



**Parasha Beha'alotekha**

June 6, 2026

*Torah:* Numbers 8:1-12:15

*Haftarah:* Zechariah 2:14-4:7

*Ketuvim Sh'lichim:* Acts 15:1-29

### **Yeshua's Early Disciples Obeyed The Torah, Part II**

*Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha!* My two-message series entitled “Yeshua’s Early Disciples Obeyed The Torah” was interrupted three weeks ago by my mortality, when my heart decided to act up. But now, with ADONAI’s amazing healing through the advanced medical care He has provided, and your prayers, it is working much better. A great thank you to everyone who prayed for me. And I am ready to continue the series.

As was pointed out in the first message, there is a modern Christian myth that Yeshua’s early followers stopped obeying the *Torah* when they trusted in Him. This is completely false, and we began our journey into the truth last time. We showed that *Shimon Kefa*’s vision of the sheet had absolutely nothing to do with food, but was ADONAI’s symbolic message to Peter that he was to take the Gospel message to the Gentiles, who at that time were considered unclean by Jews. *Kefa* and all of Yeshua’s Jewish followers upheld and obeyed the *Torah*, just as it had been for centuries. If you missed that first message, may I suggest that you watch it on YouTube or read it on our website to get the full impact of how early Gentile antisemitism began the pattern of Jew hatred, which led to the antinomian position of the Church today. While we do not agree with that position, we love and honor the members of the Church as brothers and sisters in Yeshua, who are fulfilling the mission He has given to them, and recognize the authority He has given to them to determine how they will interpret Scripture (Matthew 16:19). As *Sha’ul* said, we all see through a glass darkly, and I readily admit that I don’t have all the answers, nor do I claim absolute truth for my teachings. As *Sha’ul* said, *9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10 but when that which is perfect has come, then that which is partial will pass away.* (1 Corinthians 13:9-10 TLV). When Yeshua returns as King, we will learn the fullness of the truth.

As we continue our series, it is important to pinpoint the timing of events, as the activities of Yeshua’s early disciples unfolded over several years. Reading it directly from the Bible gives the impression that events followed each other closely. Following Yeshua’s crucifixion in 30 CE, *Shavuot* and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on Yeshua’s Jewish disciples occurred that same year. However, the disciples’ peaceful existence in Jerusalem was short-lived, as traditional Jews began persecuting the disciples and Stephen was stoned to death (31-33 CE). This growing persecution scattered Yeshua’s disciples throughout the nation. This was where we first met *Sha’ul*, but his rampage against Yeshua’s followers was relatively short, and he met Yeshua on his way to Damascus 1-2 years later (34-35 CE). But it had been 7-10 years after the *Ruach HaKodesh*’s outpouring upon the Jews on *Shavuot* when *Shimon Kefa* went to Cornelius’s house, and the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles (37-40 CE). This was the first time the Gospel had been preached to Gentiles. Not long after the events involving *Kefa* and Cornelius, we find that those fleeing persecution in Jerusalem

arrived in Antioch, Syria, where Yeshua's disciples began preaching to Jews and soon to Gentiles as well (40-42 CE). A year or so later, news of the activities in Antioch reached Jerusalem (43 CE), and the disciples sent Barnabus to investigate (Acts 11:19-22). What Barnabus found caused him to go to Tarsus to find *Sha'ul*, and the two of them returned to Antioch and taught the Messianic community there for a year (Acts 11:25-26). But it was still another 5-7 years before the events of the Jerusalem Council (48-50 CE) took place. and that's where we are now.

Jerusalem was the operations center for the ministry of Yeshua's followers, which was taking shape. From there, disciples were being sent out to all parts of the known world. The Hebrew term for these "sent ones," or "emissaries," is *shlichim*, also known as "apostles," in Greek, *apostoloi*. The authority over these *shlichim* rested in Yeshua's disciples, who were in leadership at that time. The Tree of Life Bible describes them in Acts 15 as the "emissaries and elders," but does not name all who were there. The group of leaders present at this meeting would have included some of Yeshua's original disciples and possibly other emissaries sent as *shlichim*, such as Barnabas and *Sha'ul*. The other group mentioned, the elders, would have been those appointed to serve as leaders in the congregation. The Hebrew term for elder is *zaken* (plural, *zekenim*). One of the elders was *Ya'acov* (Jacob), the brother of Yeshua. We learned in the first session of this message that he was the leader of the Jerusalem congregation, the *Nasi* (Prince).

*1 Now some men coming down from Judea (to Antioch) were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1). These men were Messianic Jews, followers of Yeshua, but they held a different view of how Gentiles should fit into the Jewish community. The custom of Moses they spoke of was most likely what Moses commanded regarding the first Passover: 48 But if an outsider dwells with you, who would keep the Passover for Adonai, all his males must be circumcised. (Exodus 12:48a TLV). These men said Gentiles could not be saved unless they underwent b'rit mila. But Sha'ul and Barnabus had a different understanding and got into a debate with them. Reaching no solution, the brothers in Antioch appointed them, along with others, to go to Jerusalem to put the question to the emissaries and elders (Acts 15:2).*

*4 When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the community and, the emissaries, and the elders. They reported all that God had done in helping them. 5 But some belonging to the party of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Torah of Moses." 6 The emissaries and elders were gathered together to examine this issue. (Acts 15:4-6 TLV). The council of emissaries and elders was convened to resolve this theological dispute: whether Gentiles who had trusted in Yeshua had to be circumcised. But the question was really whether they should be required to become proselytes to Judaism, with all its requirements, including keeping the *Torah* of Moses and circumcision, as was wished by these Messianic Pharisees.*

*7 After much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose from among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the message of the Good News and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving them the Ruach ha-Kodesh—just as He also did for us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts through faith." (Acts 15:7-9 TLV). Kefa said, "G-d chose me to go to Cornelius and his household, and He did not require them to undergo b'rit milah, but instead filled them with His Ruach HaKodesh." It was the purification of their hearts by faith that was important. Simon Peter has just told the men of the council exactly what we*

believe, salvation by faith alone. That's the beginning and the end of what we call "justification by faith." The Messianic Pharisees had said, "*It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the Torah of Moses,*" but ADONAI did not require that of Cornelius and his household. The Father's response was immediate when they responded in faith to the Gospel message from *Kefa* and were immersed in His Holy Spirit. It is clear that what ADONAI did at Cornelius's house is what He wants for all Gentiles who trust in Yeshua and come into the faith: *45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter (to Cornelius's house) 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. Then Peter answered, 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 10:45-48a TLV).

That was what ADONAI required, but these Messianic Pharisees wished for something more. Peter continued, *10 "Why then do you put God to the test by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 But instead, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they are."* (Acts 15:10-11 TLV). Some would have you believe that the "yoke they could not bear" is the *Torah*, but is it? The *Torah* was given by ADONAI, and *Kefa* would never say that something which G-d ordained was improper. It was not the *Torah*, but the repressive administration of Jews and Gentile proselytes by the Pharisee and Sadducee leaders. These were additional requirements made by men. In the 1st century, a Gentile proselyte to Judaism was required to do five things: 1. Undergo circumcision (*b'rit milah*). 2. Be immersed in a *mikveh* for ritual purity. (*tevilah*). 3. Sacrifice, by giving a burnt offering at the Temple. (*korban*). 4. Agree to obey the written *Torah* (*Torah Shebictav*, the *Torah* that is in writing). And, 5. Agree to obey the oral *Torah* (*Torah Sheba'al Peh*, the *Torah* that is by mouth, which was supposedly passed down from Moses, but in my opinion, was not). This is what the Messianic Pharisees wanted the council to approve. But Peter said there was a difference. Cornelius and his household were voluntarily following the *Torah* by worshipping the G-d of Israel, eating kosher, and giving *tzedakah*, that is, from their hearts and not from being required to do it. But these Messianic Pharisees said that it must be required. However, the yoke they could not bear was not the written *Torah*; it was the Oral *Torah*, laws imposed by the Pharisees beyond what the written *Torah* required.

Yeshua spoke of the Oral *Torah* when He said, *8 "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* (Matthew 15:8-9 TLV). There were at least four instances in which Yeshua rejected elements of the Oral *Torah*. In Matthew 15 and Mark 7, a group of Pharisees confronted Yeshua because His disciples did not do *netilat yadayim*, ritual handwashing before eating bread. The only command in the written *Torah* about handwashing was for priests serving in the Temple. Yeshua said to them: *6 ... , "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors Me with their lips but their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'* *8 Having left behind the commandment of God, you hold on to the tradition of men."* (Mark 7:6b-8 TLV). Within that same discussion of ritual handwashing, Yeshua unmasked their tradition, which allowed them to declare their financial assets as *korban*, dedicated to G-d, instead of using them to care for their aging parents. *9 He was also telling them, "You set aside the commands of God, in order that you may validate your own tradition."* (Mark 7:9 TLV). In Matthew 12 and Luke 13, the Pharisees confronted Yeshua about their restrictive *Shabbat* laws about

what constituted work, laws of the Oral *Torah*, and not the written. He rejected their added commands not to carry a mat, pluck grain, heal the sick, or walk a certain distance on the Sabbath, saying: 8 *“For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat.”* (Matthew 12:8 TLV). In Matthew 23, Yeshua rejected their expansion of Biblical tithing to include tithing even garden herbs. He said, 23 *“Woe to you, Torah scholars and Pharisees, hypocrites! You tithe mint and dill and cumin, yet you have neglected the weightier matters of Torah—justice and mercy and faithfulness. It is necessary to do these things without neglecting the others.”* (Matthew 23:23 TLV).

Kefa had said: 11 *But instead, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they are.*” (Acts 15:11 TLV). To this point, it seems that the council was in agreement with him because their attention was now turned to *Sha’ul* and Barnabas, who were telling them about all the signs and wonders ADONAI had done through them among the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). 13 *After they finished speaking, Jacob answered, “Brothers, listen to me. 14 Simon has described how God first showed His concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for His Name. 15 The words of the Prophets agree, as it is written: 16 ‘After this I will return and rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David. I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it, 17 so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord— namely all the Gentiles who are called by My name— says Adonai, who makes these things 18 known from of old.”* (Acts 15:13-18 TLV). The fallen tabernacle of David was an open tent containing the Ark of the Covenant, with open access for worship. *Ya’acov* is quoting Amos, where ADONAI said: 11 *“In that day I will raise up David’s fallen sukkah. I will restore its breaches, raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in days of old 12 —so they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations called by My Name.”* It is a declaration of Adonai, the One who will do this.” (Amos 9:11-12 TLV). *Ya’acov* recognized that ADONAI had a plan for the people of the Nations even before the coming of Yeshua, and that He is the “fallen tabernacle of David restored.” As the “Son of David,” He is the restoration of the Davidic line of kings and is the “light to the Gentiles.”

Then, speaking as the *Nasi*, the synagogue leader, he said: 19 *Therefore, I judge not to trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God—* (Acts 15:19 TLV). “Judge” is *krinó* (kree’-no), also meaning to decide. He was saying that, in his position as leader, he had made a decision about what he believed. He continued: 20 *but to write to them to abstain from the contamination of idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what is strangled, and from blood.* (Acts 15:20 TLV). The Gentiles of Antioch and other places in the Roman world were considered unclean by Jews. Their pagan temples had both male and female prostitutes, and sex was a part of their worship practices. Here is what the four prohibitions mean. 1) The new Gentile believers were not to eat meat that they knew had been presented as a sacrifice to a false god in pagan temple worship. This was not a reference to meat, which was clean according to *Torah*, which was sold in the marketplace, but was specifically a reference to food at an idolatrous ceremony. 3 *“You shall have no other gods before Me. 4 Do not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or on the earth below or in the water under the earth. 5 Do not bow down to them, do not let anyone make you serve them. For I, ADONAI your God, am a jealous God,..* (Exodus 20:3-5 TLV). 2) They were to abstain from the eating of blood. The eating of blood was prohibited by ADONAI in Genesis 9 when He gave Noah new instructions which allowed the eating of meat (9:3-4). This prohibition can also be found in several places in the Covenant given at Mount Sinai. This rule for the new believers would refer to eating meat with blood in it and the drinking of blood as a part of a pagan ritual. 3) They were to abstain from things strangled. Pagan sacrifices

were usually killed by cutting the throat of the animal, but strangulation was also known to be used. The main objection to strangulation was that meat from animals strangled was saturated with blood. This would have been the eating of meat with blood in it and would also have been a violation of compassionate slaughter, a characteristic of Jewish slaughtering. 4) They were to abstain from fornication. This would have addressed “temple prostitution.” Joining oneself to a prostitute (either male or female) was to negate ADONAI's ownership of everyone who was called by His Name. 1 Corinthians, written later by *Sha'ul*, addresses the thought behind this prohibition: *15 Don't you know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take the members of Messiah and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! 16 Or don't you know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall become one flesh." 17 But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 18 Flee from sexual immorality! Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body—but the one committing sexual immorality sins against his own body.* (1 Corinthians 6:15-18 TLV). The members of the council had to be certain that these new Gentile believers had turned their backs on the very serious *Torah* offense of “serving other gods.” They had to provide a way for these former pagans, former idol worshippers, to stop their pagan practices and begin to learn about ADONAI and His commandments. By refraining from these four things, new Gentile believers could be received among Jews, including in the synagogues.

Why did *Ya'acov* stop with these four commands? Instead of commanding the Gentiles to undergo the five requirements to become Jewish proselytes, that is, convert to Judaism, he instead said that he believed that these four things were necessary. What he said next explained it all. 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). Moses is a euphemism for the *Torah* of Moses. *Ya'acov* was suggesting that new Gentile believers in *Yeshua* should go to synagogues on *Shabbat* and learn the *Torah*, what ADONAI said could and could not be done. It was a voluntary thing. They had been justified by faith, but now they would put their faith into action by learning what ADONAI required of them. The other members of the council agreed with *Ya'acov's* recommendation. *22 Then it seemed good to the emissaries and elders, with the whole community, to choose men from among themselves to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judah (also called Barsabbas) and Silas, leading men among the brethren, 23 and this letter along with them: "The emissaries and the elders, your brothers, To the Gentile brothers of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings! (Acts 15:2-3 TLV).* The verses go on to list the four prohibitions again, and you can read verses 24-29 yourselves. While the council rejected the Messianic Pharisees' argument for proselyte conversion of the new believers, it did not command them to learn the *Torah*. They left it up to them to go to synagogue and learn. None of us has been forced to do that. It's a matter of the heart. *Yeshua* said: *17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill."* (Matthew 5:17 TLV). He taught that the *Torah* was eternal and authoritative, stating that he did not come to abolish it, but to fulfill it by bringing out its full spiritual meaning. He emphasized that true obedience requires an inner transformation of the heart, not just outward actions.

*Sha'ul* was on the ministry road for a number of years, and we now see more evidence for following the *Torah*. The events of the Jerusalem council took place in 48, 49, or 50 CE, and now, around 57 CE, 7-9 years later, *Sha'ul* has returned to Jerusalem for the last time. *17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters welcomed us gladly. 18 On the next day, Paul went in with us to Jacob; all the elders were present. 19 After greeting them, he*

reported to them in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his service. 20 And when they heard, they began glorifying God. They said, “You see, brother, how many myriads there are among the Jewish people who have believed—and they are all zealous for the Torah. (Acts 21:17-20 TLV). The most remarkable thing about this is that some 27 years after Yeshua’s death on the cross, these Judean believers were still zealous for the *Torah*. They didn’t believe it had been abandoned. They embraced it and were called *zēlōtai* (zel-o-tie), the plural of *zēlōtēs* (zel-o-tays), meaning a zealot, enthusiast, or devoted adherent to the *Torah*. But also exciting was the number of them. There were myriads, *myriades* (myri-a-dees), from *urias* (moo-ree'-as), meaning “ten thousand.” And, it’s plural. There were tens of thousands of Yeshua’s followers who were zealous for the *Torah*, and that was just in Judah and not the whole of Israel. That the elders pointed this out emphasized their own devotion to the *Torah*, as would be shown in the verses that follow.

21 *They have been told about you (Sha’ul)—that you teach all the Jewish people among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs.* (Acts 21:21 TLV). Because *Sha’ul* taught that circumcision was not necessary for Gentile conversion, rumors began to be circulated that he also taught Jews in Gentile lands not to circumcise their children or to follow the customs. The first part was false. *Sha’ul* did not teach Jews to forsake the *Torah*, but it is very likely that he did speak against the customs, the Oral *Torah*. 22 *What’s to be done then? No doubt they will hear that you have come.* 23 *“So do what we tell you. We have four men who have a vow on themselves.* 24 *Take them, and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. That way, all will realize there is nothing to the things they have been told about you, but that you yourself walk in an orderly manner, keeping the Torah.* (Acts 21:22-24 TLV). And that is what was done. *Sha’ul* went to the Temple with the four men and purified himself along with them, signifying that he upheld the *Torah*. He also paid for their expenses to take a Nazarite vow, an act that showed he agreed with the *Torah*. But even before the men completed their vow at the Temple, he was taken prisoner by the Romans and sent to Caesarea. While there, his own specific words to Governor Festus were: 8 ..., “*I have committed no offense against the Torah of the Jewish people, or against the Temple, or against Caesar.*” (Acts 25:8b TLV). This makes it very clear that *Sha’ul* upheld the *Torah*.

It’s also very clear that Yeshua’s Jewish disciples and followers all obeyed the *Torah* of that day. While His Gentile followers were not commanded to follow the *Torah*, they were encouraged to join Jewish fellowship and attend synagogue on *Shabbat*. Certainly, it was never commanded that Gentiles not obey the *Torah*. The *Torah* of the 1st century was much different than the *Torah* available to us today. Yeshua’s followers actively obeyed the *Torah* with regard to sacrifices and Temple worship, as was shown by *Sha’ul*’s actions. About 13 years after he returned to Jerusalem and was subsequently taken prisoner, the Temple was destroyed. That, along with the dispersal of the Levitical Priesthood, effectively put on hold about 75% of the *Torah*’s 613 commands, according to my count.

Today, salvation is no different. We trust in Yeshua by faith, receiving His grace of pardon from our sins. Nothing else is required. But we heed the words of Yeshua that He came to teach us the fullness of the *Torah* (Matthew 5:17), and those of *Sha’ul*, who said to Timothy: 15 *Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth.* (2 Timothy 2:15 TLV). The council of elders and leaders rejected the Messianic Pharisee’s suggestion that Gentiles trusting in Yeshua should convert to Judaism and become what was then known as a *Ger Tzedek*, a righteous convert. Even before he trusted in Yeshua, Cornelius appeared to be a

*Ger Toshav*, a proselyte at the gate, one who voluntarily kept the *Torah*. If we were to devise a name for us, Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua and seek to follow the *Torah* to the best of our ability, we could consider *Ger Tzadik*, meaning “righteous Gentile.” Righteousness is our aim, to continually recognize our sins, repent frequently, and ask forgiveness from our righteous Messiah. To be a *Ger Tzadik* is a good thing. It means that we love Yeshua and want to do His will.

There was a man who said, “Oh, how I love Your *Torah*.” It was none other than King David. We end with this: 97 *O how I love Your **Torah!** It is my meditation all day.* 98 *Your mitzvot (**commands**) make me wiser than my enemies—for they are mine forever.* 99 *I have more insight than all my teachers, for Your testimonies (**Torah**) are my meditation.* 100 *I have gained more understanding than all my elders, for I have kept Your precepts (**Torah**).* 101 *I kept my feet from every evil way, in order to follow Your word (**Torah**).* 102 *I do not turn away from Your rulings (**Torah**), for You Yourself have taught me.* 103 *How sweet is Your word (**Torah**) to my taste—yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!* 104 *From Your precepts (**Torah**) I get discernment, therefore I hate every false way.* 105 *Your word (**Torah**) is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.* 106 *I have sworn and confirmed to observe Your righteous rulings (**Torah**).* (Psalm 119:97-105 TLV). Should we do anything different? *Shabbat shalom!*