

Parasha Emor May 14, 2022

Torah: Leviticus 21:1-24:23 Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15-31

Ketuvim Shlichim: Romans 11:16-23

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our Torah portion today is Emor which means "speak." 1 Then Adonai said to Moses, "Speak to the kohanim, the sons of Aaron, and say to them,..(etc.)" (Leviticus 21:1a TLV). Leviticus chapters 21 and 22 are directions for the kohanim, the priests. These mitzvot are all about their holiness, separating themselves for ADONAI from unclean things. The concept of separating from unclean things also has spiritual application for us, although not the specific things in this parasha. Without a Temple, even the Jews who are kohanim today cannot carry them out. But, we are called to be clean because we, as Yeshua's followers, are kohanim. Each of us, Jew and Gentile, are called to be priests before ADONAI under our High Priest Yeshua.

To fulfill that calling, we must understand and obey His instructions to us. understand why it's important that we follow Torah, whether it's Torah in the Tanakh or Torah in the Ketuvim Sh'lichim, the writings of Yeshua's disciples, we must understand what ADONAI requires of us. And, it is through the Torah, and only through the Torah, that we can understand. That's because *Torah* is not just Law. It is teaching and instruction which we must have in order to be effective kohanim. And, in learning Torah, whether from Exodus or Matthew, or any other book in the Scripture, we are taught how to be holy, how to be set apart from the things of the world as we follow ADONAI and Yeshua. We are to present our best to Him. In our parasha last week, ADONAI said: 26 "You are to be holy to Me, for I, Adonai, am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, so that you would be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26 TLV). He was speaking to Israel, the nation which He called to be priests to the nations. Those of us, Jew and Gentile, who have trusted Yeshua, are a part of Israel and called to be holy. We cannot be Yeshua's followers on our own terms, but only on His terms. And, we have to learn how we are to follow Him. How we are to follow Him has been a part of every past message. We are continuing with that theme today as we continue to try and understand Sha'ul and his instructions for us through his authority from Yeshua as a shaliach, an apostle.

We ended our Romans study last time with *Sha'ul* speaking of the status of the Jews who have been partially hardened by ADONAI: 15 For if their rejection leads to the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15 TLV). "The world" in this verse is referring to the people of the world, the Gentiles. It has always been ADONAI's plan to reconcile the Gentiles to Himself through Yeshua. But, an important question is: "did He prevent the Jews who rejected Yeshua from being saved in order to save the Gentiles?" I would say no, that is not ADONAI's nature. The answer is here: 15 For to Moses He says, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." 16 So then it does not depend on the one who wills or the one who strives, but on God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh,

"For this very purpose I raised you up—to demonstrate My power in you, so My name might be proclaimed in all the earth." 18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills. (Romans 9:15-18 TLV). You have learned from your earlier studies of Exodus and the plagues that ADONAI brought on Egypt what it meant for Him to harden Pharaoh's heart. Here is one of the times: 20 But Adonai hardened (va'y'chazak) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let Bnei-Yisrael go. (Exodus 10:20 TLV). The Hebrew word translated as hardened is va'y'chazak, ויְחַזַּק, from the word chazaq, חַזָּק, meaning "to be or grow firm or strong, strengthen." ADONAI didn't harden Pharaoh's heart. What He did was strengthen the will that was already in his heart and as a result, Pharaoh did exactly what he had purposed in his heart. The same is true of the Jews who rejected and are presently rejecting Yeshua. ADONAI strengthened their hearts, their will to do what they wished to do. understanding is in Romans 9:18. Referring to that segment of Israel who were partially hardened, Sha'ul said: 18 So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens (sklérunó) whom He wills. (Romans 9:18 TLV). The Greek word used here, sklérunó, is the very same word used in the Greek translation of Exodus 10:20 in the Septuagint, the LXX: 20 But Adonai hardened (sklérunó) Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let Bnei-Yisrael go. (Exodus 10:20 TLV). ADONAI gave both Pharaoh and the rejecting Jews exactly what they wanted. He didn't harden their hearts, but He did strengthen their will to do what was already in their hearts.

Sha'ul continues to discuss ADONAI's plans for His chosen nation Israel: 16 If the firstfruit is holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. (Romans 11:16 TLV). The firstfruit is referring to the firstfruit barley offering which was given during Chag HaMatzot, the Festival of Unleavened Bread: 18 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael. Say to them: When you enter the land to which I am taking you, 19 and you eat some of the food of the land, you are to offer a portion to Adonai. 20 You are to offer a cake from the first of your ground-up meal as an offering from your threshing floor—so you are to lift it up. 21 Throughout your generations to come, you are to give this offering from the first of your ground-up meal. (Numbers 15:18-21 TLV). This was to occur right after Passover. When Israel entered the land of Canaan, it was at this festival time. Sha'ul compares the firstfruit of barley to the rest of the grain offering. If the firstfruit, that portion offered during Chaq HaMatzot is holy, so is the whole lump, the portion from which the firstfruit was removed. And, he compares the root to the branches. If the root of a tree is holy, so are its branches. Just as the firstfruit and root are holy, set apart for ADONAI, so is the whole lump of barley and all the branches of the tree. But, this is not speaking of grain and trees, but of people, Israel, ADONAI's chosen nation. If the firstfruit, the Jews who have accepted Yeshua are holy, so also is the rest of the dough, those who have not yet chosen Yeshua.

Then Sha'ul reveals the kind of tree of which he is speaking. It's an olive tree: 17 But if some of the branches were broken off and you—being a wild olive—were grafted in among them and became a partaker of the root of the olive tree with its richness, 18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, it is not you who support the root but the root supports you. (Romans 11:17-18 TLV). In these verses, he is speaking specifically to Gentiles, the wild olive branches, but also explaining that the Jews who rejected Yeshua are those natural branches which were broken off. We Gentiles who have been grafted into the olive tree are not to boast of our righteousness or to speak ill of the natural branches which were broken off. Through ADONAI's love and grace, we Gentiles have been grafted into a holy root and it is the Jewish root which supports us.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." 20 True enough. They were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. (Romans 11:19-20a TLV). That is the difference. Because of our faith in Yeshua we have been grafted in and because of their nonbelief in Yeshua, they have been broken off. 20 ... Do not be arrogant, but fear—21 for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you. (Romans 11:20b-21 TLV). Those of us who have trusted and remain grafted onto the olive tree by faith must be careful. ADONAI will also break us off for unbelief just as He did the natural branches. 22 Notice then the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who fell; but God's kindness toward you, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you too will be cut off! 23 And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in; for God is able to graft them in again. 24 For if you were cut out of that which by nature is a wild olive tree, and grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree? (Romans 11:19-24 TLV). Of course we pray for "all Israel" to be grafted into their own olive tree. It's one of our major prayers. We pray for Jewish firstfruits now and the salvation of all Israel in its time. But, if ADONAI can graft the natural branches back in when they abandon their unbelief, so too can He graft back in the wild olive branches, the Gentiles who first trusted Yeshua, but were then broken off for their unbelief. We must pray for them too.

All of this olive tree business is about *Avraham aveinu*, Abraham our father, even though his name is not mentioned. He is the root, the absolute root of the olive tree, although we would add Isaac and Jacob and Jacob's twelve sons as being parts of the root. Both the natural and the grafted in branches grow from Abraham. The natural branches are Abraham's natural descendants and grafted in Gentiles are Abraham's spiritual descendants. Regarding this tree, there are two possibilities with Abraham's natural descendants. Some have been broken off the olive tree because of unbelief and some have been grafted back in because of belief and faith.

What we see in this is G-d's great love for all of His creation, Jew and Gentile alike. Because of Abraham's belief in ADONAI, ADONAI chose his descendants to be His own special people, the ones who would carry His *Torah* as a nation of priests to the Gentiles. (Exodus 19:6). But ADONAI loves the rest of His creation, the Gentiles, equally and from even before the foundation of the earth He had His plan for them to be grafted into Abraham's tree, the Israel of ADONAI. He chose to do it through Abraham and his descendants. It was because Abraham had faith "that ADONAI is and believed Him." He made a covenant with Abraham, promising him a national homeland for his descendants, the land which at that time was called Canaan. And ADONAI promised to bless all the nations of the earth through Abraham's descendants. 3 "My desire is to bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:3 TLV). Right now, many are cursed of G-d because they have cursed Israel.

But, what about the olive tree? How can a person be grafted onto it? *Sha'ul's* metaphoric olive tree is a faith tree through and through. Bloodlines and physical descent have no part in this tree. Abraham, the root, was established by faith and every branch, whether native or Gentile which grows on it, remains on it by faith. The faith is in Yeshua and His sacrifice on the Tree, another kind of tree. Rather than being metaphoric, the tree that Yeshua died on was real and His death was a real death which brings real life. Faith, trust in Yeshua, as a sacrifice for our sins is what allows us to remain grafted onto the olive tree but, we can be broken off for unbelief. Unbelief in Yeshua's atoning death is a sad thing,

something which has happened to some of our former brothers and sisters who have been broken off from the life-giving tree.

Genesis 12:3 says: 3 I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed. We understand "by you" to mean that all the families of the earth will be blessed by Abraham's descendants and we have been blessed now and in the past by many of Abraham's descendants. But, the reference here is to only one descendant, Yeshua from the Tribe of Judah. In the Book of Galatians Sha'ul wrote: 6 It was the same with Avraham: "He trusted in God and was faithful to him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness. (Galatians 3:6 TLV). And in verses 8 and 9 he says: 8 Also the Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Avraham in advance by saying, "In connection with you, all the Goyim will be blessed." 9 So then, those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Avraham, who trusted and was faithful. (Galatians 3:8-9 TLV). In this, we understand Sha'ul to explain that ADONAI told Abraham about the Gospel, the Besorah, the Good News, in advance. Abraham knew and trusted in his descendant, Yeshua, whom he saw far off. In Galatians 3, Sha'ul used the same words that ADONAI used in Genesis 12. He said "in connection with you, all the Goyim, the Nations, will be blessed." The primary meaning of this is that the blessing is salvation which comes through Yeshua.

There is another slant on this phrase, "and by you all the Nations of the earth will be blessed." It explains that ADONAI's original intent of blessing was to "graft the Nations into Israel," exactly what Sha'ul has explained to us in Romans 11. In Hebrew, this phrase is Va'avarechah mevarachecha umekalelecha a'or venivrechu vecha kol mishpechot ha'adamah. The word venivrechu is usually translated "blessed," but it can have another meaning. The Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sotah 43 tells that Venivrechu is derived from the Hebrew infinitive "mavrich," which means "to graft." Understanding this, this phrase actually means: "and by or through you, that is, by Abraham and his descendants, all of the other families of the earth will be 'grafted in." Isn't that amazing? Almost four thousand years ago ADONAI gave Abraham a vision of his descendant Yeshua as the Good News which would cause both Jew and non-Jew who believed on him to be grafted into the Jewish olive tree, the spiritual commonwealth of Israel that ADONAI instituted through Abraham and He has nurtured all these years. Sha'ul saw the very same thing when he said, "In connection with you, all the Goyim will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8), meaning, in connection with Abraham, all the Gentiles will be grafted in." This is also found in the Talmud in Mishna Kilayim 1, where v'nivrechu is a word related to "mixing, as in mixing plant stock," or in other words, "grafting." Also, according to Baalei HaTosafos, a medieval commentary on the Talmud, the word "nivrechu" is a derivative of the infinitive "mavrich, which means "grafting." Although grafting results in merging, Baalei HaTosafos is not implying that Abraham mingled with the nations. It is referring to the "grafting of the Gentiles into the Jewish Nation through the process of conversion and to the merging of the descendants of Esau and Ishmael with the remainder of humanity." We believe that too, that many who now follow Islam are Gentiles who will be grafted into the Jewish Olive Tree by faith in Yeshua. That's been ADONAI's plan from the beginning. It has always been His plan to reconcile all the people of the earth to himself; that is, if they wish to be reconciled. And they do have to want this because He has given each of us free will. We can choose ADONAI or we can reject Him.

Continuing in Romans 11: 25 For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that <u>a partial hardening</u> has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;.. (Romans 11:25 TLV). The partial hardening of unsaved Israel is partially by ADONAI and partially by themselves. ADONAI

hardened or better understood, "strengthened" their own human will to do what they really wanted to do. My understanding of the Scriptures is that any Jew who has been partially hardened can overcome it by listening to ADONAI's still, small voice which is also there at the same time drawing them. This is very much like the traditional Jewish belief of the yetzer hatov and the yetzer hara, the good impulse and the evil impulse within the human soul which struggle one against the other. The unbelieving Jews allow the yetzer hara, the evil impulse, to overshadow and to drown out the yetzer hatov, the good impulse, actually the Ruach Kodesh, the Holy Spirit of ADONAI, which is drawing them toward Yeshua. Any Jewish person can be Jewish firstfruits of salvation and have eternal life even before the time that "all Israel is saved." By our lives and by our testimonies, it is our job as Messianic Jews and Messianic Gentiles to make them jealous. I believe that is why ADONAI brought back Messianic Israel as the Messianic Jewish Movement in the last days. As was explained two weeks ago, Sha'ul wrote in Romans 10:19 of a non-nation who would provoke to jealousy by vexing, annoying, Israel. He was quoting ADONAI from Deuteronomy 32:21. The Gentiles in Messianic Judaism are that non-nation spoken of by ADONAI. Our love of Torah and obedience to His word is what will provoke them to jealousy. The "fullness of the Gentiles" is another unknown. When will that occur and all Israel be saved? One author I read believed that that it would be when the number of Gentiles saved equaled the number of fallen angels, those taken out of heaven in HaSatan's rebellion. Whatever it is, it is near.

Sha'ul continues: 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. 27 And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins." (Romans 11:25-27 TLV). The wording, "The Deliverer shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" referring to ADONAI as Deliverer, leads us to believe that it will be a sovereign act of ADONAI or at least a supernatural prompting of some kind by Him which will cause "all Israel" to be saved. What Sha'ul wrote in these last two verses is his interpretation of Isaiah's prophecy: 20 "But a Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those in Jacob who turn from transgression." It is a declaration of Adonai. 21 "As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says Adonai: "My Ruach who is on you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, or from the mouth of your offspring, or from the mouth of your children's offspring," says Adonai, "from now on and forever." (Isaiah 59:20-21 TLV). Isaiah's prophecy states that ADONAI's covenant will be with those who turn from transgression, and that it will happen by the drawing of His Holy Spirit and the words which He puts in their mouths. His covenant with them is found in Jeremiah 31, the New Covenant. ADONAI said: 33 "No longer will each teach his neighbor or each his brother, saying: 'Know Adonai,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest." it is a declaration of Adonai. "For I will forgive their iniquity, their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:33 TLV).

28 "Concerning the Good News, they are hostile for your sake; but concerning chosenness, they are loved on account of the fathers— 29 for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." (Romans 11:28-29 TLV). Sha'ul is speaking to Gentiles. He says that there is a reason for Israel being hostile to the Good News. ADONAI caused their hostility for the Gentile's sake. Because of their hostility, we have an opportunity to be saved. But, he also says: "they are chosen because of the fathers." ADONAI made unconditional promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that their calling as a nation and His blessing would never end. Even though Israel sinned many times and turned away from ADONAI, He continues to forgive and will ultimately bring about eternal salvation for all Israel through His irrevocable gifts and calling. He will do it. All Israel shall be saved!

Romans 11:30-32 speaks of G-d's mercy to Jew and Gentile. Because ADONAI has shown us mercy, *Sha'ul* urges us to respond with gratitude: 1 I urge you therefore, brothers

and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice—holy, acceptable to God—which is your spiritual service. (Romans 12:1 TLV). The word translated "urge" is parakaleó which means to exhort or to encourage. Urge almost doesn't seem strong enough. I believe that Sha'ul was saying with much emotion, "I exhort you to be living sacrifices!" When he wrote this, the Temple was standing and sacrifices were being offered daily. He compares the spiritual service of a follower of Yeshua to animal sacrifice. We are exhorted to present our bodies to G-d as living sacrifices just as the lives of animals were offered in the Temple. It is the life in our bodies which makes us acceptable as sacrifices. We are to live for Yeshua. Our bodies are to be holy, set apart, for service to G-d. Even though we may want to do this, it is difficult, because we are humans who also have to deal with our own wishes and desires, self-gratification, which every human has to deal with. Sha'ul exhorts us: 2 Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 TLV).

Some of us attended Jonathan Cahn's movie, *The Harbingers Of Things To Come*, two nights ago. It is another wake-up call for those of us who live in the United States. Jonathan has dedicated his life to this message. He is the author of six books that were all New York Times best-sellers. In addition, he planned and hosted a gigantic meeting on the Washington Mall called *The Return* and now has made this movie. And, he has another book due for release in September. It's called *The Return Of The Gods*. It doesn't take much imagination to guess what that's all about, the gods which we, the people of the United States serve, the gods which will bring about our physical and spiritual downfall unless we repent and turn back to ADONAI. That's my guess. I don't know for certain, but that would seem to continue Jonathan's pattern.

How successful has he been? We can only judge by the reception of this movie and what We see around us. It was shown in two theaters in Tallahassee two nights ago. The theater we were in seats 51 and it was not full. In a city of 193,000 people, were there only about 100 people who deemed it essential to watch, assuming the other theater where it was being shown seated about the same number?

Jonathan is the Jeremiah of our day, but in my opinion, thus far he has been no more successful than Jeremiah was in turning the wicked kingdom of Judah around. It's not for It's the apathy of the people. ADONAI told Jeremiah: 2 "Take a megillah scroll, and write in it all the words that I have spoken to you about Israel, about Judah, and about all the nations from the day I spoke to you—from the days of Josiah until this day. 3 Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity that I am planning to do to them, in order that they may turn, each one from his evil way. Then I would forgive their iniquity and their sin." (Jeremiah 36:2-3 TLV). To whom was ADONAI's message given? It was to a people who claimed to be worshipping in ADONAI's Temple but had only a form of Godliness. To whom is Jonathan's message given? It's not to the godless millions in the United States who by their actions have perverted ADONAI's Word. No, it's unlikely that many of them will respond to Jonathan's messages. Not that he doesn't want them to. In my opinion, his warning has been and continues to be to the house of G-d, primarily Yeshua's body. It's they, we, us, who are not listening. Yeshua's body has conformed itself to the ways of this world in opposition to what has been commanded of us. As Jonathan said, right after 9-11, people returned to churches for a few months, but then returned to their old ways.

How about those of us in Messianic Judaism, we who claim to follow ADONAI's Word? Have we made our bodies living sacrifices? How much have we sacrificed for Yeshua? How much of our comfort level and personal pleasures are we willing to give up for Yeshua? We believe we know the truth of what Yeshua and the writers of the Gospels and Letters meant

when they said and wrote it. But, do we follow the truth which we have learned. Truth means nothing unless it is followed, walked in. Do we walk in ADONAI's will for us? The Hebrew word for walk is halak. From this, we get the word halakha, a word used in Orthodox Judaism to refer to "how we walk," that is, how we are to observe our understanding of Torah. And, we do have a Messianic Jewish halakha. It is based upon a correct understanding of Yeshua's Words and a correct understanding of the writings of Sha'ul, his interpretation of what Yeshua revealed to him on the Damascus road and of course the writings of Yeshua's other disciples. We must understand it correctly, throwing out every addition which promotes an antinomian theology, a theology which teaches that obedience to the Law is bad. Sha'ul's message to us is that obedience to Torah is not a bad thing; it's a good thing. It is our reasonable service as living sacrifices. We can't control nor have we been called to control what the rest of the body of Messiah does, but we can control how we walk out our own spiritual lives.

Judgment begins with the house of G-d. Shimon Kefa wrote: 17 For the time has come for judgment to begin with the house of God. If judgment begins with us first, what will be the end for those who disobey the Good News of God? (1Peter 4:17 TLV). This says to me that ADONAI's judgement will begin with us because we know the truth, or at least we should know the truth. If ADONAI judges those of us who know the truth for our disobedience, how much worse will it be for those outside Yeshua's body, those who totally reject ADONAI?

Obedience is the key. So, what is your "OL," your obedience level? What is your "LSL" level, your living sacrifice level? Is it cold, lukewarm or hot? We know how Yeshua feels about being lukewarm: 15 "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. Oh, that you were either cold or hot! 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spew you out of My mouth." (Revelation 3:15-16 TLV). Lukewarm is where many in Yeshua's body are today. That, in my opinion, is why no more are responding to Jonathan's messages. Lukewarm is not good enough. But, cold is not a good thing either. Yeshua already knows where the cold are and their judgment awaits them- unless they repent and become hot. If you are lukewarm, there is still time. That is the underlying and unsaid message of Jonathan to the body of Messiah; you're lukewarm, repent and become hot for Jesus; hot for Yeshua. Maybe he wouldn't like me to put words in his mouth, but that's my interpretation.

But, those of us in Messianic Judaism cannot be smug and self-assured in our position. We must do better than we are doing. We must improve our OL, our obedience level and our LSL, our living sacrifice level. Time is short. Jeremiah had his scribe *Baruch* to write down ADONAI's words and proclaim them at the Temple and to those coming there from the towns of Judah: 3 "Perhaps the house of Judah will hear all the calamity that I am planning to do to them, in order that they may turn, each one from his evil way. Then I would forgive their iniquity and their sin." (Jeremiah 36:3 TLV). The body of Messiah in the United States of America has had this word proclaimed to them. That same calamity is coming to us, unless, unless we repent. We must not only respond to Jeremiah's and Jonathan's warnings ourselves, but take up and make the proclamation ourselves. We are not being melodramatic when we say that "time is short."

The kohanim and the people in Jeremiah's day didn't listen. Jeremiah cried over them and begged them to repent. They didn't. As kohanim under our High Priest Yeshua, we have a spiritual calling. It is the calling of Israel to be a set-apart nation for ADONAI: 26 "You are to be holy to Me, for I, Adonai, am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, so that you would be Mine" (Leviticus 20:26 TLV). Will those who are called by His name listen and repent and by doing so turn away ADONAI's righteous judgment from our nation? This is not intended to be a message of doom and gloom, just an honest statement of the facts. I do

believe in a coming revival, but how much better would it be for Yeshua's body if they turned back to Him now. He said: 28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and 'you will find rest for your souls.' 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30 TLV). There is still time. With ADONAI's help, we will return. Shabbat shalom!