



Parasha Vayigash

December 23, 2023

Torah: Genesis 44:18-47:27

Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:15-28

Ketuvim Shlichim: John 15:4-11

Talmidim Shel Yeshua 19

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! In *Parasha Vayigash*, *Torah* continues with the story of Joseph. The story of Joseph is one of the longer-running narratives in *Torah* and so far has extended over three *parshiyot*, *Vayeshev*, *Miketz*, and *Vayigash*. Next week, it is concluded with the fourth and last *parasha* about Joseph, *Vayechi*. I know that you are keeping up by reading your *parasha* each week and are excited about the climax of this week when Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers. In our *Haftarah* reading, we saw the rejoining of the Israelites of the northern kingdom, Israel, with the Israelites of the southern kingdom, Judah. That joining took place before Judah was taken to Babylon and the Jews of the world today are the result of ADONAI's miraculous joining of the two sticks.

Today, we are continuing our series, *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*. What do the majority of us, His followers, know about our faith? Many know there is a New Covenant, but have no idea with whom it was made, only knowing that because they have trusted in Jesus, they have the promise of eternal life. But, there is much more for every disciple of Yeshua to know. *31 Then Yeshua said to the Judeans who had trusted Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples.* (John 8:31 TLV). Abide is translated from the Greek, *menó*, meaning: to stay, remain, live, dwell, abide. To abide in Yeshua is to follow His example of a life obedient to the will of ADONAI. Certainly, that's something we all want to do, but we can't do it without study. To abide really means that we are to "live our lives in submission to His authority." We have to know what we're abiding in.

For those of us who are Gentiles, and most who are in Yeshua's body are, *Sha'ul*, once again, is our teacher. He wrote: *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).* (Ephesians 2:11 TLV). It's important to note that *Sha'ul* calls the group Gentiles which comes from the Latin *gentilis*, meaning a race, a nation or "the nations." The underlying Greek word is *ethne'*, from *ethnos*, meaning the same thing. That he refers to Gentiles in this way is important because many Gentiles today believe that followers of Jesus become spiritual Jews and that the Church is spiritual Israel, having replaced the Jews. That is not true. Gentiles remain Gentiles and are grafted into the Jewish body. *Sha'ul* confirmed this fact in Romans by writing this to Gentiles who had been grafted into the Jewish olive tree: *13 But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles.* (Romans 11:13a TLV). They were still Gentiles and that is not a negative term, just a description of racial background. But, the spiritual body continues to be Israel, a living body of Jews who have trusted in Yeshua. Yeshua's Gentile followers in the Church are a part of the spiritual nation of Israel

represented by the Jews who have trusted in Yeshua and entered into the New Covenant. But, the covenant was made with Israel. (Jeremiah 31:32).

Sha'ul continues: *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 2:12-13 TLV). By trusting in Yeshua, we Gentiles have been brought near to the Covenants of Promise; covenants, plural. *Sha'ul*, in these words, is focusing on the Gentile Ephesians, but as we also know, Jews also must enter the covenant the same way, by trusting faith. He is thought to have written this letter around 60-62 CE when he was in prison in Rome. We learn from Acts chapter 19 that he spent more than two and a half years in Ephesus preaching, teaching and debating. His initial contacts were with Jews. He first met twelve Jewish disciples of Yeshua who had only had the immersion of *Yochanan*, John, an immersion of repentance. He immersed them into Yeshua and when he laid his hands on them they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. *Sha'ul* then went into the local synagogue and began teaching. After about three months, they began to harden and to speak evil about The Way, as Yeshua's movement was called, and so, he took his disciples and left. From the traditional synagogue, he went, according to the TLV, into "the hall of Tyrannus" and continued speaking and debating there for about two years. The Complete Jewish Bible refers to it as "Tyrannus's *yeshiva*," recognizing it as a Jewish institution rather than Gentile. The actual congregation at Ephesus is not mentioned in the Book of Acts, but it seems clear that it was composed of both Jews and Gentiles and that *Sha'ul* had had contact with them by letter and through disciples that were coming and going.

The Greek word which the TLV translates as "commonwealth" is *politeias* (pol-ee-tae-ee-as), taken from *politeia* (pol-ee-ti'-ah) meaning citizenship. Before trusting in Yeshua, Gentiles were excluded from this citizenship. Britain is the best modern example of a commonwealth of nations. At one time, the sovereign of England ruled over other nation-states such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. So, "commonwealth" fits very well with ADONAI's reign. He is the King over Israel which is a commonwealth composed today of two groups. At one point in time, His kingdom only contained descendants of Abraham, ethnic Jews. But, now with Yeshua as Messiah, there are two groups within Israel with some Jews being members of both groups. One group is those Jews who have not trusted Yeshua as Messiah. They are in covenant with ADONAI through His covenant with Abraham and are heirs to ADONAI's covenant with him, heirs to the Land of Israel. A second group is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, those who have trusted in Yeshua and they are in covenant with ADONAI through the New Covenant, ADONAI's active covenant. The Jews in the New Covenant are also members of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Gentiles who were formerly separate from the Messiah, actually pagans, were strangers to the "covenants of Israel," (Ephesians 2:12), simply meaning not a part of them. According to the TLV, *Sha'ul* calls these covenants "the covenants of promise." But, the underlying Greek text of Ephesians 12:2 says more and actually states: "strangers to the covenants of 'the' promise." That's quite a bit different. What are these covenants? For our discussion, we will limit the covenants of promise to covenants made with the Jews, Abraham's descendants. We identify them as the Abrahamic Covenant, the covenant of the land of Israel made with Abraham and his descendants, the Mosaic Covenant, the covenant made with Abraham's descendants at Mount Sinai, the Davidic Covenant, the covenant ADONAI made with King David, and the New Covenant, the covenant ADONAI made with Abraham's descendants mediated by His Son, Yeshua. Only two of these covenants, the

Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant are unconditional. ADONAI will carry them out without any requirement by the covenant recipients. In Genesis 18 we read of the covenant ADONAI made with Abraham: *18 On that day Adonai cut a covenant with Abram, saying, "I give this land to your seed, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River.. (Genesis 15:18 TLV).* The Covenant of Circumcision is a sub-covenant of the Abrahamic Covenant. Regarding the Davidic covenant, 2Samuel 7 says: *16 So your house and your kingship will be secure forever before you; your throne will be established forever."* (2Samuel 7:16 TLV). ADONAI made this unconditional covenant with David and it is both an honoring of him and his relationship with ADONAI and the preparation for His descendant Yeshua to sit on David's throne as King Messiah.

Different persons classify the covenants slightly differently. In my opinion, there is one conditional covenant, the Mosaic Covenant. But, even though it is conditional, it initially depended upon a response from the individual Israelites. ADONAI asked them if they would accept His *mitzvot* and they replied "with one voice," yes. But, even though this covenant is conditional, there are still promises. Some of them are: 1) Israel will be ADONAI's prized possession if they obey His voice. (Exodus 19:5). 2) Israel will be a kingdom of priests if they listen closely to ADONAI's voice and keep His covenant. (Exodus 19:6). 3) Israel will be a holy nation if they listen closely to ADONAI's voice and keep His covenant. (Exodus 19:5-6). 4) ADONAI will defend Israel from all her enemies if they listen closely to His voice and do everything He says. (Exodus 23:22). 5) ADONAI will be merciful, gracious and forgiving. Scripture says: *6 Then Adonai passed before him, and proclaimed, "Adonai, Adonai, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth, 7 showing mercy to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means leaving the guilty unpunished, but bringing the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and fourth generation."* (Exodus 34:6-7 TLV). These verses are known as "The Thirteen Attributes of ADONAI" and are also conditional upon Israel keeping the covenant. But, we understand from *Torah* that the Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant made at Sinai, is also a covenant of promise, but a covenant of conditional promises. Israel was required to be faithful in order to receive the benefits from ADONAI.

The final covenant is different from all the rest. The New Covenant is unconditional in promise, but conditional in acceptance. The Scriptures make it clear that what ADONAI promised to do has no conditions on it. He gave this covenant without requirement. He spoke through Isaiah saying: *1 Then a shoot will come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch will bear fruit out of His roots. 2 The Ruach of Adonai will rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and insight, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Adonai.* (Isaiah 11:1-2 TLV). This Messianic promise continues through verse 10 and prophecies Yeshua, calling Him "the root of Jesse." ADONAI also spoke through Ezekiel saying: *27 I will put My Ruach within you. Then I will cause you to walk in My laws, so you will keep My rulings and do them.* (Ezekiel 36:10 TLV). Through Isaiah he also said: *10 Yet it pleased Adonai to bruise Him. He caused Him to suffer. If He makes His soul a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the will of Adonai will succeed by His hand. 11 As a result of the anguish of His soul He will see it and be satisfied by His knowledge. The Righteous One, My Servant will make many righteous and He will bear their iniquities.* (Isaiah 53:10-11 TLV). These verses and the rest of chapter 53 foretell Yeshua's death as our sin sacrifice. ADONAI foretold the actual covenant through Jeremiah: *30 "Behold, days are coming" —it is a declaration of Adonai— "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 31 not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the*

day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they broke My covenant, though I was a husband to them.” it is a declaration of Adonai. (Jeremiah 31:30-31 TLV). ADONAI states that He is going to make a new covenant with Israel for a specific reason. It is that Israel continually broke His conditional covenant of promise, the Mosaic Covenant. They didn't hold up their end of the bargain. But, this new covenant of promise prophesied by Jeremiah, is an unconditional promise. ADONAI said that He would make a new covenant and He has established the New Covenant.

But, this New Covenant with Israel is different from the former covenant: 32 *“But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days” —it is a declaration of Adonai— “I will put My Torah within them. Yes, I will write it on their heart. I will be their God and they will be My people.”* (Jeremiah 31:32 TLV). The *Torah* which was initially written on stone in the Mosaic Covenant is now written on the human heart of the New Covenant members. This happens when a person, either Jew or Gentile, trusts in Yeshua, believing that His death was a sacrifice for their sins. Yeshua, by His death, cut the New Covenant with His own blood and the person who trusts in Him becomes a covenant member. When they trust, the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit inhabits their heart, their spirit, indwelling them. But, the *Ruach* also writes ADONAI's *Torah* upon their heart. ADONAI said: “I will write my Laws on their heart.” As the Scripture says, “G-d is not a man that He would lie.” (Numbers 23:19). I believe that if He said He would do it for those who entered His New Covenant, He did. Even as our hearts were circumcised, they were also inscribed with ADONAI's *Torah*, His righteous laws.

ADONAI continued: 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). This part of the promise has not yet been fulfilled, but will be soon. *“For they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest”* is ADONAI's promise of the salvation of “all Israel” which was prophesied in Ezekiel 36 and Romans 11. We are anxiously waiting for that to happen. Under this covenant of promise, the New Covenant, the sins of those who trust in Yeshua are forgiven and are remembered no more. The basis of this covenant is unconditional. ADONAI has already cut this covenant with the blood of His Son, freely given it. But, it is individually conditional, in that each person must accept the conditions of the covenant in order to receive the benefits of the covenant. That's the entry requirement; trust in Yeshua as the sacrifice for your sins.

Sha'ul continues to the Ephesians: 14 *For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility— 15 the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations. He did this in order to create within Himself one new man from the two groups, making shalom, 16 and to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross—by which He put the hostility to death.* (Ephesians 2:14-16 TLV). What is “the middle wall of separation and the law code of *mitzvot* in regulations?” We'll see. The covenants of promise are- Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and New. *Sha'ul* wrote to the Ephesians that the Gentiles in their former state were: “strangers to the covenants of the promise.” The Greek text says *tēs* (teis) *epangelias* (ep-ang-el-ee'-as). *Tēs* (teis) meaning “the” renders this as “the promise.” What is “the promise?” Strangers to “the covenants of promise” without the ‘the’ can mean strangers to the Abrahamic, the Mosaic, the Davidic and the New. But, strangers to “the covenants of ‘the’ promise can only refer to one covenant, the Davidic Covenant. “The promise” was ADONAI's promise to David that his descendant would sit on Israel's throne, an indirect reference to the New Covenant.

The pagan Gentiles in Ephesus were separate from citizenship in Israel because they were not a part of Israel. But, those that trusted were brought near by the blood of Yeshua just as we are when we trust in Him. *13 But now in Messiah Yeshua, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah.* (Ephesians 2:13 TLV). All Jews are already citizens of Israel. Gentiles are made citizens, members of the Commonwealth of Israel, by Yeshua's blood and are brought near to the covenants of 'the' promise because Yeshua broke down the middle wall of separation.

What is this wall? *14 For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility—* (Ephesians 2:14 TLV). Yeshua has made Jew and Gentile into one body through the New Covenant. He broke down the "middle wall of separation" and brought Gentile believers near. The Complete Jewish Bible uses the word *mechitzah* to translate middle wall of separation. This is the Hebrew word for division or partition. This term is generally used in orthodox synagogues to refer to the separation of men and women. The CJB uses it here to refer to the *cheil*, a low stone wall with a low wooden fence called the *soreg* built on top of it and which stood about 15 feet from the walls of the Temple. According to this understanding, this was the dividing line, the line beyond which no unclean Jew or a Gentile could go. But, is it the *cheil* to which this word refers?

Looking further: *14 For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility— 15 the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations. He did this in order to create within Himself one new man from the two groups, making shalom,...* (Ephesians 2:14-15 TLV). Verse 15 states that this middle wall of separation is the law code of *mitzvot* contained in regulations, commands of some kind. Is this referring to the *Torah*? The question we must ask is, did Messiah Yeshua abolish the *Torah* by His sacrificial death? Was the *Torah*, the Law commands, the actual instrument of hostility that erected a dividing wall between Jew and Gentile? Many people believe that. But, as we have shown over and over, the Scriptures are not antinomian and Yeshua and *Sha'ul* are certainly not antinomian. There is another answer.

If you search for theological opinions on this subject, you will find a number. In my opinion, Tim Hegg has the best explanation of these verses (<https://torahresource.com/dividing-wall-ephesians-214/>). First, *Sha'ul* could not have been talking about the dividing fence outside the Temple because it was "not broken down." At the time Yeshua died and also at the time of this letter, this dividing fence still stood and was not broken down until the Romans destroyed the Temple some seven or eight years later. We have Yeshua's testimony about the written *Torah*, and this lets us know that the *Torah* was not the "middle wall." Yeshua said that not one jot or tittle of *Torah* would pass away before heaven and earth pass away and then went on to condemn those who would break the least of these commands. (Matthew 5:18-19). Yeshua was definitely not antinomian.

If it was not the physical wall around the Temple and not the written *Torah*, then it had to be something else. *Phragmos* is the Greek word translated as "fence" in Ephesians 2:14. Hegg notes that: "the Greek term *fragmos* was used in the 1st Century to identify the oral *Torah* as a 'wall' or 'fence' around the written *Torah*, and the Pharisees were described as 'builders of the wall.'" I believe that he is correct. It was a "law code of commands, but not the written *Torah*. It was the oral *Torah* which laid the foundation for a strict separation between Jew and non-Jew which continues today. Hegg suggests that the dividing wall which

was abolished by Messiah was none other than those rabbinic laws which caused the separation between Jew and Gentile and not the written *Torah*. The *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible, gives very clear instructions against erecting barriers to separate Israel from the nations. According to it, the foreigner who desired to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be welcomed into the community and treated with the same respect as was given the native born.

I believe that Hegg is correct regarding the middle wall of separation and the hostility. It was not the *Torah* that divided. The Bible is not antinomian. It is just the opposite. It upholds ADONAI's righteous laws. The oral *Torah* is something which was created by the Pharisees after Israel's return from Babylon. At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Kefa, speaking of the new Gentile believers, said: 7, "*Brothers, you know that in the early days God chose from among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the message of the Good News and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, testified to them by giving them the Ruach ha-Kodesh—just as He also did for us. 9 He made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts through faith. 10 Why then do you put God to the test by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples—which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*" (Acts 15:7b-10 TLV). Is this yoke the written *Torah*, the Laws which ADONAI has written on our hearts? No, definitely not. I believe that Kefa's "yoke" and Sha'ul's "middle wall of separation" are one and the same, the oral *torah*.

14 For He is our shalom, the One who made the two into one and broke down the middle wall of separation. Within His flesh He made powerless the hostility— 15 the law code of mitzvot contained in regulations. He did this in order to create within Himself one new man from the two groups, making shalom, 16 and to reconcile both to God in one body through the cross—by which He put the hostility to death. (Ephesians 2:14-16 TLV). Now, Jew and Gentile, one in Messiah Yeshua, are "one new man." This "one new humanity" is made up of all those who have taken advantage of the "covenant of the promise" and become covenant members of the New Covenant. Yeshua has taken away the *mechitzah*, the division separating us, the oral *Torah*. *Mechitzah* is still a good word to use. It means division and division has been removed from creating problems among the covenant members of the New Covenant.

Why is it that we spend so much of our time trying to understand the difficult words of Scripture? It's because we realize that our goal is the truth. Yes, there is absolute truth in ADONAI's plan for mankind. And, it is our goal to not only find it, but also to walk in it. We do this for ourselves because we have a thirst for truth. Yeshua said to the Jews who had trusted Him: 31, "*If you abide in My word, then you are truly My disciples. 32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free!*" (John 8:31-32 TLV). We do want to abide, to live, in His word, to know His truth. That's our goal, that our service would be pleasing to Him. What Yeshua seemed to be saying was that if we fully commit our lives to Him, living according to His Word, then we will know the truth. It will be progressive truth. We don't learn it all at one time, but when we do learn it, it will set us free. Being set free is open to interpretation, but I believe that it means to be free from false teaching and false belief. That's why Sha'ul encouraged Timothy to: *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). This is important advice for us. We want to be presented to Yeshua as His faithful disciples and not as those who are satisfied with just what they already know. There is always more truth available. We want to be unashamed of our lives as Yeshua's disciples and especially with regard to the truth. The Greek word translated as "cutting a straight path" is *orthotomounta* (or-thot-om-own-ta). It means to cut straight, to handle

correctly, to teach rightly or to accurately handle the truth. We are not all teachers, but everyone is called to be a witness. We will all stand before Yeshua one day to answer His questions regarding our lives, what we have done either good or bad. (2Corinthians 5:10). We will all stand before Him, but our motivation to study shouldn't be out of fear of judgment, but out of love, love and our sense of responsibility as His disciples. It's very important that we study to show ourselves approved!

As individuals, our relationship with Yeshua is very personal. We, personally, chose Him and committed our lives to Him. The way that happened is individually very meaningful to each of us. While our observation of how all the parts of His Kingdom fit together may sometimes seem clinical, they are the facts, the truth which we are seeking, truth which verifies our relationship with Yeshua and sets us free. Because of His love for us and our love for Him, we are linked to Yeshua in a relationship closer than mother and child. Actually, we are yoked to Him, symbolically harnessed alongside Him, sharing the load to pull a plow with Him. Yeshua said: *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 11:29-30 TLV). If we have trusted Him, we must respond to His request. He said: "take my yoke" and then gently said: *4 "Abide in Me, and I will abide in you. The branch cannot itself produce fruit, unless it abides on the vine. Likewise, you cannot produce fruit unless you abide in Me."* (John 15:4 TLV). Each of us must make that decision. Have you, or will you, take Yeshua's yoke? If you do, you will find His rest for your souls and bear much fruit for His Kingdom. *Shabbat shalom!*