plan of redemption today. It is through Yeshua and the New Covenant, and it is the only way for both Jew and Gentile.

Trusting faith, the New Covenant way of being right with ADONAI as prophesied through Jeremiah, was “trusting in Yeshua's sacrificial death as paying sin's penalty for us.” But the *B'rit Chadasha* also provided a new way of following the *Torah* for us. 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). The “curse of the *Torah*” no longer applied to Jews and Gentiles who trusted in Yeshua and had His *Torah* written on their hearts. When ADONAI's instructions to us are written on our circumcised hearts, there can only be one response: to obey them! But Jeremiah 31:32 is also a promise that ADONAI will write His *Torah* on the hearts of “all Israel,” a reference to the coming salvation of all Israel, which *Sha'ul* prophesied in Romans 11. ADONAI loves his people, the children of Abraham whom He chose, and He will ultimately bring them into His only redemptive covenant, the New Covenant. With the New Covenant now in effect, the people of Israel no longer need the

Levitical High Priest to sacrifice animals in the Temple to be in relationship with ADONAI. When Yeshua died on the cross as a sacrifice for Israel's sins, He fulfilled a double role. First, He was the blood sacrifice, the sin offering (2 Corinthians 5:21), and all our sins were placed on Him (Isaiah 53:6, 1 Peter 2:24). Additionally, He is the "High Priest after the order of מְלִיִּצְדֵּק Malkitzedek," and a fulfillment of David's prophecy: 4 *Adonai has sworn, and will not change His mind: "You are a Kohen forever according to the order of Melechizedek."* (Psalm 110:4). As the writer of Hebrews said about Yeshua as *Kohen HaGadol*, Israel's High Priest: 6 *"But now Yeshua has obtained a more excellent ministry, insofar as He is the mediator of a better covenant which has been enacted on better promises"* (Hebrews 8:6). This "better covenant" includes several changes, but one of them specifically means that Israel, the Jews of the world, no longer must be under "the Curse of the Torah."

It is my heart's desire for our brother and sister Jews to understand this. As the Gentile leader of a Messianic Jewish congregation, I have taken the Jewish people to be my people, my family, and the same feeling applies to thousands of Gentiles whom ADONAI has called into Messianic Judaism. Messianic Jewish Gentiles have the calling of Ruth, who said: 16 ..., *"Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Adonai deal with me, and worse, if anything but death comes between me and you!"* (Ruth 1:16b-17). People of Israel, your G-d is our G-d, and you are our people; we stand with you until death. That is why we, the Gentiles, along with the Jews in Messianic Judaism, wish for the Jews of the world to understand what the New Covenant provides. When the Temple was present and the High Priest presented the *Yom Kippur* sacrifice, ADONAI accepted it and provided atonement for one year. But now, none of that is present, and ADONAI's redemptive covenant is the *B'rit Chadasha*. We pray that during this *Elul* and the upcoming *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, many Jews will not only recognize this truth but also be willing to risk disapproval from their family and friends by trusting in their brother Yeshua, son of David.

Studying and understanding the Scriptures helps us understand the meaning of the "Curse of the Torah," or the "Curse of the Law," as some Bible versions refer to it. They use this term because "law," "*nomos*," is the only Greek word used to represent this principle in the writings of Yeshua's disciples. But when "the Curse of the Law" in Galatians 3 is mentioned, it clearly refers to Deuteronomy 27. 26 *'Cursed is the one who does not uphold the words of this Torah by doing them.'* Then all the people are to say, 'Amen.' (Deuteronomy 27:21). The Tree of Life Version has put back some of the intended Hebrew meaning by translating *nomos* as *Torah*, and by using *Torah*, the Tree of Life Version clearly references Deuteronomy 27.

There is no question about it! We are no longer under "the Curse of the Law!!" We are now under grace, the gift of salvation that ADONAI gives us when we trust in His Son Yeshua's sacrificial death. But because we are no longer under "the Curse of the Law," it does not mean that the *Torah* is no longer applicable to us. Some people say it isn't, claiming that "the Law" has been abolished because we are now under grace. But we know that's not true. *Sha'ul*, a man who had a personal encounter with Yeshua and received revelation directly from Him, says differently. To the congregation at Rome, a group that included both Jewish and Gentile followers of Yeshua, 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). A few verses later, he confirms this by saying: 28 *"For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance"* (Romans 3:28 TLV). This means that

obeying the Law cannot save you. *Sha'ul* made it clear that no one can achieve righteousness before ADONAI by *Torah* observance. After saying these things, he presents his conclusion: 31 "Do we then nullify the *Torah* through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the *Torah*" (Romans 3:28 TLV). What *Sha'ul* has shown us is that even though we are no longer under "the Curse of the Law," which was how sin was dealt with under the Tabernacle and Temple systems, the *Torah*, the teaching and instruction of ADONAI in the Scriptures, has not been abolished. It is through the *Torah*, ADONAI's teaching and instruction, that we learn what He requires of us. If our earthly father tells us not to touch a hot stove, we will only do it once before we fully understand his words. How much more should we heed the words of our Heavenly Father, whose "teaching and instruction" guide us in His ways?

We, the Jews and Gentiles in Messianic Judaism, recognize that the *mitzvot*, the currently observable commandments of the *Torah*, have not been abolished. However, the number that can be observed today has been significantly reduced because there is no longer a Temple and Levitical priesthood. But still, there are more than 125 *mitzvot* in the five books of Moses, which we can and believe we should observe. That's for us in Messianic Judaism. We are neither judges nor teachers for Yeshua's disciples who are part of the Church. Everyone who has placed their trust in Yeshua must make their own decisions. He has given us free will, a view also shared by the rabbis, and we each have the G-d-given right to choose whether to follow Him. But ultimately, Yeshua is the judge whom all His followers will face to determine whether their actions in life were correct (2 Corinthians 14:10, Romans 14:10).

But there's still more regarding obeying commands. *Torah*, teaching and instruction, as a principle of knowing ADONAI's will for us, is found throughout not only the Hebrew Scriptures, but also the whole of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. This means we also need to learn from ADONAI through His commandments in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua's disciples, as well as in the five books of Moses and the rest of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. In the New Covenant Scriptures, the word rendered "commandment" is found 67 times, the Greek word *entolē* (en-tol-ay'). But, because it's written 67 times, that doesn't mean there are only 67 commands in the books and letters written by Yeshua's followers. Someone has counted the *entolē*, and there are 1,050 of them, 1,050 commands given to Yeshua's followers. I can give you a complete list if you would like to know what they are, but what this means for a follower of Yeshua is that even though we are not under "the Curse of the Law," we are still expected to obey not only the active *mitzvot* of the *Torah* but also the *entolē*, the commandments found in the New Covenant Scriptures. Obedience is not for salvation, but it is essential as covenant loyalty.

There is one command given by Yeshua that might be the most important for His followers today. He said: 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). In the month of *Elul*, a time when we, as followers of Yeshua, reflect and examine our hearts, this should be one of the first things we should evaluate about ourselves. In this, Yeshua tells us that our relationships with one another are of utmost importance. Not only is our relationship with each other important personally, but our human relationships can also influence our relationship with Yeshua and the Father. If we harbor unforgiveness in our hearts towards others, ADONAI will not forgive our sins that we confess. Having a healthy relationship with ADONAI requires us to let go of grudges. We must obey Yeshua's command by forgiving each other. Disobedience to this one command has a very deep impact on the entire Body of Messiah, meaning that the love

we are required to have for each other is missing in those who hold grudges. For the individual follower of Yeshua, holding a grudge means not having his sins forgiven by the Father. What unforgiveness does to someone's relationship with Yeshua is a question I don't know the answer to. But it is so serious that anyone who holds unforgiveness should act quickly to fix it.

I believe we would all agree that among Yeshua's followers, unforgiveness is widespread, and our lack of forgiveness seems to be the main barrier to unity among those who follow Yeshua. We see it every day. Unforgiveness is regularly displayed on television by those who claim to follow Yeshua. Each of us must understand this: the foundation of our personal relationship with Yeshua, once established through faith, is to love and obey our Messiah. Being Yeshua's disciple and following Him means doing what He has asked us to do. It is essential that we both know and understand what He expects of us; that which He has asked us as His disciples to do. And what He has asked us to do is clearly written in His Word. As covenant members of the New Covenant, we are not under "the Curse of the Law." Yeshua has removed it by becoming a curse for us. We are not under the Law because righteousness cannot be gained by following laws. We are under ADONAI's grace, yet we are still expected to obey His Word. The word "obedient," when used regarding following the *Torah*, is not a negative term. It is our proof to ADONAI that we love Yeshua. If we genuinely love ADONAI, our G-d, with all our heart, mind, and soul, and love our neighbor as ourselves, we will also obey everything else that He has asked of us. During the month of *Elul*, after reciting the *Shema* and saying, "You are to love your neighbor as yourself," pause for a moment to reflect on this commandment. Is there anything you're holding against anyone? If you realize you are, admit it to Yeshua and extend forgiveness to your brother or sister. But it's even better to go to the person and forgive them face-to-face. This is just a small part of what it means for us to be "*Torah* observant." Obeying ADONAI's commandments is our way of showing Yeshua that we are truly His disciples! *Shabbat shalom!*