



A Study of Galatians

Chapter 4

In this chapter, *Sha'ul* continues to present the truth regarding salvation and related issues. His allegory about Israel being under a tutor during that time during which righteousness depended upon sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood is continued here in a slightly different sense. Here, he uses the example of a minor under guardianship. The opposite of this, no longer being under a tutor or a guardian, is represented by the picture of adulthood which is brought about by the acceptance of Yeshua's perfect sacrifice through the New Covenant.

Chapter 4

1 And I say, as long as the heir is a child he is no different from a bond servant, even though he is legally the owner of the estate (Because of legal requirements, the child has no more authority than an indentured servant and is unable as a minor to tend to his own affairs; to make his own decisions.);

2 But he is under guardians and trustees until the time that his father pre-arranged (He must obey the orders of the guardian or trustee until he reaches the age which his father set for him to inherit. In the analogy, the *Torah*, in its "sin and sacrifice form" through the Covenant at Sinai, is the guardian.).

3 Even so we, when we were children, we were enslaved under the basic principles of the world (By saying we, *Sha'ul* referred to himself and to the system under which he was formerly as a Pharasaic Jew. The Greek word *stoicheion* is what is translated as "basic principles of the world." It can refer to things in a row such as the letters of the alphabet and by extension, the elements of knowledge or an elementary rule. Another interpretation of *stoicheion* is of the heavenly bodies, sun, moon and stars. We have no knowledge that Israel ever in any way worshipped them and that could not be applicable here. Since this is a continuation of *Sha'ul's* analogy comparing a child under guardianship with a person of legal age, this would also seem to continue in that vein. A synthesis of these meanings can allow us to understand *stoicheion* to mean: "having the basic knowledge of a child," and here to be referring to the traditional Judaism of that day as opposed to that which is available through Yeshua.):

4 But when the appointed time (The appointed time refers to the coming of the Messiah. It was prophesied by Daniel: 25 "So know and understand: From the issuing of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem until the time Mashiach, the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and 62 weeks" [Daniel 9:25a TLV].) **arrived, Elohim sent forth Ben HaElohim** (The Son of G-d; His only begotten Son.), **born of an isha** (Yeshua was a man, born of an *isha*, a human woman), **during a time that the commands of the Torah were being over-emphasized in a legalistic manner** (The *Torah* was used in a way not given by ADONAI. It had been perverted by the certain Pharisees by adding elements not intended by ADONAI. We refer specifically here to their requirement for Gentiles followers of Yeshua to be circumcised and to convert to Judaism.);

5 to redeem them that were under this legalistic interpretation of Torah that we might receive adoption as sons (Not only Gentiles, but also Jews were redeemed by Yeshua and the New Covenant. That, after trusting in Yeshua, *Sha'ul* continued to follow *Torah* commands as evidenced by his offering of sacrifices in the Temple, is proof that it was not the *mitzvot*, the commands themselves, which ended. For Yeshua's *talmidim*, it was "atonement" through Temple sacrifices which ended. At the Jerusalem Council, *Oral Torah*, a part of the traditional Judaism of the day, was also rejected. That the use of certain commands ended when the Temple was destroyed was ADONAI's way of rendering those no longer needed as inactive. But, all other *Torah* commands remained active and a part of Messianic Jewish and Messianic Gentile life of that time. Yeshua redeemed Israel

from the slavery of legalistic perversion of *Torah* by His sacrificial death which cut, put into effect, the New Covenant. Through His sacrificial death, *Torah* commands given at Sinai have been written on the hearts of those who have trusted in Him. But, prior to receiving Yeshua, Gentiles were outside the covenants [Ephesians 2:12] and outside of Israel. Now, the Galatian's acceptance of Yeshua has caused them to become covenant partners and a part of the Commonwealth of Israel.).

6 And because you are now sons (Sons and covenant partners by adoption through their redemption by Yeshua), ***Elohim* has sent forth the *Ruach* (Spirit) of *Ben HaElohim* (The Son of G-d, Yeshua) into your hearts** (The Galatian's hearts were circumcised by their trusting faith through the gift of Yeshua's sacrifice.) **crying** (Crying out to ADONAI for salvation.), ***Abba Avinu*** (Our hearts cry out," dear Father, save us.").

7 So, you (the Galatians) **are no longer a bond servant** (A slave to the perversion of the legalistic system.), **but a *ben* (son), and if a *ben*, an heir of *Elohim* through *Mashiach*** (Gentiles, through the promise given to Abraham were, through Messiah, the Anointed One, adopted as sons, becoming inheritors of ADONAI's kingdom.).

8 But formerly, when you did not know *Elohim*, you served them (The false gods of mythic Greek and Roman worship.) **which by nature are not the true *Elohim*** (not ADONAI, the One True G-d)).

9 And now, after you have known *Elohim*, and more importantly, are known by *Elohim*, how can it be that you are returning to the weak and poor elementary matters of this world (Verse 8 seems to indicate that *Sha'ul* was referring to the false gods which the Galatians formerly worshipped. But, he also used *stoicheion* here, the word which he used in verse 3 to refer to the legalistic perversion of Judaism, his own former system, to refer to "the weak and poor elementary matters of the world." I believe he used that same term here as well because he was again referring to the legalistic perversion of Judaism, the system which was seemed now to have been in use among the Galatians through the efforts of the Judaizers. Judaizers is not really the best way to refer to the group to which *Sha'ul* was referring. Those men were Messianic Jews, followers of Yeshua, but they were also Pharisees who believed that those Gentile followers of Yeshua should convert to Judaism. *Sha'ul*, also a Pharisee, did not believe in their legalistic way of perverting the *Torah*. "Perverters" may be a better way to refer to those men.

Some also understand "the weak and poor elementary matters of this world" as the Galatian's former worship of false gods through their Greek and Roman cultic systems. We have to consider this possibility as well. But, since *Sha'ul*'s primary focus throughout every chapter has been on what the Judaizers were teaching to the Galatians, it is unlikely that "the weak and poor elementary matters of this world" are to what he was referring, unless it was in a secondary way. That they may have been vacillating between the message of the Jewish perverters and their former pagan religion is a possibility. But, since *Sha'ul* used exactly the same word, *stoicheion*, in verse 3 and also in verse 9, it is very likely that the legalistic perversion of *Torah* was that to which he was referring in both verses. It seems, that at least some of the Galatians, had begun to drift away from the correct message of the Good News which *Sha'ul* had taught them. It is unfortunate for us that because *Sha'ul* knew that the Galatians knew more of the details of what he was writing about, he did not need to fully describe the situation to them. As *Kefa* said, *Sha'ul* is sometimes hard to understand. And, it's probably because many of the important details are left out of the letter assuming that the readers would know them. Because of that, we have to make some assumptions.); **do you want to be enslaved by them** (Do you want to abandon the truth of Yeshua and adoption as sons and return to the slavery of perverted legalism? That enslavement was to a false system and not a reference to the legitimate commands of *Torah* given by ADONAI. *Sha'ul* could in no way could have been referring to *Torah*, which he described in Romans 7:12 as "holy, righteous and good." Or, was *Sha'ul* saying, "do you want to be enslaved" by belief in false gods? We have to consider both possibilities, even though his overall message was clearly about the legalistic perversion of *Torah*.) **again?**

10 You observe special days, and months, and seasons, and years. (Observe is present tense in this verse. They were doing whatever it was that they were doing at the time that *Sha'ul* wrote this letter. Here again, we must consider that there are two possibilities. Does "days, months, seasons and years" refer to Judaism or does

it refer to Greek/Roman cultic worship, or possibly to both. That special days and new moons were observed within the pharisaic Judaism of that day is not in dispute. *Sha'ul* also observed them as *Torah* commanded by ADONAI as an observant Jew. But, it is also possible that the perverters, the Judaizers, changed the Scriptural and legitimate observance of the *Moadim*, the festival days, and *rosh chodesh*, the new moon, by adding Oral *Torah* requirements to them and making other additions to ADONAI's *Torah* commands. Those perverters possibly had already convinced the Galatians that to be a part of Israel, to be within the Judaism of that day, that they had to be circumcised, to be immersed, to follow written *Torah* and to follow Oral *Torah*. To follow written *Torah* was not in dispute by *Sha'ul* because he, himself, followed it. But, in this verse, it is possible that his meaning was that following Oral *Torah* had caused a legalistic perversion of the *moadim* and the other events of written *Torah*. Which of the two is correct? Were the Galatians observing *Torah* in the wrong way or were they following their former pagan practices? We don't know for certain, but whichever it was, either was a departure from the truth which *Sha'ul* had taught them.)?

11 I fear that for you my labor has been wasted (*Sha'ul* feared that the Galatians had abandoned the Good News which he had taught them in favor of the “gospel” of the perverters or that they had returned to paganism.).

12 Brothers, I beg you to become as I am because I became as you are (These words are somewhat confusing and do not accurately describe what *Sha'ul* was saying. Although “become” is correctly translated from *ginomai*, meaning to “come into being, to become,” it is stilted language. *Sha'ul* was essentially urging the Galatians to return to the true way, to be Messianic followers of Yeshua and to have the same understanding which he, himself, now had. Because they had now turned to the legalistic perversion of *Torah* where he “was formerly,” he urged them to turn to where he “was now,” and the true worship of Yeshua. He made a similar argument before King Agrippa: 27 “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do believe!” 28 Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time you are trying to persuade me to be Messianic!” 29 And Paul said, “Whether short or long, I would pray to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today would be (become) such as I am—except for these chains” [Acts 26:27-29 TLV]); **you have not done me any wrong at all** (*Sha'ul* was saying that, even though they had turned away from his teaching, they had not offended him.).

13 You know that it was in weakness of the flesh (Weakness comes from *astheneia*, which means weakness or frailty. *Sha'ul* seemed to be saying that he was ill; that he didn't feel well.) **that I first brought the Besurat HaGeulah** (Good News) **to you** (Because of his love for them, even though he was ill, *Sha'ul* carried his teaching to its conclusion. His “weakness of the flesh” may have been the “thorn in the flesh,” about which he spoke in 2Corinthians 12:7-10.)

14 and you did not despise or reject me because of my physical condition (The Galatians were gracious in their reception of *Sha'ul*, not looking down on him because of his visible sickness.), **but received me as if I had been a malakh** (angel or messenger) **of Elohim, even as Yeshua HaMashiach himself** (They graciously received him, as if he were Yeshua, Himself.).

15 Where then is the joy that you spoke of (They no longer had the joy which they had when *Sha'ul* was physically present with them and taught them the Good News.)? **For I tell you truthfully that if it had been possible you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me** (At that first visit, the Galatians were so committed to serving *Sha'ul*, that they would have complied with anything which he requested.).

16 Have I now become your enemy by speaking the truth to you (Now that they were now following the perverters, they were no longer friendly to *Sha'ul* who taught them truth.)?

17 They (the perverters; the teachers of legalistic interpretation of *Torah*) **are zealous toward you, but for no good; they want to cause you to separate from us so that you might be zealous for them** (The perverters were trying to make their influence greater than *Sha'ul*'s in the Galatian congregations so that the Galatians would become evangelists for their cause.).

18 And it is good to be zealous regarding a good thing, even when I am not present with you (Even though the perverters were zealous toward the Galatians that they would accept their message, *Sha'ul* hoped that they, the Galatians, would be zealous, even in his absence, for the Good News which he had preached to them.).

19 My children, I travail again for you until *Mashiach* is formed in your life (*Sha'ul* was once again praying, travelling for them, because they had departed from the “truth” which he originally presented to them. The Greek word *ódinó* translated travail, means to have “birth pangs.” *Sha'ul* used the metaphor of “travailing for birth” to show how much he wanted the Galatians to turn away from the perverter’s gospel and to “rebirth, re-form the truth about Messiah” as he had originally presented it to them. *Morphoó* means “to form.” The Galatians needed to “form,” to make firm, the truth which *Sha'ul* had originally preached to them.).

20 Even now I wish that I was present with you and could change my tone of voice, for you puzzle me (*Sha'ul* wished that he could speak directly to the Galatians regarding their falling away, that somehow through changing his tone of voice, through earnestly entreating them, he could convince them of the truth. And, he was puzzled by their susceptibility, how easily they succumbed to the teachings of the perverters.).

21 Tell me, you who wish to be legalistically bound to the *Torah* (In several Bible versions, “legalistically bound to the law,” is rendered “under the Law.” This is from the Greek words *hypo nomon*. Here, it continues to mean “legalistic perversion of Law.”); **don't you hear what the *Torah* itself says** (You who wish to be "under the law" are not listening to, not understanding, what the *Torah* says about trying to keep the *Torah* to obtain righteousness.)?

22 For it has been written, that *Avraham Avinu* had two sons, one by a bondmaid (a slave girl), and the other by the free woman (*Sara*, his wife).

23 And the son (Ishmael) of the bondmaid (*Hagar*, a slave) was born through flesh (Ishmael was born because of a desire of *Sara*’s flesh to have children in the way that she chose and not through trusting ADONAI. *Sara* asked *Abram* to give her a child through *Hagar* [Genesis 16:1-2].); **but the son (Isaac) of the free woman (*Sara*, *Abram*’s wife) was born through promise** (Isaac was born of ADONAI’s promise: *10 Then He said, “I will most surely return to you in about a year’s time, surprisingly, Sarah your wife will have a son* [Genesis 18:10]”). As a child of the promise, a child of the covenant, Isaac was a son and an heir, not a slave.).

24 This is given allegorically (An allegory is a literary device used to make a desired point. There are two levels of meaning, the surface level, the actual meaning of the words, and the symbolic level, the hidden, deeper meaning.). **These are two *b'ritot* (covenants); one covenant is from Mount Sinai** (symbolizing the legalistic perversion of *Torah*) **and brings forth slavery; this is *Hagar*** (*Hagar*, representing the covenant made at Sinai, is used allegorically to represent human effort, the legalistic misuse of *Torah* or a human effort such as *Sara* used to get a child through *Hagar* and is not a negative reflection on the actual Covenant at Sinai.).

25 Now, *Hagar* is Mount Sinai in Arabia (representing the legalistic perversion of *Torah*) **and corresponds to the present *Yerushalayim*** (The earthly, physical Jerusalem is also allegorical and relates to human effort.); **she (*Hagar*, the legalistic perversion of *Torah*), as well as her children** (all who follow a legalistic perversion of *Torah*) **are in bondage** (Anyone in bondage is a slave. Symbolic Mount Sinai and symbolic physical Jerusalem go hand in hand. Both are physical efforts to establish a relationship with ADONAI. Mount Sinai represents the legalistic perversion of the *Torah* and physical Jerusalem is a parallel portrayal of the same thing. Both are in the surface level of our allegory.).

26 But *Yerushalayim* above (heavenly Jerusalem; spiritual Jerusalem) **is free** (not a slave); **she is our mother** (Heavenly Jerusalem represents the free woman, *Sara* and symbolizes the promise to those who through trust/faith approach G-d through Messiah Yeshua. *Sara*’s children are those who are in proper relationship with Yeshua. They/we are the free children of the free woman. We are not slaves who are trying to maintain a relationship with G-d through works. This is the spiritual level of the allegory which teaches us that we are not to try and keep *Torah* in order to obtain righteousness. The only way is through trusting faith in Yeshua as Messiah.);

27 for it has been written,

Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear!

Break forth and shout, you who do not have birth pains!

For the deserted one has many more children than she who has a husband [Isaiah) 54: 1]. (In Isaiah, ADONAI was promising Israel a return from Babylonian captivity and the repopulation of her cities. Using this in *Sha'ul's* allegory, the barren are those who wait upon and receive the promise, not taking matters into their own hands through the legalistic perversion of *Torah*. Isaiah teaches us that we who have waited upon the promise and have not legalistically taken matters into our own hands will bear the most spiritual children).

28 And we (*Sha'ul* and his fellow workers) *achim* (brothers, speaking to the Galatian brothers), **are as *Yitzchak*** (Isaac) **was, children of promise** (*Sha'ul* and his fellow workers through their correct way of obtaining righteousness are children of the promise given to Abraham about his Seed, Yeshua.).

29 But, just as he who was born according to the flesh (Ishmael) **persecuted him born according to the *Ruach*** (Isaac), **so it is now also** (Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac by mocking him [Genesis 21:9], the Jews who were legalistically perverting *Torah* were also persecuting *Sha'ul* and his disciples who were making proper application of the *Torah*. Interestingly, some of Ishmael's physical descendants are today also persecuting Isaac's physical descendants.).

30 But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bondmaid and her son, for the son of the bondmaid shall by no means be heir with the son of the free woman ([Genesis 21: 10]. The slave woman and her son represent human effort to obtain what only ADONAI can provide. In other words, legalistic interpretation of the *Torah* can bring no inheritance from G-d. It is only through faith in Messiah Yeshua that we become sons and legal heirs.).

31 Therefore, *achim* (brothers), we are not children of the bondmaid, but of the free woman (According to *Sha'ul's* allegory, those who are bound to Messiah Yeshua through trusting faith and not by "slavishly" trying to keep the commands of *Torah*, are children of the free woman and heirs to the promise of ADONAI. Anyone who attempts to obey the commands of *Torah* in order to be made righteous, to be saved, is the child of the slave woman and not an heir to the promise.).

Chapter 4 Synopsis

Because of requirements set legally, a child has no more authority than an indentured servant and is as a minor unable to tend to his own affairs. He must obey the orders of the guardian or trustee until he reaches the age which his father set for him to inherit. In this analogy, the *Torah*, in its sin and sacrifice form through the Covenant at Sinai, was the guardian. Before receiving Yeshua as Messiah, as children, the Jews had "the basic knowledge of a child," a way of referring to a perverted legalistic system before the arrival of the promise.

ADONAI sent Yeshua at the appointed time during a time when the *Torah* was being used in a way not given by Him. His only begotten Son, Yeshua, a human man with a human mother, was sent to redeem those under the legalism of that day. After crying out to the Father, those who accept Yeshua's sacrifice, become sons through the receiving the Spirit of the Son of G-d in their hearts. They are then no longer slaves of the legalistic system, but are sons and heirs through Messiah Yeshua. Before they knew G-d, the Galatians worshipped false gods. Now that they knew G-d, and He knew them, *Sha'ul* asked why they were returning to the slavery of the "basic knowledge of children," the legalistic perversion of the *Torah*.

With regard to ADONAI's commanded days, His *moadim* and His new moons, the Galatians were following the teachings of the perverters, the legalistic, pharisaic followers of Yeshua. Rather than observe them as ADONAI commanded in His written *Torah*, the perverters changed them to conform to the Oral Torah and its

interpretations. We also must consider that *Sha'ul* may have been referring to worshipping their old, false, pagan gods. Fearing that his effort toward them was wasted, *Sha'ul* assured the Galatians that they had not offended him and begged them to return to the truth which he had taught them. He conceded though, even when he was ill as he first brought the message to them, they graciously received him. But, why had they lost the joy which they formerly had when they were so committed to serving him. Because he had spoken the truth to them, had he now become their enemy? Continuing, he cautioned them that the perverters wished to separate them from him, so that they might convince them, the Galatians, about their own interpretation of the way to righteousness. Wishing that he could be present with them to convince them, *Sha'ul* told the Galatians that he was urgently in prayer for them, that the truth about Messiah might once again be the guide for their lives.

Here is another allegory. *Sha'ul* said: “You Galatians who are seeking to be perverters of the *Torah*, don't you understand the truth of *Torah*? The *Torah* tells us that our father Abraham had two sons, one by *Hagar*, his slave, and one by his wife, *Sara*. Ishmael, the son of the slave, was born because of the desire of the flesh through *Sara*, but Isaac, the son of *Sara* the free woman, was born through G-d's promise. That there are two covenants, is given allegorically. One is from Mount Sinai and it represents the legalistic perversion of *Torah*, which causes slavery. The covenant at Sinai is further represented by *Hagar* the slave girl who also corresponds to earthly Jerusalem. Those allegorically represented by *Hagar* and earthly Jerusalem are slaves to a perverted system formed by human understanding and desire. But, those of us who follow Yeshua are children of *Sara*, the free woman and recipients of the promise which is represented allegorically by the heavenly Jerusalem, the promise from ADONAI. Isaiah teaches us that we who have waited upon the promise and have not legalistically taken matters into our own hands will bear the most spiritual children (Isaiah 54:1). *Sha'ul* told the Galatians that he and his fellow workers, who like Isaac were children of the promise, were being persecuted by those born of the slave woman, the legalistic pharisaic followers of Yeshua, who were perverting the *Torah*. And, *Torah* has told us not to follow the doctrine of the perverters, that is, to cast out the children of the slave woman, because what they are teaching cannot provide redemption. (Genesis 21:10). Therefore, brothers in Messiah, we who understand and follow the truth are not slaves, but heirs according to the promise of G-d.

This chapter has continued to conform to *Sha'ul*'s basic thesis, “No person can be justified before ADONAI by obeying any list of rules or teachings.” We, who today have trusted through the way which *Sha'ul* taught, understand that salvation through Yeshua is only by ADONAI's grace and through faith. We also understand that what was then known as Oral Torah, later becoming the *Mishnah*, and now as the writings of the *Talmud*, is valuable for understanding in some cases, but is not in any way authoritative for us. Our only authority is ADONAI's written *Torah*, Genesis through Revelation, which *Sha'ul* described as “inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for restoration, and for training in righteousness” (2Timothy 3:16 TLV). Remembering what *Sha'ul* did after he trusted in Yeshua, that is, continuing to follow *Torah* commands as evidenced by his offering of sacrifices in the Temple, is proof for us that it was not the *mitzvot*, the commands themselves, which ended. *Sha'ul* continued to follow *Torah* even after he trusted in Yeshua. It was the system of sacrifices administered through the Levitical priesthood which ended. This has convinced us that ADONAI's *Torah*, His commands found throughout “all” Scripture, have not only not have been done away with, but are no longer just “written on stone,” but also on our hearts once we have trusted in Yeshua.