



Parshiyot Matot / Masei

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Torah: Numbers 30:1-36:13

Haftarah: Jeremiah 2:4-2:28

Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 9:1-33

Messianic Judaism 3

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! The spiritual winds have shifted. ADONAI's Spirit has heightened the focus on the Messianic Jewish Movement, a sense I felt in the Spirit several weeks ago as the first of these messages was being prepared. Perhaps you felt this when you heard the first message. In the first two sessions of the series on Messianic Judaism, I was led to place greater emphasis on our belief that we are the modern expression of the faith and practice of Yeshua's 1st-century disciples. They held faithfully to the *Torah*, and so do we.

Who are we? We are the Messianic Jewish Movement, the modern expression of Yeshua's 1st-century *talmidim* and the spiritual descendants of the move of the *Ruach HaKodesh* in the United States in the mid-1960s. Even as Yeshua's prophecy that "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) was being fulfilled during Israel's Six-Day War in 1967, ADONAI's Spirit was moving across the United States, touching hearts and drawing young men and women into a deep faith in their Savior.

It was known as the Jesus Movement, and it affected many young Jews. But it was not the earliest corporate modern move of G-d's Spirit among the Jews. That occurred in Great Britain in 1866, when the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Great Britain was formed. It was explicitly created to address a problem: Jewish believers were scattered across various Christian denominations (Anglican, Presbyterian, and Methodist), and they felt culturally isolated. But it would be many years before a similar group was formed in the United States. In 1905, in partnership with the Hebrew Christian Alliance of Great Britain, independent American regional Jewish groups made their first attempt to unite under a single national banner. However, it wasn't until 1915 that a constitution was ratified, permanently establishing the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America (HCAA), the forerunner of our Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA).

The HCAA was described as a trans-denominational fellowship with local chapters. Its main meeting was the Annual Conference, where Christian Jews from across the United States would gather for shared worship and fellowship. Their model for gathering once a year was so successful that it survived the organization's evolution. When the HCAA transitioned to the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America (MJAA) in the 1970s, the annual tradition was kept alive. Today, it continues as the annual Messiah Conference in Grantham, Pennsylvania, the movement's central gathering.

How it got from the HCAA to the MJAA is another story. As the Jesus Movement spread across the United States in 1967, a Jewish follower of Yeshua named Martin Chernoff had the greatest influence on Jewish involvement. He was much older than those being born of the Spirit in the Jesus Movement. Born in Toronto, Canada, in 1920, he embraced Jesus as the Messiah in 1941, following his father, Solomon, who had secretly professed faith years earlier but had kept it from his Orthodox family. Rather than hiding his faith, Martin dedicated his life to open evangelism and spiritual revival in the Jewish community. After moving to Cincinnati, Ohio, in the mid-1950s, he worked as an evangelist, leading new Jewish believers into traditional Baptist churches. Over time, he grew dissatisfied with this approach because it caused Jewish believers to lose their cultural identity entirely. The massive influx of young people from the Jesus Movement led him to break away from the traditional church model. He became the father of modern Messianic Judaism by founding Beth Messiah in Cincinnati in 1970, one of the first independent, self-governing Messianic Jewish congregations of the modern era, and he led it until mid-1975. He then moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to shepherd a newly formed group of young Jews that lacked a leader. From this group grew Congregation Beth Yeshua.

During these formative years, many Messianic Jews from the Jesus Movement joined the Hebrew Christian Alliance of America. By the early 1970s, a major generational divide had emerged within the HCAA. The older leadership viewed themselves as Jewish converts to Christianity and were comfortable assimilating into Gentile churches, a practice the younger generation opposed as eroding their Jewish identity. At their annual meeting in Dunedin, Florida, in 1975, led by Martin Chernoff and the younger Jesus Movement Jews, the name was formally changed from the HCAA to MJAA, the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, as a desired step to focus more on Jewish identity. Many more details could be given, but suffice it to say that this change added to the congregational movement that was already underway. Now, our alliance forms the backbone of our movement, ministering internationally, especially to the Nation of Israel, through the Joseph Project and other outreach efforts. Its International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues (the IAMCS) is the congregational arm, with more than 200 congregations, including *Beit Shalom*.

Some of you heard Rabbi Jonathan Cahn's message at the Messiah Conference on July 4th. Incidentally, Messiah Conference 2026 was the 111th Annual Meeting, a practice which began in 1915 in the HCAA. It was a powerful message about where we are as the Messianic Jewish Movement now, even amid all the political craziness in our nation today. Rabbi Cahn said: "These are the days to go full blast with our calling. The first shall be last. And we were the last. We were the first and the last. God has saved us for last. What is the anointing of the Messianic Jewish movement of God, the Jewish and those of you who've been joined to it? It is the anointing of the book of Acts. It's the anointing to live by the Spirit and by the power of God. It's the anointing to open prison doors, to cast down principalities, to break down walls, to break open barriers. It's the anointing to cast out evil. It's the anointing to overcome the powers of kingdoms and empires. It's the anointing

to touch the nations and change the very course of this world. That's our anointing." We must get that excited about our movement too. We are the "boots on the ground."

When Rabbi Jonathan said we were the first, it was because we embody Yeshua's 1st-century disciples, the early Jewish leaders, as well as the Corneliuses, the Gentile disciples of the 1st-century. We are the last because we are the movement that was born last, the Messianic Jewish Movement of the end times, a movement born in response to the end of the "times of the Gentiles" in Jerusalem. We are a prophetic movement, and it is our calling to go forth now, speaking confidently about the Gospel and the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* available to heal, deliver, and tear down strongholds. Our time of anointing is now. It will happen! We have the power of the Spirit to step out in power as the prophetic movement we were born to be. But it's not just about Jews; it's also about the modern Corneliuses, the Messianic Gentiles of our movement. ADONAI chose the Jews to be the first to receive His Spirit and the leaders of His movement, but they are a very small group, just .2 percent of the world's population. ADONAI said: 7 *"It is not because you are more numerous than all the peoples that Adonai set His love on you and chose you—for you are the least of all peoples."* (Deuteronomy 7:7 TLV). Estimates of the Gentile portion of the Messianic Jewish Movement today are 70 percent or more, but as the Messianic revival continues to take place, that percentage can only increase, because that is ADONAI's plan. Our prayer is that as many of the remaining 99.8 percent of the world's population as can be saved would join us.

That raises the question: To whom is our study directed? It is for those already in Messianic Judaism and for those whom ADONAI is calling to Messianic Judaism, those with ears to hear. While we welcome interactions with our brothers and sisters in the Church, we are not called to engage with them except on matters we already agree on. If they ask questions about our differing understandings, we answer, but our direct instruction is only for those who choose to hear. This is a movement-wide understanding and a directive from our leadership. Our congregation is but a tiny part of Messianic Judaism, itself a small part of Yeshua's wider Body, the Ecclesia, His community of followers. We are called to be, and we wish to be, in love and fellowship with the Church, even as we teach our respective groups differently about understanding the Scriptures. As Messianic disciples of Yeshua, we firmly believe our teachings reflect true Biblical faith, but we have not been called to teach them to the Church except when asked. Why? As you will see in a moment, the Church has been given the authority to determine its own teachings. We also believe that Messianic Judaism is for those Jews who follow Rabbinic Judaism and will accept it. That is a significant purpose of our re-establishment as a Jewish Movement after two thousand years, with our major prayer focus on the "salvation of all Israel," the Jews of the world. I humbly note that Messianic Judaism is "the elder brother," having been established more than forty years before Rabbinic Judaism. As the elder brother, we continue to care for and reach out to our brothers and sisters in other Judaisms. We hope and pray that they will come to know their *Goel Yisra'el* (Kinsman Redeemer) Yeshua, and understand that the *Torah* still requires blood (Leviticus 17:11) to cover sin. Today, Yeshua's blood is the only blood ADONAI approves.

As Messianic Jewish followers of Yeshua, what is the extent of our relationship with Jesus's followers in the Church? Of course, it is to love each other, to have fellowship with each other, and to recognize each other as called and committed to the service of Jesus. Despite our differing interpretations of parts of Scripture, we should respect one another's sincere commitment to understanding ADONAI's Word and to their individual spiritual calling. But Yeshua specifically addressed this question about differing views. When He asked His disciples, "Who do the people say the Son of Man is?" they gave several answers. 4 His more pointed question was, "Who do you say I am?" *Shimon Kefa* (Simon Peter) answered: 16 ..., "*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*" (Matthew 16:16b TLV). Yeshua blessed him for his answer and said, 19 "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 16:19a TLV), spiritual keys. We also understand that Yeshua didn't give these spiritual keys only to Peter, but to him as a representative of leaders, then and now, within Yeshua's Ecclesia (His Body of Followers). As He sat on a mountain in Israel, Yeshua taught His disciples: 17 *From then on, Yeshua began to proclaim, "Turn away from your sins, for the kingdom of heaven is near."* (Matthew 4:17 TLV). The "Kingdom of Heaven" is a central theme symbolizing G-d's divine rule, presence, and salvation. The Kingdom of Heaven is Yeshua's movement, encompassing everything He does in heaven and on earth. What keys to it has He given us? The keys He gave us are keys to authority, authority to make binding decisions for those under our leadership's charge. 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). His words have been widely misunderstood. They are not magic phrases for healing or for commanding demons. They are legal terms used by Jewish rabbis a generation before Yeshua and in His own generation. His disciples understood what He meant. They knew about *Rabbi Hillel* and *Rabbi Shammai*, the two greatest rabbis of the 1st century, and their individual interactions. The Greek words *deo* and *luo*, meaning "forbid" (or "bind") and "permit" (or "loose"), correspond to the Hebrew *asar* and *hitir*, words used to render rabbinic rulings. To understand what Yeshua meant, we must understand what He was referring to. And it was a cultural component of the rabbinic system of His day. Then and now, rabbis issue rulings for their followers. In Rabbinic Judaism, the whole is called *halakha*, the collective authoritative rulings of the group. Derived from *halakh*, meaning walk, *halakha* determines what their followers can or cannot do, essentially their "spiritual walk," the way Scripture is interpreted by them. *Rabbi Shammai* would sometimes "bind," while *Rabbi Hillel* would "loose," and *Hillel* would sometimes "bind," and *Shammai* would "loose." The result was that their individual followers would obey according to their leader's ruling. This system continued even after their deaths with the organizations of their followers of succeeding generations, *Beit Hillel* and *Beit Shammai*, the houses of *Hillel* and *Shammai*. Yeshua's disciples understood what He meant by binding and loosing. They understood that it meant they, as leaders of His Ecclesia, could interpret Scripture and make *halakhic* decisions for Yeshua's followers within their respective groups. This continues today. As an ordained congregational leader, I have Yeshua's authority to bind or loose for those in my charge, but not to bind or loose for those in someone else's charge. But we generally see it as part of a larger picture, with derived Messianic *halakha* and Christian teaching. The end result is that each of us who issues rulings, interpretations, and ways of understanding Scripture must stand before Yeshua at the judgment. We will be held

accountable for our rulings. While the meaning of Yeshua's words about binding and loosing is that we have His authority to interpret *Torah* and teach our congregation, it is not to exercise authority over someone else. The Church has Yeshua's authority to develop its own theology, *halakha* in a sense, and we are not called to teach them ours.

Sha'ul (Paul) wrote a major portion of the *Ketuvim Shlichim* (the Writings of the Apostles and Emissaries) and is a primary source for our congregational faith. In Messianic Judaism, we call him by his Hebrew name, *Sha'ul*. All Jews, both then and now, have two names, one in Hebrew and one in the language of the nation where they live. While his Hebrew name, *Sha'ul*, was given to him at his *B'rit Milah* (circumcision) at eight days old, he was also given the Latin name *Paulus* as a Roman citizen. He wrote: *16 For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek.* (Romans 1:16 TLV). The Good News, *Besurat HaGuelah*, is more completely described as *Besurat HaGeulah HaMalchut shel Yeshua HaMashiach*, “the Good News of the Kingdom of Yeshua the Messiah.” It's not just about getting saved, but that is an essential first step. It's also about becoming a part of Yeshua's Kingdom and our relationship with eternity. *Mashiach* means “anointed.” Yeshua is our anointed Savior and King. The Good News, the Gospel, is about Yeshua's Kingdom, both in heaven and on earth. This verse means that the Good News part of it, the truth that Yeshua is G-d's only begotten Son who is the only way to eternal life, was given first to G-d's chosen people, the Jews. It is given equally to the Gentiles but through the Jews. Speaking to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, Yeshua said: *22 “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”* (John 4:22 TLV). But the Good News is much more than salvation. It is the revelation of the total and complete gift of G-d, both here on earth, in heaven, and ultimately, in the world to come on the new earth, where we will reign with our Messiah Yeshua for eternity.

But why is the Good News first to the Jew? It's because, in the progression of the spiritual events of the 1st century, the Jews were the first to be saved on *Shavuot* (Pentecost), when the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) fell on the seeking Jews gathered at the Temple Mount. We hear Yeshua's words regarding worship: *24 “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”* (John 4:22 TLV). Yes, of course we worship Him in spirit, but we also worship ADONAI in physical ways. We worship Him as covenant members of the New Covenant, responsible for covenant loyalty through obedience to the *Torah*, through our praise and worship, and through the good works we do in the world. Even so, that is only a part of how we worship Him. Because G-d is Spirit, our basis of relationship with Him must be spirit to spirit: G-d's *Ruach*, His Spirit, to our (man's) spirit. This spiritual relationship can only come through a relationship with His Son, Yeshua. Once that relationship is established and His Spirit dwells in us, we worship ADONAI by studying and understanding the truth of His Word, the *Torah*, as revealed in the Bible from Genesis (the *Torah* of Moses) through the Revelation of *Yochanan* (John). *Torah* means “teaching and instruction” and teaches us how flesh and blood can serve a holy, supernatural G-d. Every book of the Bible is anointed truth written by Jewish authors inspired by ADONAI.

Are there more reasons for the Jew first? Yes! To begin with, the Jews are a “chosen people,” chosen by ADONAI to be His instrument for revealing Himself to the Nations. Messiah Yeshua is a Jew, not was, but is a Jew. He had to be a Jew and, second, a descendant of King David to be the *Goel*, the Kinsman Redeemer. It was to His kinsmen that Yeshua first revealed the Gospel. *Sha’ul* asks the question: *1 Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision?* (Romans 3:1 TLV). The phrases in this verse exemplify Jewish parallelism; both statements convey the same meaning. The “advantage of being Jewish” is parallel to “the benefit of those who are called “the circumcision,” the Jews.” What is the advantage? *Sha’ul* answers: *2 Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God.* (Romans 3:2 TLV). A Jewish author wrote every book of the Bible except the two written by Luke. Luke was a Gentile but most likely also a proselyte, and there is no question that he wrote with Jewish understanding. *Sha’ul* continued regarding the advantage of being Jewish: *4 ... To them belong the adoption and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Torah and the Temple service and the promises. 5 To them belong the patriarchs—and from them, according to the flesh, the Messiah, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen.* (Romans 9:4b-5 TLV). The Jews are a special group in G-d’s eyes, and because they are, they have suffered much persecution throughout the centuries. But, even though ADONAI chose none of the other people groups of the earth, He loves every person He created equally and has provided a way for everyone to become covenant members of the same covenant that He made with the Jews. His eternal plan is revealed in His choosing them to be “priests to the nations” (Exodus 19:5), that “the seed of Abraham” (Genesis 22:18), Yeshua, would bless the nations.

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.” (Exodus 19:5 TLV). Some argue that Exodus 19:5 was not fulfilled because Israel was unfaithful. But I believe they were, and this verse has been fulfilled over the centuries. There has always been a faithful remnant, even during the time when Israel was being punished for idolatry and deported to Babylon. ADONAI said: *2 ... “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love. Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness. 3 Again I will build you, so you will be rebuilt, virgin Israel!”* (Jeremiah 31:2b-3a TLV). Even though Israel had just whored after false gods, ADONAI called them “virgin,” an expression of His love for them. Later in the same chapter, ADONAI revealed through Jeremiah that He would make a new covenant with Israel (31:30) because they had broken the one He had made with them at Sinai (31:31). The New Covenant, cut with Yeshua’s blood, is today’s active redemptive covenant. It is the only way to experience “the life of the world to come,” eternity. And it is our Messianic Jewish brothers and sisters who have trusted in Yeshua and, over the years, have obeyed the *Torah* who are keeping the covenant today and upholding Exodus 19:5. They are declared as His own, treasured people. There remains a righteous remnant of *Torah*-faithful Jews today, Jews who worship ADONAI through His New Covenant.

It’s time for us, the Jews and Gentiles in Yeshua’s modern Messianic Jewish Movement, to stand up and be counted. I believe the United States’ 250th birthday marked the start of a new era in our movement, marked by greater activism and boldness in

presenting our Messiah to a hurting and divided world. Each congregation is to be more visible in its community. In 2027, *Beit Shalom* will begin its ministry in a new location after spending almost 22 years in this building. But it's not to diminish us; it's to propel us forward with power, the power to change the world. Yeshua continues to speak to us individually, calling us to greater unity as a congregation. We know WWYD, what Yeshua would do. But it is WMWD, "what must we do," that we must address. Yeshua is our example, and He perfectly kept ADONAI's *Torah*. That is what He calls us to do, to obey His *Torah* as it applies to us today. We can't do this in our homes, and we must be gathered together each *Shabbat* to hear from His Spirit and to add our voices to our group's identity. Yeshua is our example: 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). It was His custom because He knew that ADONAI had commanded us to assemble on *Shabbat* (Leviticus 23:3), a holy convocation He calls each week. WWYD? Yeshua is our example, and He is calling those of us in His Messianic Jewish Movement not only to greater commitment but also to greater boldness. Let's grow together in faith and commitment as we move through the remaining months in this place. And then let's be prepared to move out in power as he sends us to our new location. I pray that each person called to *Beit Shalom* will grow in their commitment to the *Torah* as Yeshua gives the increase! *Shabbat shalom!*