



Parshiyot Acharei Mot/Kedoshim

April 25, 2026

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

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

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Luke 4:14-21; Acts 13:14-16; 17:1-3

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha! Our previous two sessions were about the New Covenant, and today's discussion is a follow-up on how we are to comply with it. If we have understood and agree with what the Scriptures require of us, are we doing what Yeshua asks of us? Yeshua said, *40 "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher"* (Luke 6:40). We understand that Yeshua perfectly kept the *Torah* and taught His disciples to do the same. In the Sermon on the Mount, He stated clearly that He did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17-18). He added a sobering warning: *19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:19). We are not excused from ignoring even the very least of the commandments. As Yochanan (John) reminds us, *4 "Everyone practicing sin also practices lawlessness—indeed, sin is lawlessness"* (1 John 3:4 TLV). Breaking even the "least" commandment is sin.

The point many of us miss is that our Messiah requires much more of us than we think. While a relationship with Yeshua brings love, peace, and joy, that is just the beginning. We are held accountable for our personal holiness and how we respond to ADONAI's instructions. The truth is that each of us continues to struggle with sin after salvation. Even *Sha'ul*, who learned the Gospel directly from Yeshua, described this internal battle: *22 "For I delight in the Torah of God with respect to the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in my body parts, battling against the law of my mind and bringing me into bondage under the law of sin which is in my body parts. 24 Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"* (Romans 7:22-24 TLV). While the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) lives within us, our minds are still under our control. We must make the daily decision whether or not to obey ADONAI's commandments.

How do we deal with these daily sins? Yochanan provides the roadmap: *8 "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:8-9). We must not pretend to be perfect, as that makes Yeshua out to be a liar. Instead, we must use the provision ADONAI has made for us. Yochanan continues: *1 "My children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Intercessor with the Father—the righteous Messiah Yeshua. 2 He is the atonement for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world"* (1 John 2:1-2). Yeshua is ready and willing to forgive us and keep us on the path of righteousness—if we but ask.

To be a truly obedient disciple of Yeshua, the first step is to know what He asks of us; after all, if we do not know His commands, we cannot hope to obey them. While the prospect of learning these requirements may seem overwhelming, they are structured into two primary categories.

First, there are the commandments of the *Torah*. Among the rabbis, it is generally accepted that there are 613 *mitzvot* (commands). This specific count was first recorded by Rabbi Simlai, a third-century CE teacher, in the Babylonian *Talmud* (Makkot 23b). Although there may be more than 613, the rabbinic list serves as an excellent starting point that each of us can eventually customize. Dealing with these is easier than one might think, as many have been rendered inactive due to the absence of the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood. We should know which of the remaining *mitzvot* are applicable to us as individuals.

Beyond the *Torah*, there are the commandments found in the *Ketuvim Shlichim* (Writings of the Emissaries). Finis J. Dake (1902–1987) is credited with identifying 1,050 such commands in his *Dake Annotated Reference Bible*. We might recoil in terror at the thought of mastering more than 1,000 requirements, wondering whether Yeshua really requires us to know so much to be His disciples. The answer is yes. However, the 1,050 New Covenant commands are manageable because they are essentially extensions of the original 613, all of which are primarily based on the foundational principles of loving G-d and loving our neighbor.

The commands in the five books of the *Torah* are traditionally divided into three categories: *Mishpatim* מִשְׁפָּטִים (Judgments), *Eidot* עֵדוּת (Testimonies), and *Chukim* חֻקִּים (Statutes/Decrees). This classification is based on the text itself, which lists these terms as distinct groupings that must be “guarded.” While the *Torah* provides the names, the theological distinctions among these terms were defined by rabbinic study, and many do not apply to those in Messianic Judaism because they are fences around the *Torah*, for example, the prohibition against mixing milk and meat. There is no command that prohibits eating milk and meat together. The rabbinic command is derived from a fence placed around Exodus 23:19b, 19 ... “Do not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (TLV), an attempt to prevent the accidental use of an animal’s milk in preparing the meat of its young. *Mishpatim* are rational laws that govern interpersonal behavior and social morality, such as prohibitions against murder and theft. *Eidot* are symbolic practices that remind us of core beliefs or historical events, usually given by divine command. *Shabbat* and Passover are examples. *Chukim* are regulations that go beyond human understanding and are followed because they represent G-d’s command, without any discernible logical justification. Examples include the Kosher laws, *Shaatznez* (mixing of wool and linen), and *Kilayim* (crossbreeding of animals or mixing of seeds). It’s not because eating pork or shellfish is bad for your health, but because ADONAI said, “Don’t eat it.”

Leviticus 23:3 is a command commonly violated, often without any thought of it as sin. 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). It has two components: 1) Do no work wherever you live, that is, in Israel or another place in the world. 2) It is a holy convocation. What this command is is defined by the verse before it. 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 moedim” (Leviticus 23:2 TLV). *Moed* מועד, the singular of *moedim* מועדים, literally means “appointment.” In a biblical context, it refers to ADONAI’s appointed times, which serve as sacred, scheduled meetings between Him and His people. First listed, *Shabbat*, occurring weekly, is the most important of the other *moedim*, which occur annually. Holy convocations, *Miqraei kodesh* מקראי קדש, are declared times of meeting set-apart by ADONAI for meeting with Him, and include not only *Shabbat*, but also the seven special *Moedim* and their associated special Sabbaths. Convoke means to call together or summon people for an official, formal meeting or assembly, a convocation, something that ADONAI does every seven days. Where does He expect us to meet Him?

One of the most controversial meetings in the Book of Acts, from a modern perspective, is the Jerusalem Council, recorded in chapter 15. It was called to deal with the question of whether new Gentile believers in Yeshua needed to be circumcised because some disciples had said they must be in order to be saved. Led by *Ya’akov benYosef*, Yeshua’s brother, the *nasi* (leader) of the Jerusalem Congregation, it was a gathering of emissaries and elders who would settle the question. Ultimately, *Ya’acov*, the leader, decided that these former pagans, worshippers of false gods, would be instructed to observe four prohibitions. He said: 19 “Therefore, I judge not to trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God— 20 but to write to them **1)** to abstain from the contamination of idols, **2)** and from sexual immorality, **3)** and from what is strangled, **4)** and from blood.” (Acts 15:19-20 TLV). These four things were closely related to ADONAI’s *Torah* of Leviticus 17 and 18 which spoke about relations with “the stranger living among you.” Each of these things violated the *Torah* and had likely been regularly practiced by these former pagans in the Temples to Aphrodite and other Greek and Roman gods. But this was not the end-point for these new followers of Yeshua, just the beginning. The goal of *Ya’acov*’s ruling was then revealed as he said: 21 “For Moses from ancient generations has had in every city those who proclaim him, since he is read in all the synagogues every *Shabbat*.” (Acts 15:21 TLV). This is clear. New Gentile followers of Yeshua were to be instructed to attend synagogues wherever they were every *Shabbat* and hear the “reading of Moses,” that is, the teaching of the *Torah*. From *Ya’acov*’s statement, we learn three things expected of Gentile followers of Yeshua: 1) where to assemble on *Shabbat*, 2) attend synagogue every *Shabbat*, and 3) learn the *Torah*.

This example was primarily shared to show where followers of Yeshua were to assemble themselves at ADONAI’s weekly holy convocation. It is further verified throughout the Book of Acts, showing that it is not only in synagogues but also in new congregations formed by Yeshua’s disciples. The foremost example is *Sha’ul*, who, through his disciples Timothy and Titus, established new congregations, as described in the letters of 1 Timothy and Titus.

Who are our examples regarding worship on *Shabbat*? Yeshua is first and foremost. This verse demonstrates what He did with regard to the Sabbath: 16 *And He came to Natzeret, where He had been raised. As was His custom, He went into the synagogue on Shabbat, and He got up to read.* (Luke 4:16 TLV). This is also shown in Mark 1:2 and 6:2, as well as in Luke 4:31 and 13:10. *Sha’ul* followed Yeshua’s example, who followed the *Torah*: 1 *After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went*

to the Jewish people; and for three Shabbatot, he debated the Scriptures with them. (Acts 17:1-2 TLV). There are numerous examples of *Sha'ul* attending synagogue on *Shabbat*.

The *Shabbat* is but one example of a *Torah* command found within the New Covenant. But it is important for us as followers of Yeshua to understand the nature of a covenant. A Biblical covenant is a formal, binding relationship between G-d and a segment of humanity. It usually begins with a **Preamble**. This part of the New Covenant is retained from the Covenant made at Sinai, the First Covenant. Preamble: *3 Moses went up to God, and Adonai called to him from the mountain saying, "Say this to the house of Jacob, and tell Bnei-Yisrael, 4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself. 5 Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine. 6 So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation.'* These are the words which you are to speak to Bnei-Yisrael." (Exodus 19:3-6 TLV). *Shimon Kefa* repeats this important part of the First Covenant **Preamble** to New Covenant believers: *9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."* (1 Peter 2:9 TLV). It points out that it has not changed for those under the New Covenant. We are still called to be "priests to the Nations," a light to the people of the world, but also, "kings," heirs to ADONAI's Kingdom. This is echoed in Revelation 1:6 and 5:10.

The second part of a Biblical covenant is the **Historical Prologue**. For the New Covenant as the logical successor of the First Covenant, verse 4 above, states what went before, along with this verse: *2 "I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."* (Exodus 20:2 TLV). We were all in bondage before we met Yeshua, and it began with Israel in Egypt. For us who are almost 3,500 years removed from the Exodus, it is difficult to connect it to the New Covenant, but that is where it began.

The third part of a covenant is the **Stipulations**, the specific laws, requirements, or ethical obligations the people must follow. The Ten Commandments are prominently displayed as the prologue of the *Torah*, but the stipulations also include all of the *Torah* that is applicable to us today without a Temple and a Levitical Priesthood. ADONAI proclaimed: *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).

The fourth part of the covenant is the **Sanctions**. Under the First Covenant, the Blessings and Curses were the rewards for obedience and the punishments for violating the agreement. They are no longer in effect for members of the New Covenant because Yeshua hung on a tree and took the curse for us: *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 10:13-14 TLV). Yeshua revoked this part of the First Covenant so that Gentiles could be saved and receive the Holy Spirit.

The fifth part of a covenant is the **Witnesses**, entities that verify the oath, such as the two tablets of stone, the Book of the Covenant, and numerous other physical objects related to it. The physical witnesses of the First Covenant have now become spiritual witnesses with the words on the tablets of stone and the Book of the Covenant with its changes, written on our hearts. *Sha'ul* wrote: 6 *“He also made us competent as servants of a new covenant—not of the letter, but of the Ruach. For the letter kills, but the Ruach gives life.”* (2 Corinthians 3:6 TLV). He explains that his ministry is authorized by the *Ruach* (the Holy Spirit) under the New Covenant, focusing on inner transformation provided by the Holy Spirit, who gives life, rather than on outward compliance with the laws of the First Covenant, which offered no eternal reward. The “letter” (First Covenant law) brings condemnation and spiritual death because it exposes sin without providing power to overcome it, whereas the Spirit gives life and empowers believers to live in righteousness. What is righteousness for a follower of Yeshua? It is right standing before ADONAI, the position of someone who regularly repents of their ongoing sins. John wrote: 9 *“No one born of God practices sin, because God’s seed remains in him. He cannot sin, because he is born of God.”* (1 John 3:9 TLV). Those who practice sin repeat their sins without repentance, while we, as born of G-d, choose not to sin, yet it is humanly impossible not to sin.

The sixth and final part of a covenant is **Provision for Maintenance**, instructions for writing down the covenant and reading it publicly to future generations. Examples in the First Covenant are Exodus 24:4-8, 34:27-28, Deuteronomy 31:9-13, Joshua 8:34-35, 2 Kings 23:2, and Nehemiah 8:3-8. In the New Covenant, here again, we see Jeremiah 31:32 and ADONAI’s Torah written on our hearts. In a similar manner, we learn of the Blood of the Covenant: 20 *In the same way, He took the cup after the meal, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.”* (Luke 22:20 TLV). Also connected to Jeremiah 31:32 is this verse: 12 *“For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and their sins I will remember no more.”* (Hebrews 8:12 TLV). And ADONAI gave this promise of the New Covenant to Israel, the Jews, but through the New Covenant, it is also available to the Gentiles of the world: 26 *“Moreover, I will give you a new heart. I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Ruach within you. Then I will cause you to walk in My laws, so you will keep My rulings and do them.”* (Ezekiel 36:26-27 TLV).

While the elements of the New Covenant aren’t displayed as prominently as the First Covenant, its components are still present and available to those who seek them. ADONAI said: 13 *“You will seek Me and find Me, when you will search for Me with all your heart.”* (Jeremiah 29:13 TLV). Yeshua taught: 33 *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* (Matthew 6:33 TLV). The implication is that if we make seeking His kingdom our first priority, He will provide everything else we need. We are to be persistent in faith as we pursue ADONAI: 6 *“Now without faith it is impossible to please God. For the one who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6 TLV). It is not a one-time thing, but something we must continue to do: 11 *“Seek Adonai and His strength. Seek His face always.”* (1 Chronicles 16:11 TLV). Taken together, these tenets show us that we are called to be seekers of G-d whose hearts compel them to seek, find, and obey.

But it's not all black and white. 23 *Now it happened on Shabbat that Yeshua was going through the grain fields, and His disciples began to make their way, plucking the heads of grain.* 24 *The Pharisees were saying to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not permitted on Shabbat?"* (Mark 2:23-24 TLV). The Pharisees were correct according to their interpretation of the Oral Torah, something which Yeshua disputed. The *Mishnah*, the written version of the Oral Torah of Yeshua's day (in Tractate Shabbat), defines prohibited "work" on the Sabbath as *melachah*, meaning creative labor rather than mere physical exertion. It lists 39 primary categories of work that are strictly forbidden based on the activities required to build the Tabernacle. Yeshua responded: 25 *And He said to them, "Haven't you ever read what David did when he was in need, and he and those with him became hungry? 26 How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was kohen gadol and ate the showbread, which is permitted only for the kohanim to eat, and gave some even to those who were with him?"* (Mark 2: 25-26 TLV). In other words, there are exceptions to the rule as shown by ADONAI permitting these things and not condemning those who did them. 27 *Then He said to them, "Shabbat was made for man, and not man for Shabbat. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of Shabbat."* (Mark 2 27-28 TLV). The understanding of this statement is that Yeshua permitted His disciples to pluck the grain because He is Lord of the *Shabbat*, asserting His divine right to interpret and define the true purpose of the law. It is permitted to heal on the Sabbath, but also to do work that is for the good. Yeshua healed a man on the *Shabbat* and then said: 5 ..., "*Which of you, with a son or an ox falling into a well on Yom Shabbat, will not immediately pull him out?*" (Luke 14:5b TLV). In Matthew 12, an additional example of what was permitted on *Shabbat* in Mark 2 is given: 5 "*Or haven't you read in the Torah that on Shabbat the kohanim in the Temple break Shabbat and yet are innocent?*" (Matthew 12:5 TLV). The implication of all this is yes, there are rules for *Shabbat*, but sometimes they are suspended. It is permitted to do good on *Shabbat*, things that require effort or work. The commandment says: 8 "*Remember Yom Shabbat, to keep it holy.* 9 "*You are to work six days, and do all your work,* 10 *but the seventh day is a Shabbat to Adonai your God. In it you shall not do any work—not you, nor your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, nor the outsider that is within your gates.*" (Exodus 20:8-10 TLV). We understand this to mean "your regular work," that which you do to earn your living. But this doesn't mean that a plumber cannot attend to an emergency on *Shabbat* or that a physician cannot treat a sick patient. Yeshua said, "It is permitted to do good on the Sabbath, and it is also permitted to take emergency action when necessary. Most of us don't have oxen or wells for them to fall in, but we do have tires that get flat and need to be changed. The perception of *Shabbat* we should have is that it is holy and set apart, and we must honor it. But Yeshua has allowed us to do things that seem contrary to Scripture's command when necessary. In the synagogue, as the Priests did in the Temple on *Shabbat*, there are those who work to make worship possible. This includes the actual worship, as well as setting up chairs, cleaning up after *oneg*, and other necessary activities. It's a matter of the heart. If we have a heart after G-d, we will always seek to honor the principles He has given us for our benefit. Each of us is to be "a David," one after ADONAI's own heart.

The principles of the New Covenant are presented to us. How we respond to them is our choice. But being saved is much more than "fire insurance," something to keep us out of Hell. It's about our hearts. Do we allow the Holy Spirit living in our

hearts to lead us in G-d's ways, or do we continue to exert our own wills over His? We won't immediately know ADONAI's response to the daily things we do in this life, but a reckoning is coming. *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). It's up to each of us how we respond to Yeshua's call to us. He said: 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and 'you will find rest for your souls.' 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:29-30 TLV). It's up to us. We can take His yoke and learn from Him. If we do, we receive satisfaction that we are serving Him in the way He wishes, but also in the *Olam Habah* (the world to come), rewards for our service. I am available to assist you with determining the *Torah* commands applicable to you as individuals. *Shabbat shalom!*