



Parashiyot Vaya'khel-Pekudei

March 14, 2026

Torah: Exodus 35:1-40:38
Haftarah: Ezekiel 45:16-46:18
Ketuvim Shlichim: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
1 Corinthians 3:1-17

Messianic Judaism 30-2026 CE

#4: Binding and Loosing

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha. Understanding Scripture can be challenging. The diverse interpretations seen across various denominations and individual churches worldwide vividly illustrate this. But there can only be one correct understanding, and we are challenged to find it and walk in the truth of ADONAI's Word. Who has the truth? Probably no one, but we won't know until Yeshua returns. The challenge is always the same: seek truth! Yeshua said: 18 *"Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass."* (Matthew 5:18 TLV). His words prompt us, as His Messianic followers, to examine our most basic beliefs. But how can Yeshua make such a bold claim? He can make this statement because He is the Creator who spoke light into existence first, and then everything else. He is the Creator and has the authority to make such a statement. John wrote: 3 *All things were made through Him (Yeshua), and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being.* (John 1:3 TLV). And Sha'ul wrote: 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 1:16-17 TLV). We understand Yeshua's statement to mean that the *Torah* is important for His followers today, not only for understanding, but also for obedience.

When examining Scriptural concepts and ultimately deciding how to interpret them, we do so for our group and not for any other part of Yeshua's body, and we will explain why shortly. We accept the Scriptures as revealing the fundamental truth of our existence, trusting the canonized versions as accurate. Nowhere in the Hebrew or Greek texts is the *Torah*, or Law, described as irrelevant to us today, and we believe ADONAI's complete canonized written Scriptures are our only source of truth. We cannot rely on any non-canonized Gospel, of which there are many, the Book of Enoch, the Oral Torah (which became the written *Mishnah*), the *Talmud*, or any human tradition; only the canonized Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation, serve as our authority. With this in mind, we examine Yeshua's words more closely.

The King James version puts the next verse this way: 17 *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."* (Matthew 5:17 KJV). The Greek word for "destroy" is *kataluo* (kat-al-oo'-o), meaning "to destroy or overthrow." The word translated fulfill is *pleroo* (play-ro'-o), meaning "to make full, to complete." The King James translators understood that by fulfilling the Law, Jesus ended the Law. However, there is a significant problem with using the word "law," *nomos* in Greek, in the writings of Yeshua's

followers. The problem is what it means. Its definition is: “Anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, a law, or a command.” That’s the problem: *nomos* can apply to so many things; even a custom! That’s a very broad definition. The major problem when reading Matthew through Revelation is that the term *nomos*, which translates to Law, doesn’t fully capture the meaning of תורה, *Torah*, the Hebrew word that it refers to. And there is no other Greek word that can describe this concept. *Torah* comes from the Hebrew root ירה, *yarah*, meaning “to shoot an arrow or to direct,” which suggests giving guidance toward understanding. Greek is a very expressive language, but unfortunately, it does not have a word that expresses the meaning of *Torah*. But as a Hebrew speaker, *Torah* is the word Yeshua would have used, and those who heard Him would have understood. He most likely spoke Aramaic as His daily language. It was the language the Jews learned in their captivity in Babylon and then brought back to Israel, but Hebrew was always the language of the synagogue. He may have said “*targum*,” the Aramaic word meaning “translation,” which correctly expresses the word “*Torah*,” but whatever He said, His disciples understood what He meant. As He sat on the mountain teaching His disciples, He spoke about the validity of the *Torah* for His followers, a system of teaching and instruction that includes laws. Even if the everyday language was Aramaic, there is no question that the language of the synagogue and the Temple was Hebrew. The people may not have used Hebrew as an everyday language, but they did use it every *Shabbat* in the synagogues.

Yeshua’s disciples were fishermen and common folk. The people of Galilee were belittled for their lack of education by the people of Judah and by certain Scribes and Pharisees (Acts 2:7; 4:13). Their snooty remarks suggested that Yeshua’s disciples lacked formal learning. The Hebrew term for the Galilean people is *am-Haaretz*, meaning “people of the land.” The *Sanhedrin* used it to refer to Yeshua’s disciples *Kefa* and *Yochanan* (Peter and John), and, in Acts 4:13, essentially called them simple, uneducated country bumpkins. They didn’t think these Galileans could understand the finer points of the *Torah*.

The Hebrew word *Torah* literally means “teaching or instruction,” and this creates a problem in the Greek of Yeshua’s followers’ writings, where *nomos* is translated as “Law.” However, it’s the only word available, and we have to use it, but it causes a major problem for understanding, and it has conditioned many of Yeshua’s followers in the Church for hundreds of years to have a knee-jerk reaction whenever they hear the word “Law.” In their minds, it almost boils down to this: “law is bad!” But that’s not what Yeshua, who proclaimed the validity of the *Torah*, intended.

The truth is that the *Torah* is teaching and instruction for righteous living, ADONAI’s system of training, and it contains laws. When Yeshua said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the *Torah*, that is, to abolish the Law, but to fulfill,” the general Christian understanding is that by fulfilling it, he abolished it. The Greek word *pleroo* (play-ro'-o), rendered as “fulfill” in English, may be understood in Hebrew as *L’kiyyem et haTorah*, “to comply with the *Torah*,” and it usually refers expressly to “obeying the *Torah*.” There is evidence in the *Mishnah* and other rabbinic writings that the opposite was true for the word “abolish.” A rabbi who misinterpreted the *Torah* was said to be “abolishing it.” A rabbi who correctly interpreted it was said to be “fulfilling it.” By using the terms “abolish” and “fulfill,” Yeshua used Hebrew idioms to tell his disciples that he was sent to interpret the *Torah* correctly. And it is impossible to understand every verse in the writings of Yeshua’s followers just from the Greek or English words alone. We need to realize that some phrases are Hebrew idioms and seek to understand their meanings. The many Hebrew idioms in the Book of Matthew also provide evidence that this book, written in Greek, may originally have been written in Hebrew.

When Yeshua referred to the *Torah*, we must also understand that He was not only talking about the Ten Commandments but also supporting the ongoing, unchanging authority and

validity of the entire *Torah* of Moses, which was in effect at that time. And he expressed this in the strongest possible language. We have many examples in the Psalms expressing the goodness of the *Torah*. David wrote: 8 *The Torah of Adonai is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of Adonai is trustworthy, making the simple wise. 9 The precepts of Adonai are right, giving joy to the heart. The mitzvot of Adonai are pure, giving light to the eyes.* (Psalm 19:8-9 TLV). The words, *Torah*, testimony, precepts and commandments are: *Torat* (תּוֹרָה), *edut* (עֵדוּת), *pikudei* (פְּקוּדֵי), and *mitzvot* (מִצְוֹת). These words express the thoughts that ADONAI's commands are perfect, trustworthy, right, and pure, and His desire is for us to follow them. As followers of Yeshua, we must remember that when we interpret the Gospels and the epistles, the *Torah* is the eternal Word of ADONAI, and we can't go about picking and choosing which commands to keep and which to throw out.

Yeshua continued: 18 *"Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass."* (Matthew 5:1:18 TLV). The Greek word for "smallest letter" is *iota*, a tiny Greek letter often translated into English as "jot." When He mentioned *Torah*, Yeshua was referring to the *Torah* of Moses, the only written *Torah* in existence, and He specifically referred to the *yod*, the smallest Hebrew letter. He pointed out that the *Torah* was so important that not even the smallest letter in the alphabet would pass away. But He went even further than that, to something even tinier. The Greek says, "Not even a *kerasia* (ker-ah'-yah)," meaning a 'little horn,' "would be removed." This is sometimes listed as a "stroke" or a "title" in Christian Bibles. The Hebrew word is *kotz*, sometimes translated as "thorn." Yeshua's explicit use of words in these verses reminds us of the care with which the *sofer*, the Jewish Scribe, would take in copying each letter of the *Torah*. Even the slightest mistake would invalidate the whole sheet of animal skin, and the *sofer* would have to begin copying again. The same was true with the *kotz*, the tiny decorative mark on some letters. If a scribe smudged just that one small mark, he would have to start with a new sheet of parchment. Yeshua's words meant that he upheld the correctness of the *Torah* and would not change even one small letter or decorative mark. He stressed to His disciples that neither a *yod* nor a *kotz* would pass from the *Torah* until everything that must happen has happened or "until all things come to pass." Some interpreters have sought to make Yeshua's words fit their antinomian theology. Some say that the words "until all things come to pass" meant that the *Torah* was coming to an end, and that end came when Yeshua died on the stake and said, "It is finished." Others say this had to do with Yeshua's perfect obedience being finished, and thereby, "all things had come to pass" when He had perfectly obeyed everything. Others have said that the *Torah* remained until the destruction of the Temple. But none of these ideas can be true, because Yeshua was using Hebrew parallelism. The phrase "until all things come to pass" is parallel to the phrase "until heaven and earth pass away," and both mean the same thing. All things won't come to pass until heaven and earth pass away. Paraphrasing this, we can say, "The authority of the *Torah* will last as long as we stand on the earth and look at the sky."

None of what has been said is meant to criticize Yeshua's followers who interpret it differently than we do. However, it's clear that we do understand it differently. But there's no question that the Bible is a Jewish document from Genesis to Revelation. Not only was it written by Jews, but its content is thoroughly Hebraic. It is best understood by focusing on Jewish idioms, Jewish ways of thinking, and Jewish Biblical interpretations that clarify its themes. My prayer is that Bible readers in Yeshua's larger body will read with these considerations in mind and seek to understand what the writers originally intended, rather than trying to express it in a modern way that distances them from the truth of the writers' original meaning. The *Torah* states: 2 *"You must not add to the word that I am commanding you or take away from it—in order to keep the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am commanding you."* (Deuteronomy 4:2 TLV). (also Deuteronomy 12:32). ADONAI only wishes what He has inspired in His writers and has been confirmed as Scripture to be followed. While we do our best to strictly adhere to these words

within our Messianic Jewish faith, we also understand that some of Yeshua's followers hold different beliefs and remove parts of it from their belief system. But it is not our place to prescribe what they should obey, and they must decide for themselves how to interpret Scripture.

We believe mankind has been given "free will," the absolute right to make their own life choices, a belief not only found within Messianic Judaism but also in conservative traditional Judaism. This idea is introduced to us in the creation story as shown through Adam's and Eve's free choice to disobey ADONAI: 6 ...*So she took of its fruit, and she ate. She also gave to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.* (Genesis 3:6b TLV). Their free will caused all of us, their descendants, to be in the mess we're in today. Moses' words also demonstrate this truth: 19 "*I call the heavens and the earth to witness about you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live,..*" (Deuteronomy 30:19 TLV). The words וַבְּחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים *Uvacharta bachayim*, "choose life," are words that show us how we must live. Moses' words show that the Israelites had a choice. They could either accept or reject what was offered to them, in other words, free will. Today, we can still choose, but even before we can choose life, we must choose G-d, recognizing that He is G-d. It is only after acknowledging ADONAI as the Creator of the heavens and the earth that we can focus on the *chayim*, the life, which we gain from Yeshua, the Son of G-d. Following these choices, many more remain, including how we will understand every verse of the Scriptures.

In Matthew chapter 16, Yeshua and His disciples had travelled to the region of Casarea Philippi, a city in the northeastern part of Israel. The area had been given to Herod the Great by Caesar Augustus and he enlarged the city that was there. It was later inherited by Herod's son Philip, who renamed it Casarea Philippi in honor of Augustus. We were privileged to visit that area on each of our congregational visits to Israel. Each was an awe-inspiring experience, almost as if we were standing exactly where the disciples stood to hear Yeshua's words. Scripture doesn't specify where Yeshua was when He made this statement, but I imagine Him standing near the base of Mount Hermon in the city of Banias, to the right of where the Banias River flows out. The ancient city was originally called Panias after the goat-footed god Pan, who played the pipes, but later became Banias because Arabic lacks the letter "p". On the base of the mountain to the left of the river is the ancient cave dedicated to Pan.

It was then that Yeshua asked His disciples, "Who do the people say the Son of Man is?" they answered: 14 ..., "*Some say John the Immerser, others say Elijah, and still others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.*" (Matthew 16:14b TLV). His more pointed question was: 15 ..., "*But who do you say I am?*" (Matthew 16:15b TLV). *Shimon Kefa* (Simon Peter) answered: 16 ..., "*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*" (Matthew 16:16b TLV). 17 "*Yeshua said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven! 18 And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it."* (Matthew 16:17-18 TLV). Yeshua blessed him for his answer and made a wordplay using his name, but I don't believe it's the one we've heard so often. In Greek, *Petros* is a male name meaning "small rock," and *petra* means "cliff or boulder." In the usual understanding derived from the Greek, Yeshua was making a distinction between the two sizes of rocks. But I believe that because Yeshua's original conversation was in Aramaic or Hebrew, we need to replace the Greek words with the appropriate ones Yeshua used. *Kefa* is an Aramaic word meaning "rock," as well as a name, and would have been used as a loanword in Hebrew, just as *Abba* is Aramaic and is used in Hebrew. While the present translation is from Greek, Yeshua was speaking Aramaic and would likely have said: "You are *Kefa*, meaning rock, and on this *kefa*, this rock, I will build my *qahal*. *Qahal* is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek, *Ecclesia*, meaning congregation, community, or assembly. The *kefa*, the rock, upon which Yeshua would build His *qahal* is the truth that "He is the Messiah, the Son of the Living G-d." He is the "Anointed One," ADONAI's Son, whom He sent to save the

world, and it is upon this truth that Yeshua has built his community composed of every person who has trusted in Him. Essentially, He said: *Kefa*, you are named rock, but the rock that is the truth about me is the rock upon which I will build my *qahal*!

We can almost see Yeshua pointing to the pagan temple within the cave as He spoke against the gates of *שְׁאוֹל Sheol*. *Hades* is the Greek term used both in the Book of Matthew and the Septuagint, and its Hebrew counterpart is *Sheol*. Both words refer to the grave. I believe Yeshua meant that His followers would not be defeated by death and would live beyond physical life into eternity, possibly even referring to an individual's overcoming of death by trusting in Him as Savior.

But Peter was not "the rock," as some groups claim. "This rock" represents the foundational truth that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, who possesses the authority as the Messiah to build His *Ekklesia*, *קהל qahal* in Hebrew. Both words mean assembly or congregation. At that time, the assembly consisted of His Jewish followers, but today it includes His Jewish and Gentile followers worldwide. But even before the 1st century, the foundations of Yeshua's *Ekklesia* existed.

Then, Yeshua said to *Kefa*: *19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven, and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.*" (Matthew 16:19 TLV). What are the keys to His kingdom, and why did He give them to Peter? The keys are authority, authority to make binding decisions, and they were symbolically given to Peter as the recognized leader of the disciples, and also possibly because he answered Yeshua's question correctly. Yeshua said: *19 ... Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.*" (Matthew 16:16b TLV). But His words have been largely misunderstood. They are not magic phrases to deliver healing or to command demons. They are legal terms used by Jewish rabbis a generation before Yeshua's time, the technical language of the Pharisees. His disciples understood what He meant because they had heard about the foremost Pharisees, *Rabbi Hillel* and *Rabbi Shammai*.

Here again, we have to put the Greek back into Hebrew to understand what Yeshua said. The Greek words *deo* (deh-oh), meaning "forbid" (or "bind"), and *luo* (loo-oh), meaning "permit" (or "loose"), correspond to the Hebrew words *asar* and *hitir*, which the ancient rabbis used to render *halakhic* rulings. To understand what Yeshua meant, we need to understand what He was referring to. Both then and now, rabbis issue rulings for their followers. The whole of it is called *halakha*, the collective authoritative decisions for their group. Derived from *halakh*, meaning "walk," *halakha* defines what its followers can and cannot do. Essentially, it is "their followers' spiritual walk" shaped by the way the leader interprets Scripture. *Rabbi Shammai* would sometimes "bind," while *Rabbi Hillel* would "loose," and *Hillel* would sometimes "bind," and *Shammai* would "loose." An actual example relates to divorce. *Rabbi Shammai* "bound" that a man could not divorce his wife except for a serious reason, but *Rabbi Hillel* "loosed" this restriction and allowed divorce for something as trivial as burning a meal. Each of them had a movement called "a house." The result was that *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, their followers, would obey their respective rulings. Even after the rabbis' deaths, this system continued within the Pharisees and continues in use today within Rabbinic Judaism. Yeshua's disciples understood what He meant by *asar* and *hitir*, bind and loose. They understood that it meant leaders within His Movement could interpret Scripture and make *halakhic* decisions for Yeshua's followers, a practice that continues today. As an ordained congregational leader, I have Yeshua's authority to bind or loose, meaning to interpret Scripture for the congregation I serve, but not for someone else's group. However, we generally understand binding and loosing within the broader context of Messianic and Christian doctrine, as it has developed over the years. But the result

is that each person who issues rulings, interpretations, and ways to understand Scripture must stand before Yeshua at the judgment and give an account to Him. And He doesn't say that all the rulings we make are correct, just that He gives us the authority to make them. The meaning of Yeshua's words is that we have His authority to interpret the *Torah* and teach within our area of authority, but not to exercise authority over others. It is our authority to teach based on our understanding of Scripture, but not spiritual authority over *HaSatan* or demonic forces.

Reading between the lines, we understand Yeshua knew that divergences of belief would come within His *Ekklesia*, and He gave its leaders the "keys of the kingdom," the authority to interpret the *Torah* for their respective groups. We value our Christian brothers and sisters for their genuine desire to follow Jesus. We also acknowledge that Yeshua has granted both Christian leaders and Messianic Jewish leaders the freedom to interpret Scripture and establish *halacha* (rulings) that guide how each group follows Yeshua. We also sincerely wish to be in unity of spirit with them, even though we understand some things differently. We are not judges of how Christians walk out their faith, nor are they judges of how we walk out our faith. We are all responsible to ADONAI for our decisions and must answer to Yeshua when we stand before Him. *Sha'ul* wrote: *10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad.* (2 Corinthians 5:10 TLV). (also, Romans 14:10). These verses also imply that we, as individuals, are accountable for every action we take in this life. Shouldn't this knowledge spur us to seek a greater understanding of our faith and to act more faithfully?

But differing beliefs should not create disunity. We want to be united with our Christian brothers and sisters and to love them as Yeshua commanded us. He said: *34 "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13:34-35 TLV). He said that we must love the others among His disciples as He loves us. His commandment elevated the standard of love from love of neighbor to sacrificial love. It's very hard at times to practice this kind of love even within our own group, but Yeshua's words are clear. He wants our love for our Christian brothers and sisters to be sacrificial, the same kind of love He has for us. According to *Sha'ul*, Yeshua's body, His bride, is to be without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). It's up to us to make it that way. *Shabbat shalom!*