Parasha Vayera October 31, 2026

Torah: Genesis 18:1-22:24
Haftarah: 2 Kings 4:1-37
Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 2:17-29

Messianic Judaism 12

Shabbat Shalom Mishpacha! Today, we continue studying *Sha'ul*. Our ongoing study, "Messianic Judaism," helps us understand a messianic interpretation of the Scriptures, one we believe aligns with how Yeshua's early Jewish disciples understood them, even though they had access only to the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. Recently, we introduced *Sha'ul*, Yeshua's disciple and the *Torah*'s primary interpreter. But more than that, he was a major proclaimer of the *Besorah*, the Glad Tidings, or the Good News. What *Sha'ul* called the Good News is represented by the Greek word *euaggelion* (yoo-ag-ghel"-ee-on), meaning Gospel, a term that refers to the proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the message surrounding Yeshua's life, death, and resurrection. This is the starting point for anyone who trusts in Him and believes this has happened. Keeping the *Torah* without salvation is useless and pointless. But once a person trusts in Yeshua by faith, their immediate question is usually, "What do I do next?' Is there anything else I must do to fulfill this relationship? *Sha'ul*'s letter to the congregation in Rome answers this question by stating that he was called to teach Gentiles to follow and to obey the *Torah*. That's a bold statement for today, since many of Yeshua's followers believe *Sha'ul* taught that the *Torah* no longer applies to them. But this message is for those called to Messianic Judaism. Others are free to interpret his words for themselves. Yeshua has given that right to all His followers, and we are teaching only ourselves, not the Church. Can we support the claim that *Sha'ul* began Romans by stating that Gentiles should obey the *Torah*? We can and will show how in just a moment.

Romans 1 begins: *1 Paul, a slave of Messiah Yeshua, called to be an emissary and set apart for the Good News of God, 2 which He announced beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures.* (Romans 1:1-2 TLV). *Sha'ul* says he is both a slave (Greek: *doulos*) and an apostle (Greek: *apostolos*) of *Yeshua HaMashiach*. *Doulos* is translated as "bondservant." By saying that he was a slave, the image of a Hebrew bondslave comes to mind. These individuals were common in 1st-century Israel, part of a system still in use for those who fell into financial hardship. According to Exodus 21, an *eved ivri*, עֶבֶד עִבְרִי, a bondslave serving a master out of financial need, could be released from his obligation at the end of the seventh year. But if he became attached to his master during his service, he could choose to continue the relationship. *5 "But if the servant plainly states, 'I love my*

master, my wife and my children, and I will not go out free,' 6 then his master is to bring him to God, then take him to a door or to a doorpost. His master is to pierce his ear through with an awl, and he will serve him forever. (Exodus 21:5-6 TLV). This continuing scar on his ear permanently indicated a bondslave's servitude. While *Sha'ul* does not state it, his teachings strongly imply that a believer is a bondslave. In *Sha'ul*, we see the eternally bound slave of Yeshua, something all of us as His followers should be. *Sha'ul* was willing to undergo the spiritual equivalent of the painful piercing of his earlobe, for he endured persecutions far worse than a one-time jab through the ear. He had committed his life to serving Yeshua as His representative to the Gentile world of the 1st century. He was an emissary, an apostle, set apart to carry the Good News to the Gentiles because Yeshua had appointed him for this work.

Speaking of Yeshua, *Sha'ul* wrote: *3 Concerning His Son, He came into being from the seed of David according to the flesh. 4 He was appointed Ben-Elohim in power according to the Ruach of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. He is Messiah Yeshua our Lord*. (Romans 1:3-4 TLV). He tells us who Yeshua is: a descendant of David, the Son of G-d, resurrected from the dead, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Then, here it is. He writes: *5 Through Him we have received grace and the office of emissary, to bring about obedience of faith among all the nations on behalf of His name*. (Romans 1:5 TLV). This is the clear evidence regarding the *Torah* for Gentiles. *Sha'ul*'s mission as the Apostle to the Gentiles is to "bring about the obedience of faith." The TLV could just as easily have written "Gentiles" instead of "nations," because the Greek word *ethnesin* (eth-neh-sin) means "among the Gentiles," the group to whom *Sha'ul* was appointed to minister. The Greek *hypakoēn pisteōs* (hoop-ak-o-ein pis'-tay-ohs), translated as "obedience of faith," does not mean "the obedience of having faith in Yeshua for salvation," but rather faith to obey and follow Yeshua's and ADONAI's commands. The Complete Jewish Bible puts this best as "trust-grounded obedience," obedience supported by faith that it is to be done. This means that *Sha'ul* was saying that he was sent to teach the Gentiles "obedience to the *Torah*," and, as he will soon tell us, it has nothing to do with salvation. He makes this bold statement about the *Torah* just five verses in, at the beginning of his letter to the Roman congregation, and he carries this theme throughout. In verses 6-15, *Sha'ul* greets and compliments the group in Rome, explaining that he has often wanted to visit them but has been prevented, yet he is eager to share the Good News with them. And then he presents it: *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. 17 In it the righteousness of God is revealed, from trust to trust. As it is written, "But the righteous shall live by emunah*." (Romans 1:16-17 TLV). Good News is the Greek *euaggelion* meaning "the good news of the coming of the Messiah." Its Hebrew counterpart is בְּשׂוֹרָה *besorah*, which means "to bring good news or glad tidings," as prophesied by Isaiah and fulfilled by *Sha'ul*: *7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces shalom, who brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!*" (Isaiah 52:7 TLV). It is the message of salvation available through faith in Yeshua's bloody sacrifice of Himself as payment for our sins. In saying, *"But the righteous shall live by emunah*." (Romans 1:17), *Sha'ul* quotes Habakkuk: *4 Behold, the puffed up one— his soul is not right within him, But the righteous will live by his trust*. (Habakkuk 2:4 TLV). The

TLV is somewhat confusing here. It uses the Hebrew *emunah* to translate the Greek *pistis* in Romans, but in Habakkuk, where the Hebrew word is *emunah*, it renders it as trust. But we can sort it out. Trust and faith are essentially equivalent. The Greek pistis and the Hebrew אֱמוּנָה *emunah* both mean faith, but also faithfulness. While we initially trust in Yeshua by faith, *pistis* and *emunah* also point to faithfulness, the need to follow Yeshua faithfully to the end, whether in our death or at His return. Believing the Good News of Yeshua involves more than a single expression of faith; it requires lifelong commitment.

After discussing unrighteous behavior and judgment in Chapter 1 and at the start of Chapter 2, *Sha'ul* continues: *6 He will pay back each person according to his deeds*. (Romans 2:6 TLV). This is about the final judgment. For someone who trusts in the Good News of Yeshua, it is about how they served Him throughout their life. For those who trust and obey, becoming Yeshua's bondslave, there is reward. An old hymn is titled "Will There Be Any Stars In My Crown." It's about the rewards we may receive when we stand before the Master. For us, this verse is not about our initial faith in Yeshua, but how we serve Him after we trust. We face judgment when we finally stand before Yeshua's judgment seat. *7 To those who by perseverance in doing good* **(after having trusted in Yeshua)** *are seeking glory, honor, and immortality—eternal life*. (Romans 2:7 TLV). "Perseverance in doing good" further alludes to the need for *emunah*, faithfulness, in our walk with Yeshua. *8 But to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—wrath and fury. 9 There will be trouble and hardship for every human soul that does evil—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 10 But there will be glory, honor, and shalom to everyone who does good—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God*. (Romans 2:8-11 TLV). Every person will be judged as either righteous or unrighteous. But only followers of Yeshua are eligible to receive rewards.

This next statement initially appears confusing: *12 For all who have sinned outside of Torah will also perish outside of Torah, and all who have sinned according to Torah will be judged by Torah*. (Romans 2:12 TLV). But adding clarifying words temporarily clarifies the meaning. *12 For all who have sinned outside of Torah* **(pagan Gentiles)** *will also perish outside of Torah* **(the Law)**, *and all who have sinned according to Torah* **(Jews and Gentiles who have trusted Yeshua)** *will be judged by Torah* **(the Law)**. (Romans 2:12 TLV). This verse tells us that everyone has sinned against G-d. Gentiles who are pagans and idol worshippers who don't know ADONAI will be judged by Him by His standards that are not related to the *Torah*, while Jews and Gentiles who do know ADONAI's standards will be judged by Him based upon the *Torah*, but no one will escape ADONAI's judgment. We will all be held accountable for our sins regardless of who we are, Jew or Gentile, believer or unbeliever. There is a coming judgment for every human being that ADONAI created.

In his letter, *Sha'ul* addressed Jews and Gentiles in a Roman congregation he did not establish and whom he did not know. It existed before he wrote his letter, and its origin is unknown. Jews from Rome may have founded it after journeying to Jerusalem for the *Shavuot* described in Acts chapter 2 and returning home after the Holy Spirit's outpouring. As we read further in the letter, some of *Sha'ul*'s statements suggest the congregation was a mixed group: believing Jews, believing Gentiles, and Jewish and

Gentile seekers of Messiah who were not yet saved. He may have learned this from Priscilla and Aquila, Messianic Jews he met in Corinth, who were forced to leave Rome under Emperor Claudius.

Sha'ul continues: I emphasize this verse! *13 For it is not the hearers of Torah who are righteous before God; rather, it is the doers of Torah who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, do by nature the things of the Torah, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the Torah.* (Romans 2:13-14 TLV). When he says Gentiles who do not have the *Torah*, *Sha'ul* means that it was not given to them as it was to the Jews, but some Gentiles are "doers of *Torah*,' because they have been taught they are to follow it. But how can the "doers of *Torah* be justified," declared righteous, when *Sha'ul* said in chapter 1, "But the righteous shall live by *emunah*," faith. The answer is that they are "justified" because they have already trusted in Yeshua by faith and are "doers of *Torah*" after salvation. These verses are about Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua. Everything thus far concerns those saved by faith: believers, followers of Yeshua, Jews, and Gentiles in the congregation. As we said, those described in verse 14 who don't have *Torah* are the Gentiles in the congregation who trusted Yeshua. "Had no *Torah*" means they were Gentiles. *For when Gentiles, who do not have the Torah, do by nature the things of the Torah, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the Torah.* This means that for Gentiles who trust in Yeshua and then obey the *Torah*, it becomes *Torah* for them. They are then followers of the *Torah*. Within the traditional Judaism of that day, among those who did not believe in Yeshua, there were Gentiles who worshipped the G-d of Israel and kept the *Torah*, but did not convert to Judaism. They were called "proselytes at the gate" or "G-d fearers." This is likely what Cornelius was considered to be before he trusted in Yeshua. But the Gentile believers in Rome had gone beyond Proselytes at the Gate. They were Gentiles who went beyond merely obeying the Law; they first trusted in Yeshua and then obeyed the *Torah*.

Our question was, "How can doers of *Torah* be justified?" This verse helps to clarify, and is about Gentiles who had no *Torah*, but do the works of the *Torah*: *15 They show that the work of the Torah is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts switching between accusing or defending them 16 on the day when God judges the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:15-16 TLV). Not only Gentiles but also Jews who trusted Yeshua showed that the work of the *Torah* was written in their hearts. ADONAI said through Jeremiah: *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). Jews and Gentiles who trusted Yeshua showed that the work of the *Torah*, the desire to keep it, was written on their hearts. This means that when a Jew or a Gentile first trusts in Yeshua, ADONAI's *Torah*, His teaching and instruction, and His Laws are written on their hearts. Some who have trusted Yeshua may not realize they are present, but His commands are within us, in our human spirit, waiting for us to invite the Holy Spirit to reveal them! However, while the desire to obey the *Torah* has been written on our hearts, our wills may suppress it.

In this verse about our future judgment day, *Sha'ul* says ADONAI will judge men by His standard, whether they trusted in Yeshua. *16 …on the day <u>when God judges</u> the secrets of men according to my Good News through Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 2:16 TLV). *Sha'ul* also wrote to the congregation in Corinth about that day: *10 For we must all appear before the <u>judgment seat of Messiah</u>, so that each one may receive what is due for the things he did while in the body—whether good or bad.* (2 Corinthians 5:10 TLV). (Also Romans 14:10-12). In these verses, *Sha'ul* speaks to believers. As followers of Yeshua, we will all one day stand before Him to give an account of what we have done, good and bad, and be judged by our obedience to Him and our keeping of the *Torah*. This aligns with our Statement of Belief: "Faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to G-d's *Torah* commandments are not mutually exclusive. Both are expected as our reasonable faith and practice as new creations in Messiah." This means we are saved by faith through G-d's grace, but as *talmidim*, disciples of Yeshua, we are expected to follow in His footsteps and walk faithfully, as He did, to the best of our ability. We conclude that *Sha'ul* meant, "The *Torah* is for us today"; we are to obey it.

Sha'ul's next words were only to the physical Jews in the congregation: *17 But if you call yourself Jewish and rely upon the Torah and boast in God 18 and know His will and determine what matters because you are instructed from the Torah—* (Romans 2:17-18 TLV). In this, he was not speaking to Gentiles. The Greek, *Ioudaios*, (ee-oo-dah'-yos), means "Jewish." When *Sha'ul* said, "If you call yourself Jewish," he meant, "If you <u>are</u> a Jew." This is not about Gentiles calling themselves Jews. It's about Jews in the flesh. 25 *Circumcision is indeed worthwhile if you keep the Torah; but if you* **(a Jew)** *break the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.* (Romans 2:25 TLV). If a Jew violates the *Torah* by stealing, committing adultery, or whatever, their circumcision, the physical sign in their flesh that identifies them as Jewish men (the symbolism also applies to females), has become uncircumcision. The situation is this. A man, a Jew by birth, does not intend in his heart to keep the *Torah*. According to *Sha'ul*, he is no longer spiritually a Jew, and even though he is physically circumcised, his circumcision has become spiritually meaningless. *Sha'ul* is not speaking about their failure in just one point of *Torah*, but their general approach to following the *Torah*. He's talking about what is in their hearts: *28 For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. 29 Rather, <u>the Jew</u> is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29 TLV). When *Sha'ul* says "the Jew," he is equating being a Jew with being a Jewish follower of Yeshua. A Jew who has trusted in Yeshua has fulfilled these words by Moses: *6 Also Adonai your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants—to love Adonai your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.* (Deuteronomy 30:6 TLV). A Messianic Jew in ADONAI's sight is a Jew who has a circumcised heart. According to *Sha'ul*, under the New Covenant, ethnic Jews, Jews in the flesh, are not considered Jews by ADONAI unless they possess circumcised hearts. In the flesh, they are Jews, but in the spirit, they are not, and it is ADONAI who judges whose heart is circumcised.

This concept of circumcision also applies to Gentiles even though they don't have it in their flesh. *Sha'ul* continues: *26 Therefore, if the uncircumcised* **(a Gentile)** *keeps the*

righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision **(of the flesh)** *be counted as circumcision* **(of the heart)**? (Romans 2:26 TLV). The Gentile who is a follower of Yeshua who keeps the righteous decrees of the *Torah* will be viewed by ADONAI in the same way He views righteous Jews. The uncircumcision of his flesh is counted as circumcision of the heart if he keeps the righteous decrees of the *Torah* after first trusting in Yeshua. This does not make believing Gentiles into spiritual Jews or Jews of any sort. They are still Gentiles, but righteous before ADONAI because their hearts have been circumcised just as the hearts of believing Jews have been. This is about the "righteous decrees of the *Torah*," underlined in the verse above. That's what determines if a Jew or a Gentile has a circumcised heart. Those who keep the righteous decrees of the *Torah* have circumcised hearts in ADONAI's eyes. This has nothing at all to do with salvation. Salvation comes by faith through ADONAI's grace and a person's trust in Yeshua's sacrificial death, and nothing else. But after coming to faith in Yeshua, the choice is ours. We can be doers or non-doers of the *Torah*. When we stand before Yeshua, He will judge us. These decrees are "Righteous decrees of *Torah*." If they're righteous, shouldn't we obey them? Yes! What are they? They are all the commands we can obey today that don't require the Temple or the Aaronic Priesthood, since those commands are inactive.

Romans 3: *1 Then what is the advantage of being Jewish? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. First of all, they were entrusted with the sayings of God.* (Romans 3:1-2 TLV). ADONAI chose the Jews to be His priests to the nations, and in doing so, He entrusted them with the "sayings of G-d," the Scriptures. *Sha'ul*, a trained *Torah* scholar, had the qualifications of *Torah* education, which allowed him to speak authoritatively about the *Torah*. Speaking to the crowd after his arrest in Jerusalem, he said: *3 "I am a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, trained strictly according to the Torah of our fathers, being zealous for God just as all of you are today."* (Acts 22:3 TLV). *Gamli'el* (Gamaliel), the son of the great rabbi *Hillel* from the previous generation, was the foremost *Torah* scholar in *Sha'ul's day*, and *Sha'ul* received the highest training because he studied the *Torah* under him. *Sha'ul*'s letters attest that second to Yeshua, the *Torah* was his life. Because he learned it at the feet of *Gamli'el*, we understand that *Sha'ul* knew what he was talking about when he spoke about the *Torah*.

He now returns to the only way of salvation: *21 But now God's righteousness apart from the Torah has been revealed, to which the Torah and the Prophets bear witness— 22 namely, the righteousness of God through putting trust in Messiah Yeshua, to all who keep on trusting. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. 24 They are set right as a gift of His grace, through the redemption that is in Messiah Yeshua.* (Romans 3:21-24 TLV). Referring to what we have underlined, "Trusting in Yeshua is G-d's righteousness apart from the *Torah* and the only way to righteousness." *Dikaiosuné* (dik-ah-yos-oo'-nay), meaning righteousness, refers to justification, being declared righteous by ADONAI through faith in Yeshua, a gift of His grace. Keeping the *Torah* can't save anyone. We have all sinned and can only obtain righteousness and be justified before ADONAI by trusting in Yeshua. Salvation comes only by faith through grace, never by any other means. *Sha'ul* concludes this discussion by restating this

premise: *28 For we consider a person to be set right apart from Torah observance.* (Romans 3:28 TLV). There is no question about it. *Torah* observance cannot save anyone and was never a part of the Jewish theology of salvation.

Sha'ul continues: *29 Is God the God of the Jewish people only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. 30 Since God is One, He will set right the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah.* (Romans 3:29-31 TLV). G-d declares both Jew and Gentile righteous through faith, their trust in Yeshua as the כַּפָּרָה *kaparah*, the atonement for their sins. It is the only way, as *Sha'ul* declares: *20 For no human, on the basis of Torah observance, will be set right in His sight—for through the Torah comes awareness of sin.* (Romans 3:20 TLV). While keeping the *Torah* cannot save us, it is still essential. It shows us what sin is, and by obeying it, we avoid sinning. As we have seen, we are to be doers of the *Torah,* which gives us circumcised hearts. Although *Torah* observance cannot bring righteousness, *Sha'ul* encourages us, Yeshua's followers, to be "doers of *Torah*, because "doers" will be justified, as he told us in Romans 2:13.

What we do after we trust in Yeshua is important. When we stand before Him, He will only judge us by how we served Him after we trusted Him. Regarding the *Torah*, *Sha'ul* said: "On the contrary, we uphold *Torah*." He wrote to the Philippians about himself: "*In regard to the Torah, a Pharisee*." *Sha'ul* had excellent credentials, as we said, having been trained by the great *Torah* scholar *Gamli'el*. When he was imprisoned in Caesarea, he said before the High Priest of Israel and the Roman Governor Felix: *14 "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets*." (Acts 24:14 TLV). Still in prison in Caesarea two years later, *Sha'ul* said to the new Roman Governor Festus: *8…"I have committed no offense against the Torah of the Jewish people, or against the Temple, or against Caesar*." (Acts 25:8b TLV). Our examination of the first three chapters of Romans shows that *Sha'ul* never spoke against following the *Torah* and taught the Roman congregation to obey it. The *Torah* was to be obeyed, as *Shimon Kefa*, *Yochanan*, Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov*, Gentiles like Cornelius, and all 1st-century Messianic Jews and Gentiles who trusted Yeshua believed. What *Sha'ul* wrote to the Jews and Gentiles in the Roman congregation about *Torah* obedience is what all of Yeshua's followers at that time observed, and we will find even more evidence as we continue to study his later messages.

Sha'ul concludes his letter to the Romans with the same statement he made in chapter 1, verse 5, "bookends" of something he considered important. We read it here from the Complete Jewish Bible: ***25*** *Now to God, who can strengthen you, according to my Good News, in harmony with the revelation of the secret truth which is the proclamation of Yeshua the Messiah, kept hidden in silence for ages and ages,* ***26*** *but manifested now through prophetic writings, in keeping with the command of God the Eternal, and communicated to all the Gentiles to promote in them trust-grounded obedience.* ***27*** *to the only wise God, through Yeshua the Messiah, be the glory forever and ever! Amen.* (Romans 16:25-27 CJB). With this, *Sha'ul* ends the Book of Romans. This concept reflects a

biblical-Jewish understanding in which trust (*emunah*: faith) is actively connected to living out all of ADONAI's commandments and to walking in the Spirit rather than in the carnal nature. *Sha'ul* begins and ends his letter to the Romans with this emphasis, underscoring his commitment to obedience. We have not ended our study of Romans, but will return to it later in future messages.

Our message today was not for the Church. Church leaders must decide their own understanding of G-d's Word. This message is for the Messianic body of Messiah Yeshua and those He is calling to be a part of it. But regardless of where we stand in our understanding of Scripture or our theology, above all, in Yeshua's greater body, we must put on love for our fellow believers: *14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfect harmony* (Colossians 3:14 TLV), and love each other as Yeshua loves us: *34 …"that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, so also you must love one another*" (John 13:34b). We may understand differently, but both groups are members of Yeshua's body, and His direction to love one another is a high calling! *Shabbat shalom*!