



Parasha Emor

May 6, 2023

Torah: Leviticus 21:1-24:3

Haftarah: Ezekiel 44:15-31

Ketuvim Sh'llichim: 1Peter 2:4-10

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Emor*, meaning, “speak.” ADONAI told *Moshe* to speak to the *kohanim*, giving them His rules for them and also with clarification regarding sacrifices and offerings that were being brought to the Tabernacle. Regarding the sacrifices, *B’nei Yisra’el* was doing certain things that they shouldn’t have done. ADONAI concluded by saying: 31 “So you are to keep My mitzvot and do them. I am Adonai. 32 You must not profane My holy Name, for I will be made holy among *Bnei-Yisrael*. I am Adonai who makes you holy, 33 who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am Adonai.” (Leviticus 22:31-33). ADONAI said: “Keep my mitzvot and do them.” In other words, “My rules are not flexible. You must obey them.”

ADONAI’s firmness on His *mitzvot* holds true for us, Israel today, a people almost 3500 years removed from the time that ADONAI spoke these commands to Moses. We recognize that His commandments are truth for us today. For us, truth is found in the consistency of G-d’s Word, and the understanding that He does not change. Those of us here today can identify with the people of Israel of that day as they prepared to enter the Land of Promise after their Exodus. ADONAI said to Joshua: 8 “*This book of the Torah should not depart from your mouth—you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will make your ways prosperous and then you will be successful.*” (Joshua 1:8 TLV). Israel was about to go into Canaan and do battle for the land. ADONAI said that the *Torah* was to be their guide. What was commanded had a very specific meaning then. But, to understand what ADONAI wants us to do today, we must realize that He has taken Israel on a 3500 year journey and many things have changed since they entered *eretz Yisra’el* that first time. Today, we are preparing to enter the fulfillment of Israel, the final Israel of G-d, ruled by its King, Yeshua.

But today, the Commonwealth of Israel is no longer only Jews and is made up of both Jews and Gentiles and it is necessary for us to understand what it means to “be careful to do everything written in the Book of the *Torah*.” Does that mean that we are to stone someone who broke a certain *Torah* command? No, of course not! When ADONAI told us through Malachi that He doesn’t change (3:6), He didn’t mean that we are to stone lawbreakers today or that we can offer sacrifices. By not changing, we understand Him to mean that His nature does not change, a nature which includes a tremendous love for us, His creation. His justice, His judgment of evil, also never changes. But, He does change His mind. Moses pleaded with Him about Israel on the mountain and ADONAI relented. Things do change as His Kingdom advances and He has shown us which of His commands are active for us today and which are inactive. 3500 years ago, there was a Tabernacle and the Levitical priesthood necessary to carry out ADONAI’s direct judgment of the people. But, we no longer have either. The Temple and the Levitical priesthood both disappeared in 70 CE, almost 2000 years ago. Now, without those two essential components, about 80% of the commands in the five Books

of Moses are inactive because they require either a Temple or priesthood in order to be carried out.

How do we know that? We know it by studying the Scriptures. By reading the commands, we locate those which have need of either Temple or Levitical priesthood to carry them out. Regarding the *Torah* in Joshua 1, ADONAI said that “we should meditate on it day and night.” Has that changed? No, it has not. It was true 3500 years ago and also true 2000 years ago. *Sha’ul* counseled Timothy, a young follower of Yeshua: *15 Make every effort to present yourself before God as tried and true, as an unashamed worker cutting a straight path with the word of truth.* (2Timothy 2:15 TLV). What is “the word of truth?” In Paul’s and Timothy’s day, it was the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. That was the entirety of ADONAI’s revealed Word when they lived and that was what *Sha’ul* and Timothy studied and followed. “The word of truth” for us today is Genesis through Revelation, the entirety of ADONAI’s revealed Word and that is what we are to study and follow. What does it mean to “cut a straight path?” The Greek word from which this is translated is *orthotomeó* (or-thot-om-eh-o), meaning exactly that: “to cut straight.” This means that regarding “the word of truth,” ADONAI’s Scriptures, we are to handle it correctly and teach it rightly, or as some Bible versions read, “rightly dividing the Word of truth.”

As individuals responsible directly to G-d, we cannot rely on what someone else said or taught. It is up to us as individuals to determine for ourselves what the Scriptures mean. Those of you who regularly listen to me may trust me to tell you the truth, but what if what I tell you is wrong? I’m not infallible. I make mistakes and I’m certain that I don’t understand all of G-d’s truth. I can tell you how I interpret “the word of truth.” That’s my job. But, you also have a job and that is to check me out. You must also meditate on the “word of truth. When you stand before Yeshua (2Corinthians 5:10), He won’t say: “Why didn’t you do what you were taught. He will say, “Why didn’t you obey My commands, rightly divide My word of truth?” His questions will be directed to us as individuals. There has never been a time in history when it is so important that each of us study and determine what the Bible actually says. And, we cannot depend on the Bible translators. They have their own agenda and fudge their translation toward their theology. We have to look at the Hebrew and the Greek and with modern computer tools, anyone can do it.

Yeshua might also ask, “Why didn’t you follow the example of the Berean Jews?” The Jews of the synagogue in Berea, northern Greece, had a particular character trait: *11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, because they received the message with goodwill, searching the Scriptures each day to see whether these things were true.* (Acts 17:11 TLV). Just a few verses before, some of the Jews in Thessalonica became jealous of *Sha’ul* and gathered some wicked men from the marketplace and attracted a crowd to try to bring Paul and Silas out to the mob. But, the Berean Jews were different. They searched the *Tanakh* daily to see if what *Sha’ul* told them about Yeshua was true. They are a witness to us which implies that we should also be searching from Genesis to Revelation daily to see if the things which we have been told are true.

Their searching the Scriptures daily was the result of their being “noble minded.” The Greek word translated as “noble minded” is *eugenesteroi* (yoog-en'-ace-te-ro-ee) meaning “of noble or high birth.” The implication about the Bereans is that they were taught these noble ways of looking at things by their parents. The modern definition of noble is perfect to help us understand how “noble minded” should apply to us. It says: “Having or showing fine personal qualities or high moral principles and ideals.” Those people had these qualities

because their Jewish parents obeyed ADONAI's command: 6 "These words, which I am commanding you today, are to be on your heart. 7 You are to teach them diligently to your children..." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7a TLV). I would consider my parents noble, but they didn't teach me to search the Scriptures. They were witnesses of Yeshua to me, but not specifically to search the Scriptures. Today, parents who are Messianic followers of Yeshua know that they are to teach ADONAI's *Torah* to their children. That was the result for those Berean Jews, they had been taught by their parents.

Searching ADONAI's written Scriptures is one thing, but I don't search the *Talmud* or other Jewish writings to find "the word of truth." I can learn from these sources and often do, but do not consider them "truth" which *Sha'ul* described to us. The "word of truth" is only contained in the holy writings inspired by ADONAI. His truth for us is only to be found within them, the written Scriptures. There are two different processes taking place. First, we determine what "the word of truth" is and then, we obey it. Just knowing truth does nothing for us. We must obey it. Trusting in Yeshua as Savior, the sin sacrifice who paid the price for our inclusion into ADONAI's covenant, the New Covenant, is a work of G-d's grace. All we had to do was to believe and say: "Yes, L-rd, I trust. I believe that you are the Son of G-d who died for the sins of the world." That's His grace toward us. After that, it's up to us to learn how to live in ADONAI's covenant, knowing what to do and what not to do.

It's all there, *Torah* written down for us to search, to meditate on, and to reach a goal. The goal, our objective, as we are told by ADONAI is: 8 ... "so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will make your ways prosperous and then you will be successful." (Joshua 1:8b TLV). We want to be prosperous and successful. Here is ADONAI's prescription for success. But, as you know, it's not easy to walk a walk that 99.9% of Yeshua's followers are not walking. But, nevertheless, that's what ADONAI has told us to do. And He encourages us in our walk. In the very next verse, He said: 9 "Have I not commanded you? Chazak! Be strong! Do not be terrified or dismayed, for Adonai your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9 TLV). *Chazak*, "Be strong!" was a word for a people about to go in and face a whole nation of enemies, but it also applies to us today. What we see on the world horizon doesn't look good. The world seems to be falling apart. But, ADONAI says to us: "Chazak!" "Be strong! I am with you."

A good portion of the first two chapters of our *parasha*, Leviticus 21 and 22, have to do with the holiness of the priesthood. It's all about things which are not considered holy, things which take away from the dignity and calling which ADONAI gave to the sons of *Levi*. There is no direct application for us in these verses today, but there is very definitely an implied message. *Shimon Kefa* wrote: 4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua. (1Peter 2:4-5 TLV). We are the new priesthood, the ordinary priests under our *Kohen Gadol*, our High Priest, after the order of *Malkitzedek*, Yeshua. This priesthood is ADONAI's active priesthood today, a priesthood made up of the followers of Yeshua, Jews and Gentiles who have trusted in Him. The Messianic Jews today are a remnant fulfilling ADONAI's original and eternal plans for Israel. He said this to them as they approached Mount Sinai to receive the *Torah*: 6 "So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation.' These are the words which you are to speak to *Bnei-Yisrael*." (Exodus 19:6 TLV). And, we Gentiles in Yeshua, along with them are today a part of the "kingdom of kohanim, a holy nation," Israel. But, it's only for a short time that it will remain a remnant. Soon, we will be joined by millions of Jews as *Sha'ul*'s prophecy of "the salvation of all Israel"

comes to pass. (Romans 11:25-27). There will be millions of new *kohanim*. In our *haftarah* reading today, ADONAI spoke of the importance of the Levitical priests who are the descendants of Zadok. It may be that He will build the Temple seen by Ezekiel and they will minister in it. If that happens, some of *Torah* which is now inactive will again become active. But, right now, we can only wait and see what ADONAI will do.

Kefa spoke to us of spiritual sacrifices: *5 ...—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua.* (1Peter 2:5b TLV). What are the “spiritual sacrifices” that we are to offer, acceptable to G-d through Yeshua? We have no physical Temple today. We don’t have to offer physical sacrifices, to burn incense, or to trim and light the lamps of the *menorah*. We don’t have these things to do, but some of our “spiritual sacrifices” are physical things to do. Yeshua’s brother *Ya’acov*, told us that “we were to be doers of the Word and not hearers only.” (James 1:22). To be “doers,” we do what is commanded. Some things we do with our hands. We are commanded to love our neighbor as ourselves and sometimes that is a hands on process. Some things we do with our mouths. We eat only what He has told us we can eat and we speak what we are to speak. Some things we do by not doing. His Word tells us what those things are, our spiritual sacrifices which we offer to Yeshua.

Before we knew Yeshua, we were in darkness. As His *kohanim*, we are told: *9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* (1Peter 2:9 TLV). Before we trusted in Yeshua, we were in darkness and all who do not know Yeshua today remain in darkness. But, they will not all stay there. I fully believe that a great revival is coming and many who do not know Yeshua today will soon trust in Him. Our part in this is to be faithful to what we have been called to do. We are a royal priesthood and as such, we must act as G-d’s priests should act. Because He is holy, we are called to be holy, set apart for Him.

The third chapter of our *parasha*, Leviticus chapter 23 is about ADONAI’s holy days. As Messianic followers of Yeshua, Leviticus 23 should be just as familiar to us as Psalm 23, 1Corinthians chapter 13 and Jeremiah chapter 31. This chapter is the only place where we find a complete listing of G-d’s commands to us regarding His special holy days. It begins: *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying: 2 “Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, and tell them: These are the appointed moadim of Adonai, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My moadim.”* (Leviticus 23:1-2 TLV). The TLV has translated the Hebrew word *moadei*, מָעֵדִי, as *moadim* for us, a Hebrew word which we understand to be the plural of *moed*, meaning “festival” or “appointed time.” *Moadei* and *moadim* are two words which mean the same thing. “Holy convocations” in the TLV is translated from the Hebrew *mikra’e kodesh*, מִקְרָא קָדֵשׁ. A holy convocation is a holy, set apart, meeting, a coming together which ADONAI has called for all who are in covenant with Him. We are instructed to gather ourselves before Him. The holy convocations, the Sabbaths which are described in this chapter, are the weekly Sabbath, two special Sabbaths in the Festival of Unleavened Bread (*Chag HaMatzot*), the Sabbath of Pentecost (*Shavuot*), the Sabbath of the Festival of Trumpets (*Shofarot*, which we also call *Rosh Hashana*), the Sabbath of the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the Sabbath of the Festival of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) and the Sabbath of the Eighth Day Festival of Assembly (*Shemini Atzeret*). This means that ADONAI commanded us to appear before Him 59 times each year. 52 times are weekly Sabbaths and 7 times are special Sabbaths. Fifty-nine special holy days are given to us, 59 opportunities to appear before ADONAI.

We are worshipping on *Shabbat* today because ADONAI has revealed to us through His Word and confirmed by His *Ruach HaKodesh*, His Holy Spirit, that *Torah* is for us. This means that we are to do our best to keep His commandments which we can keep today. Even so, we know that we cannot fully keep the seven special *Shabbats* because they can only be fully observed in Jerusalem in the Temple. But we can fulfill the spirit of ADONAI's commands by gathering together and commemorating them. This is most important because Yeshua was the fulfillment of the Spring Festivals (*Matzah* and *Shavuot*) and is also the coming fulfillment of the Fall Festivals (*Shofarot*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkot* and *Shemini Atzeret*). By observing His Spring Festivals as best we can, we commemorate them. By observing His Fall Festivals as best we can, we rehearse them as we await His coming and the fulfillment of them. They are important to us because it is through His holy convocations that ADONAI has revealed to us His future plans for the earth.

ADONAI's festival days are *kodesh* days, holy days, days given to us as prophetic shadows, symbols of future events in His eternal plan. The meanings of *Pesach*, *Matzah* and *Shavuot* have already emerged from the shadows and are now in the full light of day. Because they have been fulfilled by Yeshua, we now understand ADONAI's purpose in having Israel to observe these festivals. Through Scripture, both the *Tanakh* and the writings of Yeshua's disciples, we now know that Yeshua is our Passover Lamb who paid the price for our sins, that His blood has washed away our sins and that He is the Bread of Life. This is the fulfillment of Passover. We now know that the *Torah* written on stone at Mount Sinai has been written on our hearts and that the *Ruach*, the Comforter sent by Yeshua, resides in those who trust in Him. This is the fulfillment of Pentecost. The Spring festivals have been fulfilled, but we are awaiting the fulfillment of the Fall festivals, their coming out of the shadows.

Sha'ul explained foreshadowing in these verses: *16 Therefore, do not let anyone pass judgment on you in matters of food or drink, or in respect to a festival or new moon or Shabbat. 17 These are a foreshadowing of things to come, but the reality is Messiah.* (Colossians 2:16-17 TLV). The Greek *heorté* (heh-or-tay') means festival. *Sha'ul* knew that those to whom he had written his letter knew and understood exactly what ADONAI had commanded in Leviticus 23 and so it was not necessary that he quote it. We read it earlier: *2 ...: "These are the appointed moadim of Adonai, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My moadim."* (Leviticus 23:2b TLV). *Heorté* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *moadim* with both meaning "festival." ADONAI said: "*My moadim.*" They are His festivals, not Jewish festivals. Some today, think that *Sha'ul* was teaching the Colossians not to observe festivals, not to eat kosher and not to honor the seventh day Sabbath. But, it was the exact opposite. He was saying "don't let the pagans judge you." He was actually saying, "You are to do them." Anyone who didn't worship ADONAI was a pagan. That was the religious community of that day. If *Sha'ul*'s letters are read critically, it is clear that he upheld *Torah* and would not have spoken against it. He also wrote this: *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 3:30-31 TLV). This means that in order to for us to correctly understand *Sha'ul*'s words in Colossians 2, we must first understand his theological approach. His explanation of foreshadowing is the next verse.

17 These are a foreshadowing of things to come, but the reality is Messiah. (Colossians 2:17 TLV). The word translated "foreshadowing" is *skia* (skee'-ah) meaning "a shadow." The word translated "reality" in the TLV is *sóma* (so'-mah) and means "a body." This says that

"the body is a shadow of things to come." *Sha'ul* knew that the body which cast the shadow is Messiah who is both a part and also the fulfillment of every one of ADONAI's special holy days as well as the Sabbath. He also wrote about this to the Roman congregation: *4 For Messiah is the goal of the Torah as a means to righteousness for everyone who keeps trusting.* (Romans 10:4 TLV). The underlying picture of Messiah Yeshua in *Torah* was also the way that His disciples first recognized Him.

Right now, the festivals of *Yom Teruah/Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur* and *Sukkot*, the Fall Festivals, remain in the shadows, only a vague outline of what ADONAI will do through them in the future. But, we do have a pretty good idea of what their fulfillment will be, with all of them in some way a picture of Yeshua's ministry and also a fulfillment by Him. ADONAI's special days are important in our understanding of who Yeshua is. There are only seven special, set-apart, Sabbaths each year, the perfect number, completion in G-d's eyes. As Messianic followers of Yeshua, we must make them important in our lives and treat them as the holy Sabbaths which they are. We should have them underlined on our calendars, giving them the importance which ADONAI places in them.

What is the most important Day of ADONAI? Of course, they are all important, but in my opinion, the most important is the one listed first in Leviticus 23 and the one observed the most, the weekly Sabbath. He doesn't just want us to appear before Him 7 times per year but 52 plus 7 times. While originally there were sacrifices to be offered in the Tabernacle on *Shabbat*, it's not possible for us today. That makes the command to assemble ourselves together on this day even more important: *2 "Speak to Bnei-Yisrael, and tell them: These are the appointed moadim of Adonai, which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations—My moadim. 3 "Work may be done for six days, but the seventh day is a Shabbat of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You are to do no work—it is a Shabbat to Adonai in all your dwellings."* (Leviticus 23:2-3 TLV). This means that our obligation to keep the weekly Sabbath extends even to us here in the United States or wherever Yeshua's followers are in the world. Wherever we dwell we are to do no work, not only honoring, but also assembling ourselves for the weekly Sabbath. There is great peace and blessing in understanding this verse and doing our best to honor ADONAI's intentions expressed to us in these verses.

We're not under the Law are we? No, of course not, even though some who misunderstand our obedience to commands, say that we are. We are in relationship with ADONAI through Yeshua only by grace and nothing else. Our salvation was paid for by Yeshua's sacrificial death and our acceptance of His sacrifice means that we have entered into the Kingdom of G-d as living beings who have also received the promise that we will enter into eternity with Yeshua when our mortal bodies stop functioning. Our keeping of the Sabbath is not an obligation which pays a debt for us. It is a thing of the heart. Because of the great love that ADONAI and Yeshua have for us, we return that love by honoring them with our obedience regarding *Shabbat* and all of their commands.

The author of Hebrews wrote: *9 So there remains a Shabbat rest for the people of God. 10 For the one who has entered God's rest has also ceased from his own work, just as God did from His. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through the same pattern of disobedience. 14 Therefore, since we have a great Kohen Gadol who has passed through the heavens, Yeshua Ben-Elohim, let us hold firmly to our confessed allegiance.* (Hebrews 4:9-11;14 TLV). The Sabbath is a weekly reminder of what Yeshua did for us and each *Shabbat* when we gather together we are recognizing our own eternal Sabbath rest which was paid for us by Yeshua by His sacrificial death. He said that He is the L-rd of

the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:29; Luke 6:5) and as such, we gather ourselves together on the Sabbath to worship Him who has fulfilled the shadow of the weekly *Shabbat* and brought its meaning and purpose fully into the light. When we worship on the *Shabbat*, we are not only recognizing that ADONAI rested on the seventh day after creation, but also that our eternal Sabbath rest was paid for by Yeshua.

Shimon Kefa wrote: *4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua.* (1Peter 2:4-5 TLV). We can only operate effectively in our *kehunnah kodesh*, our holy priesthood, by understanding what ADONAI is teaching us in His word. Bible paraphrases are ok, but we need to go deeper. We can only get the deeper meaning by reading and understanding Scripture through the eyes of its Hebrew authors. Our salvation in Yeshua is not only for what will happen when we die. Its chief purpose is that we serve Him as *kohanim*, priests, under His royal authority as *Kohen HaGadol*, the High Priest of Israel today. That is why it is uppermost that we “meditate on *Torah* day and night” (Joshua 1:8) and strive to “cut a straight path with the Word of Truth.” (2Timothy 2:15). This meditation and study will prepare us for the role which Yeshua has already laid out for us. Each of us has a part to play in His Kingdom.

Each day that goes by brings us closer to Yeshua’s return. We know He’s coming again and we long for the day. He has called us to be faithful until He returns. ADONAI said to Habakkuk: *3 “For the vision is yet for an appointed time. It hastens to the end and will not fail. If it should be slow in coming, wait for it, For it will surely come—it will not delay.”* (Habakkuk 2:3 TLV). As *talmidim* and *kohanim*, disciples and priests of Yeshua, we must faithfully wait for the appointed time of the vision. We can only do that effectively through our knowledge of His instructions for us. We learn it by study: *8 “This book of the Torah should not depart from your mouth—you are to meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will make your ways prosperous and then you will be successful.”* (Joshua 1:8 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*