



Parasha Bereshit

October 18, 2025

Torah: Genesis 1:1 - 6:8
Haftarah: Isaiah 42:5 - 43:10
Ketuvim Shlichim: John 1:1-5

Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha. Our *parasha* today is *Bereshit*, which in English is Genesis. It is composed of the letter ב *beit*, a preposition meaning “in,” and ראשית “*reshit*,” meaning beginning. This past Wednesday, we celebrated *Simchat Torah*, the time of re-rolling our *Torah* scroll from the end of Deuteronomy to the beginning of Genesis, and we saw the word *Bereshit* with a large *beit*, similar to this: בראשית. A word about our *Sefer Torah*: We often explain during the *Torah* procession that we are not worshipping the *Torah* itself, but the written message inside. When it is being processed, that’s the truth, and we hope everyone can understand this. The *Torah* is ADONAI’s Words given to us through His human servants. It, along with the rest of the *Tanakh*, forms the foundation of our faith, which is strengthened by Yeshua’s disciples’ writings about Him and the connection between the New Covenant and the First Covenant. But it is also true that we cherish our *Sefer Torah* as something that was written by a *sofer* in Poland over 100 years ago, possibly used in synagogue worship, and that has survived the Holocaust. The reason for the large *beit* at the beginning of *Bereshit* is uncertain, as no other books of the *Torah* begin with a large letter. Some say it’s due to mysticism or Kabbalah, and others claim that when the *Torah* was divided into five separate scrolls, a large letter was inserted at the beginning of each book to indicate its start. Regardless of the reasoning behind the large letter, it is a Jewish scribal tradition that began in the Middle Ages. However, for us, it is a highly anticipated sign of ADONAI’s ongoing and repeated recounting of His relationship with Israel, of which we are a part—a symbol we look forward to seeing every year. To us, it means that His act of creation is significant, and it brings us joy to see this large letter once a year. It is a symbol for us, representing not only the story of the beginning of our universe created by G-d, but also a new start each year as we eagerly follow the cycle of reading each of the five books of the *Torah*.

The seven days of creation in *Bereshit* were crowned by G-d’s resting on the seventh day. *2 God completed—on the seventh day—His work that He made, and He ceased—on the seventh day—from all His work that He made. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, for on it He ceased from all His work that God created for the purpose of preparing.* (Genesis 2:2-3 TLV). When G-d sanctified the seventh day of the week, He set it apart and made it holy. This is our first notice of the seventh day of rest, which He will later specify in the First Covenant. But it is here in Genesis chapter 2 that we learn that this is the day which ADONAI established as a day for rest and communion with Him.

Israel learned this early on and observed the *Shabbat*. Whether or not they kept it before ADONAI commanded it for them, we don’t know. We do know that ADONAI’s first mention of the Sabbath after the Book of Genesis was just before giving the *Torah* at Mount Sinai. Approximately thirty days after leaving Egypt, He gave Israel manna and instructed them not to gather it on the seventh day, but to gather enough on the sixth day. This was a

brief glimpse of what ADONAI would command at Mount Sinai regarding *Shabbat*. In the years after the wilderness experience and the conquest of Canaan, we do not know exactly how Israel observed the Sabbath, except that they did not work or light fires on it. Much later, after the Babylonian captivity, the Jews themselves, especially the group that would become the Pharisees, started to establish rules for their Shabbat activities. There might have been similar rules in earlier years, but no records exist.

Those early rules still apply today for observant Jews and are called *halakha*, which are rabbinic interpretations of how the *Torah* should be obeyed. What today's follower of Rabbinic Judaism can do on *Shabbat* is based on the different types of work required to build the Tabernacle in the wilderness. The *halakha* established by the 39 different types of work, *melachot*, required to build the Tabernacle was finalized sometime after 300 CE by Rabbi Akiva and his school. Yes, it was the same Rabbi Akiva who later proclaimed *Bar Kosiba*, meaning "Son of a Lie," as *Bar Kokhba*, "Son of a Star," as the *Mashiach* of Israel before the second Roman War against Israel (and their defeat around 330 CE). For the orthodox Jew and *Chassidim* today, those rules are now firmly established.

Halakha, הלכה, literally means "the path that one walks" and is derived from the word *halak*, הלך, meaning "to walk." It is a religious practice, a system of rules that is reinterpreted generation after generation to suit observant Jews. Re-interpretation is needed due to new inventions. This means that for the religious observant, building an actual fire now also includes driving a car, which produces a spark, and turning on or off an electrical switch for lights, which may create a spark. In Israel, this means that on *Shabbat*, the elevators operate continuously, stopping at each floor. In Israel, you can't push a button connected to electricity on *Shabbat*. It also means that in hotels on *Shabbat*, room lights come on and go off according to a hotel timer. These devices are also available for use in observant homes. The original rules are documented in the two *Talmuds*, Jerusalem and Babylonian, and were first written down in the *Mishnah*, the written form of the Oral Torah, around 200 CE. Additionally, there is the *Gemara*, which includes the additions made by later rabbis before the final version of the *Talmuds*. All of this is law for the observant Jew, equal in weight to the written *Torah* of Moses.

As Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we also honor the seventh day, *Shabbat*, because G-d sanctified it, set it apart, to be a holy day, as is told in Genesis 2. We also understand the *Torah's* teachings about *Shabbat*, which instruct us not to engage in our ordinary work. We do not follow the *halakha* of Orthodox or Chassidic Judaism but have adopted their term to describe our approach to observing the Sabbath and other *Torah* commands. We also do not have a written list of prohibited practices and work that we cannot do, and *halakha* may vary from one Messianic Jewish congregation to another.

Employment work on *Shabbat* is necessary for some to survive, and we don't judge them if they must work. But ADONAI's command is not to do regular work on the Sabbath, which means that one's goal should be to seek a way not to have to violate His command. The word *melakha* implies an occupation. Strong's Online Concordance defines it as: Work, occupation, craftsmanship, or service. At *Beit Shalom*, we don't have a fixed set of rules regarding the Sabbath, but rather a general teaching based on our interpretation of the *Torah*. Each person must decide how they will observe the Sabbath, recognizing that they are under the watch of the author of *Shabbat*. How we observe *Shabbat* is not driven by fear of punishment but by the desire to love and honor our Creator's will as outlined in the *Torah*.

for the Sabbath—His teachings and instructions for us. It is a matter of the heart, and each person is responsible to ADONAI for how they observe His *Shabbat* outside the synagogue.

Genesis describes the beginning, and John chapter 1 also refers to it: *1 In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.* (John 1:1-2 TLV). This is about Yeshua, who is called “the Word,” who was with G-d and is G-d, in the sense that He is divine, a part of the G-dhead. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, the word *Elohim*, a plural term but usually translated as G-d, singular, is used to describe who created the heavens and the earth. Our understanding of who was present at the creation, as represented by the word *Elohim*, was ADONAI, the Father, Yeshua, the Word who is the Son, and the *Ruach*, their Spirit, but the actual creation was carried out by “the Word.” John continues: *3 All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being.* (John 1:3 TLV). This is also confirmed by *Sha’ul*, who wrote: *15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created— in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen, whether thrones or angelic powers or rulers or authorities. All was created through Him and for Him. 17 He exists before everything, and in Him all holds together.* (Colossians 1:15-17 TLV). That’s very clear. Yeshua created everything, even His adversary, *HaSatan*. Why would He do that? He did it to give us a choice. We can choose our Creator and all that He stands for, or we can choose our own path, which most likely would coincide with the path of the Adversary. But we are not forced. It must be our decision. It is the same with *Shabbat*. We can do our own thing, or we can obey our Creator’s wishes.

John chapter 1 describes Yeshua as the *logos*, “word” in Greek. In the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, which dates back to about 200 years before Yeshua’s time, the word *logos* represents the Hebrew word *devar*, which also means word. From this, we recognize Yeshua as the “living Word,” “the Word made flesh” (John 1:14), as shown by the actions of the Word throughout many Scriptures. The written Word is alive and active, and Yeshua embodies it. Colossians 1:16 says that He created “the seen and the unseen,” which includes everything.

When a group of Pharisees questioned Yeshua about what could be done on the Sabbath, He responded: *5 Or haven’t you read in the Torah that on Shabbat the kohanim in the Temple break Shabbat and yet are innocent? 6 “But I tell you that something greater than the Temple is here. 7 If you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you wouldn’t have condemned the innocent. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat.”* (Matthew 12:5-8 TLV). To understand, we must examine the question of how the *kohanim* break *Shabbat* in the Temple yet are innocent. There is no doubt that many tasks the priests and Levites were required to perform would have violated some of the 39 categories later established by Rabbinic Judaism, as *melakha*, or work. Yet, Yeshua said that they were innocent. They were innocent because ADONAI permits the performance of *melakhot* (plural), which is work done to facilitate worship that He has ordained, and we connect that to what we do here in the synagogue on *Shabbat*. There is no question that work is performed here on *Shabbat*, but it is work done to support our worship and the events of the day here. Our goal is only to do what is necessary and nothing more, excluding tasks that can be completed on a regular weekday. Again, it is a heart thing. We want to obey ADONAI’s commands to honor the *Shabbat*, both in the synagogue and outside of it.

Outside the synagogue on *Shabbat*, if we don’t have to work on that day to live, we choose not to do so, and that includes work at home. We choose not to do ordinary tasks

like washing clothes or mowing the lawn, things that could be done on another day. The *Torah* also commands that one's servant should not be made to work on *Shabbat*. We don't have indentured servants today, but we interpret this to mean that we should not cause someone else to work on *Shabbat*, which in turn means that we should not buy or sell on *Shabbat*. Buying causes a salesperson to work. This includes eating in a restaurant. Not only are the salespeople made to work, but also the cooks and the servers. If possible, we should arrange to buy the necessary things before or after *Shabbat*. In the Ten Words given at Mount Sinai, ADONAI said: 8 "*Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy.*" (Exodus 20:8 TLV). That should be our desire, to keep ADONAI's *Shabbat* separate, holy, and not like the other days of the week. That's why the *Havdalah* ceremony is held, which celebrates the end of *Shabbat* by lighting a candle and marking the separation as we move back into a regular weekday. While *Havdalah* is a command for the observant Jew, for us it is a meaningful tradition, and although we aren't required to do it, we have the choice to participate if we want. However, if we do all the routine things that we want to do on *Shabbat*, we are not truly honoring it or keeping it set apart as holy. We should not treat it as a weekday.

Matthew 12:8 tells us that the "Son of Man," Yeshua, is L-rd of the *Shabbat*. As L-rd of the *Shabbat*, He has authority over it and has made some exceptions. We read about the *kohanim* working in the Temple on *Shabbat*, yet they are blameless, working to enable the worship of others. Once, when Yeshua was having a Sabbath meal at a Pharisee's house and healed a man, some Pharisees objected that it was work. 5 "*Then He said to them, 'Which of you, with a son or an ox falling into a well on Yom Shabbat, will not immediately pull him out?'*" (Luke 14:5 TLV). Certain types of work can be performed on *Shabbat*, because it is good to do good on *Shabbat*. Emergency *Mitzvahs* done on *Shabbat* to help our neighbor are what Yeshua would do. Stop and change flat tires for the elderly. Assist someone who is in real need. We also interpret Yeshua's words about "the ox in the ditch" to mean that necessary things can be done, buying medicine or gasoline if you run out. But preparation before *Shabbat* is ideal. Get your groceries and your gas on Friday. Plan what you will need for *Shabbat*. If you're on a trip in your car on *Shabbat* and need gasoline, buy it. If you need food on your trip, go to a restaurant. Yeshua knows whether your goal is to honor *Shabbat*. We should choose to do what He wants us to do, honoring both the day and our Creator. But if we interpret the *Torah* too strictly, we could never take a trip or stay in a hotel on a *Shabbat*. We would be unable to attend our Messianic conferences, which promote Yeshua and provide much-needed fellowship. I don't believe that Yeshua would have us interpret the *Torah* so rigidly that we are that severely limited in worship and ministry. That's our *halakha*. That's what ADONAI has said to me as the congregational leader here. One day, I will stand before Him to find out if my interpretation of the *Torah* was correct. You must pray about it, too. While this is what I recommend, each of you must make your own decision. One translation of the word *shavat* from which *Shabbat* is derived, is "ceasing." We not only stop working, but also stop trying to do our own thing, instead focusing on appearing before ADONAI in worship and honoring Him by refraining from weekday activities.

We are told numerous times in the *Torah* to honor the seventh day *Shabbat*, but there are also special *Shabbats* which ADONAI has commanded to be observed. As a complete group, every special Sabbath is found in Leviticus 23. 1 *Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 2 'Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, and tell them: These are the appointed moadim of Adonai, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My moadim.'*" (Leviticus 23:1-2 TLV). A *moed*, the singular of *moadim*, means appointed time, a time which ADONAI has set for those in covenant with Him to meet with Him. He has made an appointment with us to meet at these

specific times. Then ADONAI said: 3 “*Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You are to do no work—it is a Shabbat to Adonai in all your dwellings.*” (Leviticus 23:3 TLV). The command ADONAI originally gave in the Ten Words is repeated here, not to work on the Sabbath, the day of ceasing from the work of the six days. Solemn rest can be understood as genuine rest, sincerely stopping work. The day of *Shabbat* is also a holy convocation, which means that ADONAI has made an appointment with us and requires us to meet with Him each *Shabbat*. Our meeting with ADONAI is a set-apart time on the Sabbath. Convocation means the formal calling of an assembly. We have been called. If we say that we believe the *Torah* is for today, can we choose which *mitzvot* we wish to obey? No, we can’t. That Yeshua’s greater body of followers is in such terrible shape today is partially due to everyone choosing to do what is right in their own eyes. Yes, I believe we should be here every *Shabbat* unless we have a good reason not to. There are valid reasons, but it shouldn’t be solely because we’re a little tired. As followers of Yeshua, we are called to go the second mile.

There are also seven special Sabbaths listed in Leviticus 23. They are: the first and seventh days of *Chag HaMatzot* (the Festival of Unleavened Bread), the day of *Shavuot* (the Festival of Weeks), the Day of *Rosh Hashanah/Yom Teruah* (the Festival of Trumpets), the Day of *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), the first day of *Sukkot* (the Festival of Tabernacles), and finally, *Shemini Atzeret* (the Eighth Day of Assembly). ADONAI commands us to refrain from work on each of these seven days.

For us as Messianic followers of Yeshua, observing *Shabbat* isn’t about a list of rules or legal dos and don’ts, but rather a principle given to us by our Creator. We no longer need to build fires to cook our food, but I don’t believe in lighting fires on the Sabbath. It’s possible that a situation could arise requiring a fire in an emergency, and then Yeshua’s rules as Lord of the Sabbath would apply. If we were freezing in the wilderness, we would build a fire. But it’s not just about rules and regulations, but a matter of the heart — a desire to please the lover of our souls. We have no *Shabbat* police, and we are not watching you, but He is! May He be pleased with what He sees.

The seven special Sabbaths in Leviticus 23 are only required to be observed in the Land of Israel, but we do observe them here to the best of our ability. We honor them not out of obligation, but because we view the spring festivals as fulfilled by Yeshua and the fall festivals as previews of future fulfillments by Him. While we want to observe them as best we can, we should not make them more important than the weekly Sabbath. It too is a rehearsal, a rehearsal of the coming Sabbath rest of eternity and the promise of living with Yeshua for eternity. In that regard, it is more important than all the others, because it will be His final fulfillment. Although the seven special *Shabbats* are not commanded for us who reside outside of Israel, ADONAI does command us to observe the weekly Sabbath wherever we are in the world. 3... “*it is a Shabbat to Adonai in all your dwellings.*” (Leviticus 23:3b TLV).

It was the *Shabbat* that kept the Jewish people together for thousands of years, serving as the glue that held them together through all kinds of adversities in many different nations. It is also essential for us in Messianic Judaism today. We cannot exist as isolated, individual entities. As a movement, we will not succeed unless we obey ADONAI. He ordained the Sabbath, and it continues to be His desire for Yeshua’s followers to meet Him on *Shabbat*. May each of us truly feel the significance of *Shabbat* in our hearts. *Shabbat shalom!*