



Parshiyot Behar/Bechukkotai

May 9, 2026

Torah: Leviticus 25:1-27:34

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

Ketuvim Sh'lichim: Acts 10:1-48

Yeshua's Early Disciples Obeyed The Torah, Part I

Shabbat Shalom, Mishpacha. There is a modern myth among Jesus's followers that once the disciples, and all of the other Jews of the 1st century, trusted in Yeshua, they stopped obeying the *Torah*. While it's prevalent today, it probably originated in the second and third centuries. In fact, it's there that we find the origin of today's Christian antisemitism. Yes, there is antisemitism in the Church today, many churches boycott Israel and pray for their enemies, and it began with the early Church fathers. This is not about pointing fingers, but about presenting the truth to those in Messianic Judaism and to seekers. It's not a condemnation of the Church, but members of antisemitic church groups could benefit from teaching on the subject by their leaders.

The early followers of Yeshua were all Jewish, and it was at least seven to ten years before the Gentile Cornelius and his household believed. While some Gentiles were saved at *Shavuot*, they were proselytes to Judaism and were considered Jews. The first Gentiles saved were the God-fearer Cornelius and his household, followed soon thereafter by former pagans who had worshipped in Greek and Roman temples, all a part of ADONAI's plan. After *Shavuot*, following Yeshua's death and resurrection, His followers began to meet together. The Jerusalem congregation is thought to have been established shortly thereafter and, for a number of years, consisted only of Jews. While *Shimon Kefa* was the early leader of the disciples, Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* became the leader of the congregation. It likely followed the pattern of the other synagogues in Jerusalem, which were said to number in the hundreds. Within a synagogue, its leader was called the *nasi*, meaning "Prince," a term that symbolically linked the leader to the Princes who led the twelve tribes. As long as Jews were in leadership of the early Messianic Movement, there was no antisemitism, and this continued until after the *Bar Kokhba* revolt in 135 CE. The early history of the Jerusalem

Congregation is reported by Eusebius of Caesarea in his "Church History," Book IV, Chapter 5. He records that the first fifteen leaders of the Jerusalem congregation were Jewish, and they presided over the congregation from its establishment until the end of the *Bar Kokhba* revolt around 135 CE, when the Roman Emperor Hadrian forbade Jews from entering Jerusalem. This led to the appointment of the first Gentile bishop, Marcus. Once the Gentiles controlled the Jesus Movement, the door was opened for antisemitism, and it began soon after. But for the first 100 years, there was no antisemitism in Yeshua's Body.

Ignatius of Antioch was an early antisemite, followed closely by Marcion, who was declared a heretic by Church leaders. Unfortunately, they did not repudiate his antisemitic statements, and they lived on to influence the Church. Two men who were made "saints," John Chrysostom and Augustine of Hippo, came along later. Saint John wrote that Jewish synagogues were "dens of scoundrels" and "temples of demons," while Saint Augustine called Jews "the murderers of Christ." These were by no means the only antisemites in the early centuries, and a list of them follows. I will not read it to you, but suggest you go to the website and read it.

Ignatius of Antioch (d. c. 108/140 CE): Disparaged Jewish practices in his epistles.

"Epistle of Barnabas" (c. 130–138 CE): A commonly cited text of this era that denied that the Jewish covenant was ever valid

Marcion of Sinope (c. 85–160 CE): An influential heretic (though not considered a standard "Church Father") who taught that the Jewish God was evil and separate from the Christian God. An early writer on Christian matters, he taught that the wrathful God of the Old Testament was a different, inferior deity from the loving Father revealed by Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Justin Martyr (100–165 CE): In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he was one of the first to argue that the Jews' trials, including the destruction of the Temple, were justified punishment, and that the Church had replaced Israel as the chosen people.

Melito of Sardis (d. c. 180 CE): Author of the poem *Peri Pascha* ("On the Passover"), which contained early, severe rhetoric accusing Jews of murder.

Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170–235 CE): Wrote against Jews in his commentaries.

Tertullian (c. 155–240 CE): Wrote *Adversus Iudaeos* ("Against the Jews"), which argued that the law was given to Jews to curb their unique wickedness and that they were rejected by God.

Origen of Alexandria (c. 184–254 CE): Expressed that Jews were responsible for a "conspiracy against the Savior" and were therefore in a state of permanent ruin.

Cyprian of Carthage (d. 258 CE): Author of *Testimonies against the Jews*, which used Old Testament passages to argue against the Jewish people.

Ephraim the Syrian (c. 306–373 CE): Produced polemics characterizing Jews as having Satan as their partner.

Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–395 CE): Described Jews as "murderers of the Lord" and "companions of the devil".

Ambrose of Milan (c. 340–397 CE): A teacher of Augustine who portrayed Jews as a "subset of those damned to hell".

John Chrysostom (c. 344–407 CE): Known as "Golden-Mouth," he is often considered the most outspoken, as his sermons *Adversus Judaeos* ("Against the Jews")—preached in Antioch—are among the most virulent, calling synagogues "dens of scoundrels" and "temples of demons".

Jerome (c. 347–420 CE): Often identified Jews with Judas Iscariot and frequently utilized harsh anti-Jewish language in his commentaries.

Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE): While holding more nuanced views, he solidified the "witness doctrine," arguing that Jews should be kept alive but in suffering to serve as a perpetual reminder of their "murder of Christ".

But the early Gentile Christian leaders did not do it all by themselves. They had the help of *HaSatan*. In Revelation, a voice is heard from heaven: *10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Anointed One, for the accuser of our brothers and sisters—the one who accuses them before our God day and night—has been thrown out.* (Revelation 12:10 TLV). The accuser who was thrown out is *HaSatan*, but who does he accuse? The Greek word underlying "brothers and sisters" is *adelphos*, meaning "brother." The TLV wants us to understand that it's all of Yeshua's followers and adds "sisters," which is true. *HaSatan* accuses every follower of Yeshua. But in this chapter of Revelation, it also applies to the brothers of the male child, Yeshua, born to the woman *Miryam*, the Jewish people, whom the Great Red Dragon sought to devour. While there is no direct Scriptural evidence that *HaSatan* is the author of antisemitism, he is the leader of the demon spirits, some of which promote antisemitism, and is definitely a major player in it. He and his demons are also the authors and the powers behind the false gods of many religions, a number of which promote antisemitism.

The truth is that antisemitism began in the second and third centuries after the Jews were no longer in leadership of Yeshua's Movement. It was also at this time that the Church began to distance itself from Judaism, particularly in its observance of the *Torah*. But Scripture tells a different story. Yeshua's early Jewish disciples did not stop following the *Torah*, and we can prove it. That is what these two messages are about. It's important for

us to understand the truth so that our actions in our faith are grounded in it. We believe that we are to obey the *Torah* commands applicable today, without the Temple or the Levitical Priesthood. What we are really talking about is the antinomian theology of the early church fathers, a theology rooted in their antisemitism. By declaring the synagogue and all things Jewish bad, they began to promote a new theology of anti-*Torah*, one that fit their theological mold: out with the Jewish things and in with the Christian things. And they did this systematically, with this idea gaining popularity over the years as later-century theologians promoted antinomianism in their writings and by adding words to the Scriptures.

A key Scripture for their promotion of antinomianism is found in Acts 10. *1 Now in Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Cohort. 2 He was a devout man, revering God with all his household. He gave tzadakah generously to the people and prayed to God continually.* (Acts 10:1-2 TLV). Cornelius was a Gentile, but a very unusual one in 1st-century Israel. He was a Roman officer serving in the Italian Cohort, an infantry unit of about 600 soldiers, composed of volunteers from Italy, mostly Roman citizens. As a Centurion, Cornelius was one of six commanders in the cohort, each commanding 80 fighting men and 20 support personnel. But he was also a worshipper of the G-d of Israel. He was very devoted to ADONAI. The Greek text describes him as devout and fearing G-d. This places Cornelius among those known as “G-dfearers,” Gentiles who worshiped the G-d of Israel and observed certain aspects of the *Torah*, such as the Sabbath or kosher laws. But they were not proselytes, having not converted to Judaism, but often attended synagogue, and because of their adherence to much of 1st-century Judaism, they were also known as “proselytes at the gate.” Not only did Cornelius worship the G-d of Israel, but he had led his whole household to do so too.

3 About the ninth hour of the day, he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming and saying to him, “Cornelius!” (Acts 10:3 TLV). There is much more to this verse than meets the eye. It shows us that Cornelius was praying because the ninth hour, or 3 PM, was the time of afternoon prayer and the evening sacrifice at the Temple. While he was praying, he had a vision of an angel. The angel told him that G-d had heard his prayers and now had something He wished him to do. The angel said, *5 Now send men to Joppa and call for Simon, also named Peter. 6 He is being entertained as a guest by Simon the tanner, whose house is beside the sea.*” (Acts 10:5-6 TLV). Joppa, *Yafo* in Hebrew, was a port city, and actually the place that Jonah set sail from before being swallowed by the big fish. There is a reason that Simon’s

house was by the sea. The smell from tanning animal hides was terrible, and a sea breeze was needed to carry it away. We have visited Simon's traditional house several times. While the house is not the original, it has been recognized for centuries as the site of his house. And Cornelius sent two men from his household and a soldier under his command to Joppa.

9 The next day, as the men were traveling and approaching the city, Peter went up to the rooftop to pray, at about the sixth hour. 10 Now he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they were preparing something, he fell into a trance. (Acts 10:9-10 TLV). The hour Peter was praying was 12:00, noon, the reason he was hungry and wanted to eat. But his hunger was interrupted by a trance. *11 He saw the heavens opened, and something like a great sheet coming down, lowered by its four corners to the earth. 12 In it were all sorts of four-footed animals and reptiles and birds of the air. 13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 But Peter said, "Certainly not, Lord! For never have I eaten anything unholy or unclean." (Acts 10:11-14 TLV).* Kefa didn't know who was speaking to him, but spoke respectfully, referring to him as Lord. He recognized both clean and unclean animals in the sheet and was horrified that he would be asked to eat the unclean. His response, "I have never eaten anything unholy or unclean, revealed his commitment to the *Torah* and his unwillingness to do something it taught against. Peter was confused because the voice had told him to "violate ADONAI's *Torah*!"

15 Again a voice came to him, a second time: "What God has made clean, you must not consider unholy." 16 This happened three times, and the sheet was immediately taken up to heaven. (Acts 10:15 TLV). Now, the voice has identified these statements as coming from G-d, words that must be obeyed. But how could they be obeyed if they violated ADONAI's *Torah*? The answer had to be symbolic, not real.

17 Now while Peter was puzzling about what the vision he had seen might mean, behold, the men sent by Cornelius found Simon's house and appeared before the gate. 18 They called out and began to ask whether Simon, also called Peter, was staying in this place as a guest. 19 Now while Peter was mulling over the vision, the Ruach said to him, "Look here, three men are looking for you. 20 But get up, go downstairs, and go with them without hesitating, because I Myself have sent them." (Acts 10:17-20 TLV). The Holy Spirit told Kefa that He had sent the three men, whose number corresponded to the number of times the sheet came down with unclean animals on it. In a similar sense, both clean and unclean animals were in the sheet,

representing both clean and unclean people. *21 Going down to the men, Peter said, "Here, I'm the one you're looking for. What is the reason for your coming?" 22 And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well-spoken of by all the Jewish people, was directed by a holy angel to summon you to his house and to hear a message from you."* (Acts 10:21-22 TLV). Peter believed the men when they spoke of Cornelius as "righteous and Godfearing." The light is beginning to dawn upon him, and he invited them to stay as guests at Simon's house. The next day, he went with them to Cornelius's house, taking some of the brothers from Joppa with him.

At Cornelius's house, Peter found many people gathered, a congregation prepared for the message that ADONAI had sent him to deliver to them. This was monumental. Nothing like it had ever happened before. *28 He said to them, "You yourselves know that it is not permitted for a Jewish man to associate with a non-Jew or to visit him. Yet God has shown me that I should call no one unholy or unclean."* (Acts 10:28 TLV). In the Judaism of the 1st century, Jews and Gentiles did not associate, and Jews most certainly did not enter the houses of Gentiles, who were considered to be unclean. After all, they were pagans, worshipping who knows what, and their sanitary practices did not align with the *Torah*, and most especially, not their diet. But these people were different, a group arranged by ADONAI. Cornelius worshipped the G-d of Israel, and the implication is that his household followed him in doing so. That's the whole message of the sheet. ADONAI had shown *Shimon Kefa* that he should call no man unclean. It wasn't about food, but about men.

Kefa said, *29 "So I came without objection when I was sent for. I ask, then, what is the reason why you sent for me?"* (Acts 10:29 TLV). Cornelius answered, *30 ... "Four days ago at this hour, I was praying minchah in my house. Suddenly, a man stood in front of me in shining clothes. 31 He says, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your tzadakah remembered before God. 32 Therefore send to Joppa and ask for Simon, who is also called Peter. He is staying in the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea.'* *33 So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."* (Acts 10:30b-33 TLV). The TLV has shed more light on what Cornelius was doing four days ago by saying "he was praying *mincha*," the second of three daily prayers in the Temple. Where the Greek text says the "ninth hour," the TLV says "*mincha*," emphasizing that this happened while Cornelius was praying. The reason ADONAI sent for Peter is about to be revealed.

Peter begins by saying, 34 ... *“I truly understand that God is not one to show favoritism, 35 but in every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right is acceptable to Him.”* (Acts 10:34b-35 TLV). ADONAI recognized that Cornelius feared Him, and his way of worshipping Him was acceptable. Peter said, 36 *“You know the message He sent to Bnei-Yisrael, proclaiming shalom through Messiah Yeshua—He is Lord of all. 37 You know the message that has spread throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the immersion that John proclaimed. 38 You know how God anointed Yeshua of Natzeret with the Ruach ha-Kodesh and power—how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. 39 We are witnesses to all He did, both in the Judean countryside and in Jerusalem. They put Him to death by hanging Him on a tree, 40 but God raised Him up on the third day and caused Him to be visible— 41 not to all the people, but to us, witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God. We ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.”* (Acts 10:36-41 TLV). It was the Gospel message that ADONAI sent Peter to preach to Cornelius and all those gathered at his house. Peter said, “You know” three times. He told Cornelius, “This is something you know. You’ve heard about it.” He said, *“You know the message He sent to Bnei-Yisrael, proclaiming shalom through Messiah Yeshua—He is Lord of all.”* What had happened at Passover years before was still known throughout Israel through the actions of Yeshua’s Jewish followers. But now, it was time for that message to go to the hearts of the people of the nations. And ADONAI chose the faithful Cornelius to be the first to hear it. 42 *“And He commanded us to proclaim to the people and to testify that He is the One ordained by God as Judge of the living and the dead. 43 All the prophets testify about Him—that everyone who puts his trust in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”* (Acts 10:42-43 TLV). Up until this time, Yeshua’s disciples had only proclaimed the Gospel to the Jews. They were so involved in being obedient to ADONAI’s *Torah* that it would never occur to them to preach to Gentiles. But the time had come, and ADONAI wanted the message of Yeshua’s salvation to go to all people, not just the Jews.

44 *While Peter was still speaking these words, the Ruach ha-Kodesh fell on all those hearing the message. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were astonished, because the gift of the Ruach ha-Kodesh had been poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and magnifying God.* (Acts 10:44-46 TLV). The gift of the *Ruach*, which had been poured out upon Jews at *Shavuot*, was now poured out in the same way on the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house. The Jews with *Kefa* were amazed that ADONAI

had now poured out His Spirit on the uncircumcised. And for both Jews and Gentiles, the outpouring was accompanied by speaking in tongues. That we worship ADONAI in tongues every *Shabbat* shows that He has poured out His Spirit on us, just as He did the early Jews and Gentiles. And Peter said, 47 “*Can anyone refuse water for these to be immersed, who have received the Ruach ha-Kodesh just as we did?*” 48 *So he commanded them to be immersed in the name of Messiah Yeshua.*” (Acts 10:47-48 TLV).

Those who follow an antinomian theology, a theology that teaches that Law has passed away and has no part in life in Yeshua, can only do so by taking this Scripture out of context and changing the *p’shat*, its original intended meaning. When *Shimon Kefa* had his vision of the sheet coming down with all kinds of unclean animals on it, and the voice said, “Kill and eat *Kefa*,” he was not telling Peter that he could now eat snakes, scorpions, and ham. Peter understood, and he clearly explained the meaning of his vision to Cornelius and the other Gentiles when he said: 28 ..., “*You yourselves know that it is not permitted for a Jewish man to associate with a non-Jew or to visit him. Yet God has shown me that I should call no one unholy or unclean.*” (Acts 10:28 TLV). It was never about food but was a spiritual application of unclean and clean things, unclean and clean men. Jews not being permitted to associate with Gentiles was a man-made rule present in 1st century Judaism. ADONAI hadn’t and didn’t change His *Torah*. His *kosher* laws are still *kosher* laws. What G-d revealed as being clean through the vision of the sheet was the Gentiles, who before this time had no access to ADONAI except through conversion to Judaism. They were unclean, and Jews were commanded not to even enter their houses. If they became Jewish proselytes and converted to Judaism, they were then considered Jews and not unclean Gentiles because they followed the rules of the *Torah*. But when ADONAI showed *Shimon Kefa* that the separation of the Jews from Gentiles was a man-made doctrine of Judaism, it opened the door to the blessing of Abraham for the nations (Genesis 12:1-3) and to Gentiles being grafted into Israel (Galatians 3:13-14) through the New Covenant. Unless this man-made Jewish doctrine was exposed and changed, ADONAI’s plan to graft the Gentiles into Israel would not have happened. As it was, it was seven to ten years after the Holy Spirit was poured out on Jews at *Shavuot* when the Gentiles were declared clean. And most likely, that was ADONAI’s timing.

Those who interpret this vision as repealing the laws of *kashrut*, the *kosher* laws, are doing so in opposition to the clear teaching of the text (Acts 10:28), ostensibly to uphold their

antinomian theology. Without realizing it, by denying the truth revealed in Peter's vision, they are rejecting the very thing that opened the door for themselves, the Gentiles, to their own salvation and entry into the Commonwealth of Israel through the blessing of Abraham. One modern version of the Bible even goes so far as to interpret it this way: ¹⁵ *The voice spoke to him again, "When God says that something can be used for food, don't say it isn't fit to eat."* (Acts 10:15 CEV). Pray that their eyes will be opened, and that they will see ADONAI's truth.

The meaning of the sheet with clean and unclean animals is a powerful part of ADONAI's eternal plan. He created us all, but He chose the Jews to be His priests to the Nations, that everyone might have the opportunity to be a part of His family. But our message is also about ADONAI's unchanging Torah. *Kefa* wouldn't violate it by eating something unclean, and Cornelius likely would have said the same thing, as he had been worshipping G-d as a Godfearer even before he met Yeshua. There are other instances that show that the *Torah* was a normal and loved part of the lives of Yeshua's early disciples, and we will reveal them next *Shabbat* when we continue our message, "Yeshua's Early Disciples Obeyed The Torah, Part II." *Shabbat shalom!*