



Parasha Ki Tetze

August 26, 2023

Torah: Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19

Haftarah: Isaiah 54:1-10

Ketuvim Shlichim: Galatians 3:9-14

Talmidim Shel Yeshua 2

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *parasha*, *Ki Tetze*, means, “When you go,” and the verse continues “out to war against your enemies...” It covers a wide range of topics with most of them only being active under the direct kingship of ADONAI and when there is a Tabernacle or a Temple. Today, ADONAI does not expect us to have the community stone our rebellious sons as commanded in this *parasha* (Deuteronomy 21:18-21). But, there is a very important subject for today in this *parasha* and we have addressed it several times before. The *Torah* and *Ketuvim Shlichim* readings today refer to it. It is the “curse of the Law,” a subject greatly misunderstood by a large segment of Yeshua’s body. We will not discuss it today, but for review, it can be found on our website in *Parasha Ki Tetze*, August 21, 2021.

We continue today with the message series, *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*, Disciples of Yeshua, Part 2, Messianic Judaism and It’s Purpose. Last *Shabbat*, while discussing why Messianic Judaism was necessary, we spoke about *Shavuot*, Pentecost. This particular *moed*, one of ADONAI’s appointed times for Israel, marked a beginning for Yeshua’s followers as the Book of Acts attests. They began to come together (Acts 4:32 and following) for common worship, study and fellowship. The Book of Acts shows that Yeshua’s disciple’s system of worship continued to be in accordance with *Torah*: *1 Now Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the ninth hour, the time of prayer.* (Acts 3:1 TLV). They were going to the Temple for a specific Temple service, afternoon prayer, but they healed a lame man on the way and this attracted a large crowd. The crowd gathered to hear *Kefa* speak at Solomon’s Porch, the place where he had been on *Shavuot*. He spoke of Yeshua as the one crucified, of the need to repent and to return in order to have their sins forgiven, and to obey Yeshua, the one whom Moses spoke of as a prophet like him. The *kohanim*, the priests, and the captain of the Temple Guard responded in this way: *2 They were indignant because Peter and John were teaching the people and announcing in Yeshua the resurrection of the dead.* (Acts 4:1 TLV). The resurrection of the dead is a central point of the *Besurat HaGeulah*, the Good News and those men objected to the disciples’ announcing “in Yeshua the resurrection of the dead.” *Kefa* and *Yochanan* were put in jail for saying these things.

Continuing to worship according to the Judaism of the day, the disciples and the new believers continued to meet and more were added to their number: *7 The word of God kept on spreading, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem greatly multiplied; even a great number of the kohanim were becoming obedient to the faith.* (Acts 6:7 TLV). That *kohanim*, members of the Sadducee party, were coming to faith is significant. They were a part of the group that did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, but faith in Yeshua had changed their minds.

Sha’ul, a strict Pharisee who had persecuted Yeshua’s followers, had an experience with Yeshua on the Damascus road and was radically saved and changed and began to

proclaim Yeshua in Damascus and Antioch. Scholars estimate that his experience with Yeshua took place from three to five years after Yeshua's death, or from 33 to 35 CE, but he didn't immediately join the disciples in Jerusalem. *Sha'ul* wrote that after his Damascus Road experience, he left Damascus and went to Arabia and then back to Damascus. He said he did not go to Jerusalem until three years later (Galatians 1) and then only saw *Shimon Kefa* and *Ya'acov*, Yeshua's brother, the leader of the Jerusalem congregation (the *nasi*).

While *Sha'ul* was saved three to five years after the Holy Spirit was given at *Shavuot*, it may have been up to ten years later that Cornelius and his household were saved. This is a theological estimate because Scripture doesn't really tell us. But, for some years after that *Shavuot*, it was a totally Jewish thing. The only saved Gentiles during that time were proselytes to Judaism who had been attending the Festival of *Shavuot* when the Holy Spirit was poured out. Although Gentile by birth, they were considered Jews. It had been a totally Jewish thing, but now salvation in Yeshua came to the Gentiles in the household of Cornelius, the Roman Centurion. ADONAI used *Shimon Kefa* to introduce them to Yeshua and then used him to break this news to the rest of the Messianic Jewish body. After that time, disciples who had been dispersed because of the persecution after Stephen's death, began to spread the Gospel. Some went to Phoenicia, some to Cyprus and some to Antioch and more and more Gentiles trusted in Yeshua. Even so, faith in Yeshua still continued to be a very Jewish thing. *1 After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was his custom, Paul went to the Jewish people; and for three Shabbatot, he debated the Scriptures with them.* (Acts 17:1-2 TLV). (Also Acts 18:4; 19:8-10). *Shabbat*, the seventh day, never changed and Judaism, Messianic Judaism, continued to grow. Neither did obeying *Torah* change. When *Sha'ul* came to Jerusalem for his final time, he met with the elders. They said to him: *20 ... , "You see, brother, how many myriads there are among the Jewish people who have believed—and they are all zealous for the Torah."* (Acts 21:20b TLV). At this point in time, thought to be the summer of the year 55 CE, myriads, tens of thousands of Jews, had trusted in Yeshua. Not only had they trusted in Him, but they were faithful to follow *Torah*, the *Torah* of the Covenant at Sinai. Yes, as Yeshua's followers, they did have a new High Priest, but they continued to follow *Torah* because the Temple was present and the Levitical priesthood was officiating there. ADONAI had not changed that yet and the disciples understood that the *Torah* of Moses was still in effect. They continued to follow *Torah*, *Torah* which did not conflict with their faith in Yeshua as the perfect sin sacrifice. We have no Scriptural details about this, but believe that animal sacrifices for sin would not be a part of the *Torah* which they followed. Other kinds of animal sacrifice were still offered because *Sha'ul* offered them as a part of a Nazirite vow as described in Acts 21.

The life of Messianic Jews, and later Messianic Gentiles, was not easy. They were persecuted and murdered by both traditional Jews and pagans. Stephen's loss of his life was but one example of what many of them went through for their faith. Herod had *Ya'acov*, the brother of *Yochanan*, John, put to death around 44 CE (Acts 12:2) and Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* was murdered by a crowd around twenty years later (*Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History*). The total number who lost their lives for following Yeshua is unknown, but their persecution was great. *Sha'ul* underwent tremendous persecution ending with the loss of his life for serving Yeshua. But, he suffered tremendously even before he died. Referring to false emissaries, he said: *23 Are they servants of Messiah? I am more so—I speak like I'm out of my mind—in labors much more, in prisons much more, in beatings more brutal, near death often. 24 Five times from the Jewish leaders I received forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I suffered shipwreck. A night and a*

day I spent in the open sea. 26 In my many journeys I have been in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the desert, dangers in the sea, dangers among false brothers, 27 in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. (2Corinthians 11:23-27 TLV). When you stop and think about what those early followers of Yeshua went through, we realize how easy we have it today. But even right now on Planet Earth, hundreds of Yeshua's followers are dying daily for their faith.

Even though *Sha'ul* was known as the apostle to the Gentiles, he was also very concerned about his Jewish brethren, even those who treated him so brutally. He wrote: 3 *For I would pray that I myself were cursed, banished from Messiah for the sake of my people—my own flesh and blood, 4 who are Israelites.* (Romans 9:3-4a TLV). He understood that many of them had a hardness of heart from ADONAI and knew that only a remnant of them would be saved and this caused him to have a great sadness. The problem for those Jews was Yeshua. They were so conditioned by the traditional Sadducees and certain of the Pharisees, to reject Him that they were willing to commit murder to eliminate any who opposed their way of thinking. They were not willing to even consider the possibility that a human being could be a *korban chatat*, קָרְבַּן חַטָּאת, a sin offering. They would not abandon their traditions, even those led by a corrupted priesthood. But of course, as we read last week, ADONAI had caused a partial hardening to come upon them. Partial means that it did not prevent them from trusting in Yeshua if they chose to do so. They were not completely hardened and could respond in faith to the testimonies of the disciples and the words of the *Torah* picturing Yeshua. The *kohanim* who trusted in Yeshua as reported in Acts 6:7 are a perfect example. We know that Messianic Judaism has as a major purpose, prayer support for traditional Israel, but ADONAI has not yet revealed all of His purposes for His Movement.

In any Judaism, there is always the question, “Who is a Jew?” ADONAI gave the answer. It is those born of Jewish parents who have followed His command: 11 *“You must be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and this will become a sign of the covenant between Me and you.”* (Genesis 17:11 TLV). Obviously, the daughters of those circumcised are also Jews. Regarding Abraham's descendants, ADONAI has also said: 14 *“But the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin—that person will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”* (Genesis 17:11 TLV). This identifying mark is so important to ADONAI that He would cut off any descendant of Abraham who does not have it. These Scriptures mean that a Jew is determined by ADONAI's own rules. What was just described is called patrilineal descent, being descended from a Jewish father. That's the way ADONAI planned it, but Jews, over the centuries, have also devised their own rules. There are a number of different ideas about the timing, but many believe that the concept of matrilineal descent began in the 1st century CE. Matrilineal means that “who is a Jew” is determined by being descended from a Jewish mother. This has been somewhat relaxed in recent years and patrilineal descent is now accepted in Reform Judaism. The *Mishnah* states that “a Jew is the child of a Jewish mother,” and many Conservative, Orthodox and Hasidic Jews do not accept that children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers are Jewish. Today, who is a Jew has become in part, a non-religious thing. Today, many Jews don't even believe in G-d. But, the Scriptural definition is based on belief in G-d. It goes back to Abraham: 6 *Then he believed in Adonai and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.* (Genesis 15:6 TLV).

Who is a Messianic Jew? In most Messianic Jewish organizations, a Jew is described as the child of either a Jewish mother or father and extends the right to being the grandchild

of either Jewish grandparent. Yes, the *halakha* is different. *Halakha*, from the Hebrew *halak*, meaning walk, is understood in traditional Judaism as “how we walk,” in other words, how *Torah* and *Talmud* translated into how they actually live. Obviously, it differs within the different sects of Judaism. We borrow the word *halakha* for use in Messianic Judaism and it means the same for us, how we walk in our interpretation of *Torah*, Genesis to Revelation, but not *Talmud* or other traditions. *Halakha* for us describes the things that we do based upon our understanding of Scripture. At *Beit Shalom*, we observe certain Jewish traditions as a part of Jewish heritage, but only Scriptural commands are binding for us.

“Who is a Messianic Jew?” *Sha’ul* was a pretty good example of one. He gave an account of his belief in Yeshua as Messiah and his commitment to the *Torah* before the Roman Governor Felix. 14 *“But this I confess to you, that according to the Way (which they call a sect), I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything written in the Torah and the Prophets. 15 In God I have a hope—which these men also wait for—that there will surely be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”* (Acts 24:14-15 TLV). By saying “the Way,” he confessed his belief in Yeshua as Messiah, but also confessed that he followed the Judaism of the patriarchs which included a belief in everything written in the *Tanakh*, the Jewish Bible. He also gave a further description of his spiritual pedigree: 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 3:5-6 TLV). *Sha’ul* was circumcised in the flesh according to ADONAI’s requirement, but he also shows Jews that being born Jewish has other requirements as well. The reality of being a Jew is based upon the spiritual much more than the physical. Without a proper spiritual relationship with ADONAI, according to *Sha’ul*, a Jew is not really a Jew. I’m certain that that there many who would debate this, but this is what *Sha’ul* wrote: 28 *For one is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision something visible in the flesh. 29 Rather, the Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—in Spirit not in letter. His praise is not from men, but from God.* (Romans 2:28-29 TLV). This has nothing to do with Gentiles being “spiritual Jews,” but is directed by *Sha’ul* to Jews by birth. His point is that being a Jew, *Yehudi* in Hebrew, has much more to do with their spiritual relationship with ADONAI than their ancestry. A *Yehudi*, a Jew, is a “praiser of ADONAI,” and has a relationship with Him through a circumcised heart.

Also, ADONAI has embedded in His plan for Israel the “irrevocable calling.” We spoke last week about it. Romans 11, verses 25 through 29 describe the stoniness which G-d brought upon the Jews in order to allow the fullness of the Gentiles to come in. The irrevocable calling is that ADONAI has called the Jews to be in relationship with Yeshua and that that calling never expires. The time will come when their calling will result in their election: 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). In the *p’shat*, the original meaning of these verses and also in *Sha’ul*’s context, they apply to Jews. The day is coming soon when all Israel shall be saved.

But, what is the Biblical role of the Gentile? It is also a divine calling. *Ya’acov*, Yeshua’s brother said: 15 *“The words of the Prophets agree, as it is written: 16 ‘After this I will return and rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David. I will rebuild its ruins and I will restore it, 17 so that the rest of humanity may seek the Lord— namely all the Gentiles who are called by My name— says Adonai, who makes these things 18 known from of old.”* (Acts 15:15-17 TLV). *Ya’acov* was quoting Amos 9, verses 11 and 12, where Amos referred to this structure as

David's fallen *sukkah*. The fallen tabernacle of David is the kingdom ruled by the rightful ruler of Israel, Yeshua, which is in the process of being rebuilt, even now. The first step in this restoration was the New Covenant inaugurated by Yeshua's blood. The climax will be His return to reclaim His throne. Amos said that this was being done so that the Gentiles who are called by ADONAI's name could seek the L-rd. The Gentiles called by ADONAI's name are the ones whom He has seen from before the foundation of the world as having sought Yeshua and remained faithful to the end. Only ADONAI knows who they are. In that regard, they are the righteous remnant from the nations. *Sha'ul* further explains this: *24 Even us He called—not only from the Jewish people, but also from the Gentiles— 25 as He says also in Hosea, "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' and her who was not loved, 'Beloved.'" (Romans 9:24-25 TLV). (Hosea 2:25).* This further explains *Sha'ul's* words in Romans 1 where he tells that the Good News is to the Jew first, but equally to the Gentile.

But, righteous Gentiles do not become Jews. David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister said, "A Jew is anybody who, given the burdens Jews must bear, is willing to call himself one." Of course, *halakha* is not made by prime ministers and the religiously observant would disagree with him. Messianic Judaism does not agree with him either and we believe that Jews remain Jews and Gentiles remain Gentiles. In rabbinic theology, a Gentile can convert to Judaism and then be called a Jew, but there is no conversion process in Messianic Judaism.

One definition of a Messianic Gentile is: "one who promotes Messianic Judaism, loves Messianic Jews, has an affinity toward Jewish forms of worship which honor Yeshua the Messiah, and associates himself with the Messianic Jewish Movement." While Gentiles as a whole have a calling to be a part of ADONAI's kingdom through Yeshua, Messianic Gentiles have a more specific calling. They are called to join with the Jews and become a part of their community and culture. A Messianic Gentile's statement of faith is very much like Ruth's. Ruth was a Moabite woman, a part of a people who worshipped *Chemosh*, a false god. Ruth's statement of faith was: *16 ... , "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God my God. 17 Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May Adonai deal with me, and worse, if anything but death comes between me and you!" (Ruth 1:16b-17 TLV).* By birth, Ruth was a Moabite. ADONAI had said: *4 "No Ammonite or Moabite is to enter the community of Adonai—even to the tenth generation none belonging to them is to enter the community of Adonai forever"— (Deuteronomy 23:4 TLV).* Then, He went on to tell why and to say that it was because Lot's descendants had not provided Israel bread and water when they came out of Egypt and because they hired Balaam, the son of Beor, to curse Israel. How did Ruth avoid this ban? We don't know for certain. However, the word translated community in this verse is *qahal*, קהל, and refers to the congregation of Israel. It's a matter of interpretation. Ruth could not enter as a Moabite but, based upon ADONAI's mercy and grace, she could enter as a follower of YHVH, which she became. Obviously, ADONAI allowed her to become a part of Israel and even chose her to be an ancestor of both King David and Yeshua. Boaz thanked her for her kindness to her mother in law Naomi by saying: *12 "May Adonai repay you for what you have done, and may you be fully rewarded by Adonai, God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge." (Ruth 2:12 TLV).* Ruth is the Biblical model for all Gentiles who put their trust in the God of Israel and his son, Messiah Yeshua. This includes both those in the Church and those in Messianic Judaism. A Jew by birth is expected to follow the G-d-given identity of Israel, but a Gentile taking upon himself the Biblical faith of Israel demonstrates that he or she has by choice

become a part of ADONAI's covenant community with Israel. *Sha'ul* taught: *11 Therefore, keep in mind that once you—Gentiles in the flesh—were called “uncircumcision” by those called “circumcision” (which is performed on flesh by hand). 12 At that time you were separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.* (Ephesians 2:11-13 TLV). It was by our faith choice of Yeshua that we have been brought into ADONAI's *qahal*, His *ecclesia*, the congregation of the righteous who are ruled over by Yeshua.

Being “in Yeshua,” that which is offered by the Gospel, is both individual and corporate. In the individual sense, it is described by *Sha'ul* in Romans as he consistently quotes the *Tanakh*. In Chapters 1 through 3, he teaches that everyone has sinned and fallen short of adequately obeying G-d (1Kings 8:46 and Ecclesiastes 7:20), that sin builds a wall between a person and G-d (Isaiah 59:1-2), shows that the penalty for sin is death (Genesis 2:17), that no one can restore the relationship with G-d by his own efforts (Psalm 143:2; Isaiah 64:5-6) and that ADONAI, by offering Yeshua as an atonement, has closed the gap between man and G-d, restoring fellowship between the person and his G-d (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). In chapters 4 through 6, *Sha'ul* explains what a person must do to restore his personal relationship with ADONAI and to put his trust in G-d, accepting what has been done for him through Yeshua (Genesis 15:6). In chapters 7 and 8, he explains that trust, faith from the heart, will lead to both wanting to and being able through the power of the Holy Spirit to do those things which are pleasing to G-d.

But, the Gospel is also corporate. While each of our relationships with Yeshua is individual, we also relate to His government corporately. The poet John Donne wrote: “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.” (John Donne, “Meditation 17,” 1623). You would almost think that Donne was thinking of Yeshua's body of believers when he wrote this. We are not an island, but a house built of connected stones. *Shimon Kefa* said: *5... you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—* (1Peter 2:5 TLV). The spiritual house is Yeshua's kingdom, in which we as individual stones are placed together to build His house. Individual stones lying out in the field serve no purpose and contribute nothing to the corporate house. To contribute to the building of the house, they first must be willing. Then, they must be placed by the master builder, Yeshua, in the required order to build the spiritual house. *Kefa* continues: *6 For it says in Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen, precious cornerstone. Whoever trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”* (1Peter 2:6 TLV). Yeshua is the chief cornerstone laid in Zion as a foundation for His spiritual house. One of the most important words being communicated by the Holy Spirit to Yeshua's body today is, “Return to the body and make it whole.” I believe that in order to really experience revival, those separated from congregational authority must make *tshuvah*, must return and take an active part in the body to which ADONAI has called them. In closing his ode, John Donne wrote: “The bell tolls for thee.” The bell is a funeral bell. Using the bell metaphorically, it is tolling now for the lost parts of Yeshua's body, both those who have denied Him and those who have chosen to make themselves islands. Without the whole body, we cannot fulfill His calling as ADONAI has determined it.

Here is another definition of Messianic Judaism: “A movement among Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Yeshua, who believe that it is both proper and desirable to recognize and identify with their Jewishness. This Jewish lifestyle of both Jew and non-Jew can only be followed if it is consistent with the whole of Biblical teachings. The Messianic Jewish Movement is a part of the righteous remnant of the Nations as described in Romans 11 and Ephesians 2 & 3. Perceived by those in it as a spiritual renaissance, it is a return to the original faith of the followers of Yeshua.” I agree with that definition. I hope you do too. It does not in any way elevate Messianic followers of Yeshua above those in the Church, but is a special calling within Yeshua’s greater body of believers. In Matthew 16, Yeshua gave those in his body the authority to make their own decisions. Speaking to *Kefa* as representative of all those in authority, He said: 19 *“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven.”* (Matthew 16:19 TLV). Forbidding and permitting is the authority to interpret Scripture, essentially, to make *halakha*, for individual faith groups and applies to both Messianic followers of Yeshua and those in the Church. Each group has Yeshua’s authority to decide “how they will walk” spiritually. But corporately, we are “one body” and commanded to love each other.

A major part of ADONAI’s calling and purpose of those in Messianic Judaism is to have the heart of *Sha’ul*. He was very concerned about the salvation of his brother and sister Jews, Israel in the flesh. He wrote: 3 *For I would pray that I myself were cursed, banished from Messiah for the sake of my people—my own flesh and blood, 4 who are Israelites.* (Romans 9:3-4a TLV). While we as Messianic Jews and Gentiles have been called to have a holy concern for the Jews, we have not necessarily been individually given a calling with that strength. However, some may have. But, in any case, as a corporate body, we have a spiritual calling to pray for the Jews that they would know Yeshua. That, in my opinion, is ADONAI’s primary purpose for re-establishing Messianic Judaism in these last of the last days. We are called to be advocates for the greater body of Abraham’s descendants. But, in carrying out that calling, we in the Messianic Jewish Movement are misunderstood not only by those for whom we have been called to pray, the Jews, but also by much of the Church. In the face of these obstacles, ADONAI has told us to have *emunah*, faith. We walk by faith and not by sight as we follow Yeshua in the faith of Messianic Judaism. But, He has also called us to have *emunah* in the sense of faithfulness. Isaiah exhorts us and comforts us: 31 *..but they who wait for Adonai will renew their strength. They will soar up with wings as eagles. They will run, and not grow weary. They will walk, and not be faint.* (Isaiah 40:31 TLV). *Shabbat shalom!*