



A Study of Galatians

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Scripture Translation- A Modernized, Messianized King James

This study was originally written in 2001. I have updated it by replacing Scripture quotations in the comments with the Tree of Life Version of the Bible, a version which had not been written in 2001. I made some other additions which today seem to better describe *Sha'ul's* words and which also relate to my own progressive understanding of Scripture. The King James Version of the Bible has been given modern language and is used to render the text of the Book of Galatians. Understanding the overall theme of *Sha'ul's* letter is key to understanding his letter to the Congregation at Galatia. What was really trying to say to them? It really depends on whom you ask and there are many interpretations about this book out there in either written or oral form. Some are by antinomians, those who speak against the *Torah* as being useful at all today, and some are by those who understand that that Yeshua's death on the stake did not change the truth of G-d's Word. This study is not written to discredit any person or teaching, but seeks that we might understand the real message which *Sha'ul* was proclaiming for us. Galatians is a difficult letter to understand, not only from our perspective today, but also in the time in which it was written. *Sha'ul* did have the reputation of being hard to understand, even among the Jews of that time. *Shimon Kefa* (Peter) acknowledges that about *Sha'ul*, by saying this: *15 Bear in mind that the patience of our Lord means salvation—just as our dearly loved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom given to him. 16 He speaks about these matters in all of his letters. Some things in them are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist (as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures)—to their own destruction. 17 Since you already know all this, loved ones, be on your guard so that you are not led astray by the error of the lawless and lose your sure footing.* (2Kefa 3:15-17 TLV). We won't be as harsh as *Sha'ul* was when he called the perverters "ignorant and unstable," but pray that we and all of Yeshua's followers will understand what his message really was.

To understand a writing, it helps to know about the writer. By knowing the background and personality of *Sha'ul* we are aided in understanding the message which he presented. He was a very complex person, but he was also very transparent. He clearly stated his background and motivation in several of his letters and his thoughts on similar things are also quoted by Luke in the book of Acts. The most complete description of *Sha'ul*, the person, is found in Philippians 3: *3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship by the Ruach Elohim and glory in Messiah Yeshua and have not depended on the flesh— 4 though I myself might have confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he might depend on the flesh, I far more— 5 circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel; from the tribe of Benjamin; a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the Torah, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting Messiah's community; as for Torah righteousness, found blameless* (Philippians 3:3-6 TLV). In verse 8 he compares all these elements of his life with the value of knowing Messiah Yeshua and considers them as garbage. This does not mean that he considered his Jewish qualifications to be of no value, just that all of this was a very distant second when compared with knowing Yeshua as his Messiah. In fact, he continued to be a *Parush*, a Pharisee, throughout his life. In Jerusalem, he was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin because some had accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple. When he was allowed to speak, he said in his defense: "*Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees*" (Acts 23:6b TLV)! He used similar words before King Agrippa while imprisoned in Caesarea (Acts 26:5). His consistent testimony was that he had continued to live following the rules of the Pharisees, the strictest party in Judaism. Knowing the statement he made to the Philippians, "*as for Torah righteousness, found blameless,*" we can begin reading Galatians understanding that he was not against keeping *Torah*. If we take into consideration *Sha'ul's* background and his Hebraic way of thinking, we will discover that he did not contradict himself in his writings and is not really that difficult to understand, even today; that is, if we understand him as he was.

We also know that *Sha'ul* would not contradict his Messiah either. Yeshua confirmed the truth of the *Torah* in Matthew 5: *17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to*

fulfill. 18 Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19 TLV). Some say that Yeshua fulfilled the Law so that we wouldn't have to follow it. That is not true. He followed it because it is eternal truth and He taught us to do the same. When Yeshua said "I didn't come to abolish *Torah* or the Prophets," He was using a Hebrew idiom which means to "incorrectly interpret." The word destroy is used in some Bible versions in place of "abolish." The meaning is still the same. When Yeshua said He came to fulfill *Torah* and the Prophets, He was using a Hebrew idiom which has the opposite meaning of "abolish" and means "to correctly interpret the *Torah*." The word complete is used in some Bibles in the place of "fulfill," but means the same. In these verses, Yeshua stated that He came to correctly interpret the *Torah*, that is, to bring forth its true meaning. In saying *Torah*, and Prophets, He was specifically referring to the five books of Moses and all of the books of the prophets, but the remaining books of the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, would also be inferred.

Some say that *Sha'ul* taught things differently than Yeshua and seek to discredit him. Under no circumstances would he have taken it upon himself to change any of ADONAI's teachings and Laws which he claimed to follow. He would not have changed the seventh day of rest to Sunday, he would not have demeaned the importance of the keeping of the festivals, nor would he have suggested that G-d's dietary requirements had been changed. In other words *Sha'ul* changed nothing. He continued to keep the *Torah* himself and nowhere in his writings can it be found that he teaches otherwise. Before Governor Festus he said: 4 "Now all the Jewish people have known my manner of life ever since my youth, starting from the beginning in my own nation and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known about me for a long time—if they were willing to testify—that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee" (Acts 26:4-5 TLV). And, we know that *Sha'ul* was not a hypocritical Pharisee, but a genuine follower of ADONAI who later became a genuine follower of His Son.

His life as a Pharisee also had a great influence on his life as a follower of Yeshua. The Pharisees developed as a group over a period of several hundred years beginning shortly after the return from Babylonian captivity. While we know from Yeshua's words is that while there were hypocritical Pharisees, the general vision and mission of the group began as a movement to bring the people back to the observance of *Torah*, a place from which they had strayed. By the time of Yeshua they were well organized and wielded considerable power in the religious affairs of the nation. Concerning the Pharisees, hypocrisy was the problem among them which Yeshua most often addressed. But hypocrisy was not a failing of *Sha'ul*. He endeavored to do and to keep every point of his belief. As a Pharisee we also know that *Sha'ul* believed in the life to come, eternal life. This was a major belief of the Pharisees and it sharply divided them from the Sadducees who believed there was no life beyond the mortal one. The Pharisees also believed in angels; the Sadducees did not. Both of these beliefs of *Sha'ul* can be found throughout his letters.

After you hear this message today, I encourage you to study the verses in Galatians side by side with other Bible versions with which you are comfortable. As was said, there are many interpretations of Galatians from many different camps and none can be 100% correct. But, we pray that we're close. Please do not take my interpretation completely for granted. Seek the answer for yourself.

As I began this message, I referred to the overall theme of Galatians. This is what I believe *Sha'ul's* underlying message of the letter to be: "No person can be justified before ADONAI by obeying any list of rules or teachings." Trying to be justified, that is, saved, by keeping rules is legalism. As Messianic followers of Yeshua, we are often accused of legalism, but we know that is not so. Our belief and practice is that salvation is only by faith through G-d's grace; salvation through trust in Yeshua. Obedience, or faithfulness to *Torah*, is our action which naturally follows, comes after, our act of trusting Yeshua. As a *talmid*, a disciple of Yeshua, we are taught to be obedient to our Master. Those who have trusted Him are Yeshua's *talmidim*, His disciples, and are called to walk in the manner which our Master walked. We cannot be justified by Law keeping, but that doesn't mean that we aren't to keep the Law. Look for that theme as you read and study these verses.

Chapter 1

1 Sha'ul, a Sh'liach (*Sh'liach* is the Hebrew term which refers to one who is called out and sent on a mission; usually with a message. Its plural is *sh'lichim*. Two English words often used are "emissary," derived from Latin and "apostle," derived from Greek.), **not of men or by a man, but through Yeshua HaMashiach** (*Ha* [The] *Mashiach* [Anointed One]. *Mashiach* can be any anointed one, a king, a priest or other who has been anointed with oil for a certain office or other purpose. "The" Anointed One is the Messiah) **and Elohim avinu** (Our Father G-d)

who raised him from the dead; 2 and all the brothers who are with me, to the *kehillot* (Although *Sha'ul's* letter was written in Greek, *kehillot* implies the Hebraic intent and was written to the congregations in Galatia; plural. The singular is *kehillah*. The underlying Greek word is *ekklesiae* meaning assemblies; plural. The singular is *ekklesia*. *Ekklesia* and *kehillah* both refer to people, in this case the followers of Yeshua; the called-out ones. Church is not implied and actually has a different meaning. The definition of church is a public building used for Christian worship.) **in Galatia** (The region of central Turkey of today).

3 *Chesed* (Lovingkindness between humans and from ADONAI. Grace, mercy and favor from G-d toward humans.) **to you, and *shalom*** (Peace in the sense of completeness, fullness and wholeness. Also a greeting at meeting or leave-taking.), **from *Elohim avinu* and from *Adon Yeshua HaMashiach*** (the [*Adon*] L-rd Yeshua our Messiah), **4 Who gave Himself** (He gave His *nefesh*, His life.) **for our sins, to deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of *Elohim avinu*** (Yeshua's sacrifice is "capable of" delivering us from this present evil age, that is, our life in the flesh and into the world which is to come. The final deliverance for those "in Messiah" will occur, in *Sha'ul's* words, after he has run the good race and has not been disqualified [1Corinthians 9:25-26]. He also refers to this as arriving at the resurrection from the dead [Philippians 3:1-12]): **5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. *Amein*** (Amen; Let it be so).

6 I wonder that you are so quickly turning from him who called you into Messiah's favor and turning to another *Beshurat HaGe'ulah* (Another "good news"; a different gospel. The Galatians seem to have been encouraged by those Jews known as the "Circumcision faction," whom some call "Judaizers," to turn from away from what *Sha'ul* had taught them and undergo circumcision in order to make the "Good News" of Messiah Yeshua effective. This is by implication. It was also apparently a problem in Philippi as evidenced by *Sha'ul's* words: 2 "*Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the mutilation. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship by the Ruach Elohim and glory in Messiah Yeshua and have not depended on the flesh—..* [Philippians 3:2-3 TLV]. What they were teaching was in opposition to what *Sha'ul* taught; that salvation was through grace alone and circumcision was not required of Yeshua's Gentile followers. It is not likely that these that *Sha'ul* refers to here are pagans, but those causing the problem in chapter 4 likely are.) **7 which is not a Good News; but there are some people who are troubling you who would pervert the *Besurat haGe'ulah of Mashiach*** (A more complete description would be: *besurat hage'ulah hamalkhut Yeshua Hamashiach*, the good news of redemption of the kingdom of Yeshua the Messiah. The implication of these words is that those who believe in Messiah Yeshua become a member of the Kingdom of G-d and have the promise of salvation [effective in the world to come]).

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven bring a *Besurat haGe'ulah* to you other than that which we have announced to you, let him be under a curse (Let him be a person who will not be accepted as righteous by ADONAI.).

9 As we have said before, and I say it again, if anyone brings any other *Besurat haGe'ulah* to you other than what you received, let him be under a curse (The "good news" brought about by Yeshua's death on the stake was not changed in any way by the destruction of the Temple, as some might say today. The "good news" of salvation through Yeshua remained the same at a time when both Messianic and non-messianic Jews were offering sacrifices in the Temple during the forty years after Yeshua's death as it was and is when sacrifices were and are no longer possible after the Temple's destruction in 70 CE. *Sha'ul* offered sacrifices in the Temple (Acts 21), yet he was a follower of Yeshua by faith. We don't have a Scriptural record of other Messianic Jews offering sacrifices, but we know that they were at the Temple. In other words, *Torah* did not change because of Yeshua's death nor did it change after the destruction of the Temple. After the Temple was destroyed, Temple worship and sacrifices were no longer possible and in my opinion, that was ADONAI's plan, but *Torah* regarding those things are still in the Scriptures. They have not been removed. It is also important that we understand that the "good news" was given within the framework and belief system of Judaism. Jews who came to believe in Yeshua during the time of *Sha'ul's* writings did not convert to another religion. For them, and for us, the *Torah*, meaning "teaching or instruction," provided the guidance for everyday conduct after "grace" had accomplished its personal work for a believer. This would not include *Torah* which could only be followed if either the Tabernacle or Temple was present. Those *mitzvot*, commands, are presently inactive. Further, the "good news" of Yeshua could not be effective for one remaining within a Greek or Roman pagan religion, remaining within Buddhism, remaining within Hinduism or remaining within any other religion. A person in any of these religions would have to "come out of them" after receiving Yeshua as his or her Messiah, but neither Jew nor Gentile would "have to come out" of the ethical monotheism of Judaism in order to believe in and follow Yeshua. A Jewish follower of Yeshua remains a Jew. It is also important to understand that the congregations to which *Sha'ul* wrote were composed of both Jews and Gentiles and it is likely that those of the "Circumcision faction" were also a part of these congregations as well.).

10 Am I now persuading men, or Elohim (G-d) or am I seeking to please men (Are Sha'ul's words seeking to agree with the Circumcision Faction.)? For if I was pleasing men (No! He is not seeking their approval.), I would not be a servant of Mashiach (He would still be his old self and not a new creation serving Messiah.).

11 For I make known to you, brothers, that the Besurat haGe'ulah which I announced is not from man (He did not hear it from Yeshua's disciples or from any man).

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it by men, but it was given me by a revelation of Yeshua HaMashiach. (After the salvation of Yeshua's disciples and those saved at Shavuot (Pentecost), salvation was by personal witness from one to another. But, Sha'ul never heard the "Good News" from any man. He received it by direct revelation from Yeshua as described in Acts chapter 9. And, most importantly, what Sha'ul relates in his letters regarding Yeshua is not found to be in conflict with Yeshua's own words in any of the Gospels! And, that's amazing in my mind.).

13 For you have heard of my conduct earlier in Yehudut (Traditional Judaism, the Pharasaism of that day), that I excessively persecuted the kehillah of Elohim ("The Congregation or Assembly of G-d," singular, refers here to all of Yeshua's followers wherever they were.) and destroyed it (Sha'ul destroyed wherever he found it.): 14 and I progressed in Yehudut above many of my contemporaries in my nation (He rose above his contemporaries in prominence among the leaders of the Pharisees.) and was a zealot for the halachah (Literally, walk. For Pharisees, this included both the traditions and the interpretations of Torah and also the Oral Torah, which they claimed was given by G-d to Moses at Mount Sinai, something which Sha'ul rejected after his salvation. He is not referring here to obedience of literal Torah commands.) of my fathers (Sha'ul is not saying that by his acceptance of Yeshua he has left Judaism. He was simply telling the Galatians that in his former life in Judaism, he persecuted the followers of Yeshua.).

15 But when it pleased Elohim, who called me when I was in my mother's womb (This is a reference to what we refer to as predestination, ADONAI's foreknowledge of Sha'ul's future destiny, not Sha'ul's knowledge. ADONAI's foreknowledge does not imply that He caused Sha'ul to make this choice to follow Yeshua. It was Sha'ul's choice through his free will which was also a belief of the Pharisees.), and called me by his favor, 16 to reveal His Ben haElohim (the [Ben] Son of G-d; ADONAI's Son Yeshua) to me, that I might make him known to the Goyim (nations; Gentiles); I did not immediately consult anyone, 17 nor did I go up to Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) to those who were sh'lichim (Emissaries; Apostles) before me; but I went to Arabia, and then returned to Dammesek (Damascus).

18 Then after three years I went up to Yerushalayim to visit Kefa (Peter), and stayed with him fifteen days.

19 But, I saw none of the other sh'lichim (Emissaries; Apostles) except Ya'akov (Jacob [James], the nasi, [leader] of the Messianic community in Jerusalem.), the brother of Adon HaMashiach (Yeshua's half brother).

20 Now, concerning the things which I write to you, I do not lie.

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and of Cilicia; 22 but, I was not known by sight to the kehillot (assemblies; congregations) of Mashiach (Messiah) in Yehudah (Judah, the southern part of Israel): 23 and they had only heard the report that he (Sha'ul) who had persecuted us in times past now was announcing the emunah (proclaiming faith in Yeshua) which once he was destroying.

24 And they were glorifying Elohim (G-d) in me.

Chapter 1

Synopsis:

Chapter 1 appears to be an introduction to the rest of the letter, chapters 2 through 6. Sha'ul stated that he was a sh'liach, an emissary, called by Yeshua to the kehillot, the congregations, in Galatia, a region which is also known as Gaul. The Gauls were Celts, people from central Europe, the same people group which migrated into Ireland and Scotland. Sha'ul had previously visited this congregation which was located in the present area of central Turkey. Somehow, he had heard that the people were now turning to another beshurat ha'guelah, another good news, one being proclaimed by a group of people who were perverting the Good News of Yeshua which Sha'ul had taught them, salvation by faith only and not by works.

By saying that they were "perverting" the Good News, it is implied that it was being done by Jews of the Circumcision Faction. Sha'ul emphasized that the Good News which he received and brought to Galatia was not one from men, but was from a revelation he received from Yeshua the Messiah. And, he confessed that he had formerly persecuted the Messianic congregations using the zeal and skill which he derived from his Pharasaic education. He said that after he received his calling, he did not consult any of the other emissaries, but went to Arabia. It is speculated that the Arabia to which he went was the Kingdom of Nabatea which was located east of

the Dead Sea and whose capitol was Petra. The inhabitants were at that time called Nabatean Arabs. Scripture does not tell us how long he stayed there or what he did while there.

Leaving Arabia, he returned to Damascus, Syria and then after three years, he went to Jerusalem. There he visited *Shimon Kefa* for 15 days and also saw *Ya'akov*, Yeshua's brother, but he saw none of the other brothers. From there he went again into the regions of Syria and also into Cilicia. In Syria, he had already been in Damascus and possibly had visited other areas as well. The congregations which he visited in Cilicia were in an area that is now southern Turkey which lies north of the Island of Cyprus. Then, *Sha'ul* shifted his thoughts back to Judah and reflected on the comments of the Messianic Jews there. They who had previously heard about his persecution of the followers of Yeshua, were now praising G-d for him.

Remember: *Sha'ul* was not a Christian. All of the congregations at this time were within the framework of Judaism. His teaching came exclusively from within his belief system, that of a Pharisee who had accepted Yeshua. It is impossible to understand *Sha'ul's* message in Galatians if it has been sanitized, that is, it has had all of the Hebraisms and Judaism taken out of it.