



Parasha Shemini

April 6, 2024

Torah: Leviticus 9:1-11:47

Haftarah: 2Samuel 6:1-7:17

Ketuvim Shlichim: Matthew 16:24-26

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Our *parasha* today is *Shemini*, meaning “eighth.” In *Parasha Tzav* last week, ADONAI commanded Aaron and his sons to remain in the Tabernacle for the seven days of their consecration. This *parasha* begins the 8th day, the day after the consecration was completed, the special day on which ADONAI appeared to Israel. After Aaron made all the required offerings, we read: *22 Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them. Then he stepped down from presenting the sin offering, the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings. 23 Moses and Aaron then went into the Tent of Meeting. When they came back out and blessed the people, the glory of Adonai appeared to all the people. 24 Fire came out from the presence of Adonai, and devoured the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.* (Leviticus 9:22-24 TLV). What an exciting and humbling thing to witness, the greatness and power of their Creator! Doing this seemed to indicate that ADONAI was giving His approval to His priests who had just performed their first service after being consecrated. Everyone was excited, but apparently, none more than Aaron’s sons, *Nadav* and *Avihu*. Their excitement led them to do something ADONAI had not asked for.

After the offering was placed on the altar and fire from ADONAI came forth and consumed it, the very next thing that we read is about *Nadav* and *Avihu*. *1 Now Aaron’s sons Nadab and Abihu each took his own censer, put fire in it, laid incense over it, and offered unauthorized fire before Adonai—which He had not commanded them.* (Leviticus 10:1 TLV). They offered *zarah*, זָרָה, unauthorized fire. Its root is *zur*, זָוַר, meaning “to be a stranger,” strange fire. This is a good example of “why we must know ADONAI’s rules.” We are given freedom in worship, song and service, but He has also given us detailed instructions as well. If we take it upon ourselves to do unauthorized things, we may be in danger of His judgment. This was something which ADONAI had not ordered *Nadav* and *Avihu* to do. *2 So fire came out from the presence of Adonai and consumed them. So they died before Adonai.* (Leviticus 10:2 TLV). The same fire which had just consumed the offerings came forth from ADONAI again and consumed them. The word translated “consumed” is *vatokal*, וַתֹּאכַל, and comes from the word, *akal*, אָכַל, meaning “to eat.” Their bodies were partially destroyed by ADONAI’s holy fire, the result of offering *zarah*, strange fire, before ADONAI. What is the lesson for us? Don’t do something that you just think that ADONAI would like you to do. Be sure that what you do is in agreement with His Word. None of us is exempt from this. Failing to exactly follow ADONAI’s directions is what kept *Moshe* out of the Land of Promise. Because he did not speak to the rock at Meribah, but struck it, he was denied the privilege of entering the Land. *12 But Adonai said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not trust in Me so as to esteem Me as holy in the eyes of Bnei-Yisrael, therefore you will not bring this assembly into the land that I have given to them.”* (Numbers 20:12 TLV). The next verse seems to be the explanation: *13 These are the waters of Meribah where Bnei-Yisrael contended with Moses,*

and where Adonai showed Himself holy among them. (Numbers 20:13 TLV). ADONAI is a holy G-d, whose ways are not our ways. In frustration with the people's quarreling, Moses reacted to their rebellion by striking the rock, not once, but twice, rather than speaking to it as ADONAI commanded. By doing that, he misrepresented ADONAI, the same sin which his nephews *Nadav* and *Avihu* had committed. Our actions do have consequences.

We spoke last week about Yeshua as our *Kohen Gadol*, our High Priest after the order of *Melechitzedek* and the fact that the Levitical priesthood made up of Aaron's descendants is currently inactive. Yeshua is Israel's High Priest, now and forever. So what is He to do for ordinary priests to serve under Him? *Shimon Kefa* gave us the answer. He wrote: 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). Writing to Yeshua's Jewish followers in the diaspora, he said: "You are the King's priests." This is a fulfillment of ADONAI's words to Israel when they first stood before Mount Sinai when He said: 6 *"So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation."* (Exodus 19:6 TLV). These words now include both Jews and the people of the Nations who have trusted in Yeshua and are covenant members of His New Covenant with Israel. *Kefa's* words tell us that we, the covenant members, have assumed the responsibilities of the *kohanim*, the Tabernacle and Temple priests. Yeshua, our High Priest, has very clearly laid out our responsibilities to Him as His ordinary priests and we find them described throughout His teachings.

But, being a kingdom of priests and a holy nation has a condition. ADONAI said: 5 *"Now then, if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant, then you will be My own treasure from among all people, for all the earth is Mine. 6 So as for you, you will be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation."* (Exodus 19:5-6a TLV). But, Israel did not keep His covenant and after giving them hundreds of years of opportunity and grace periods, ADONAI had no choice, but to bring His judgment upon them. Even before they entered the Land of Promise, He had told them that they would fall away and He would punish them. 16 *Adonai said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers. Then this people will rise up and prostitute themselves with the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will abandon Me and break My covenant that I cut with them."* (Deuteronomy 31:16 TLV). Israel entered Canaan to conquer it around 1400 BCE and almost immediately began to turn from ADONAI. He gave them many reprieves from their falling away, but finally in 586 BCE, some 800 years later, He used the Babylonians to destroy the Temple and carry Israel into captivity. Before entering Canaan, He had said: 17 *"Then My anger will flare against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. So they will be devoured, and many evils and troubles will come on them."* (Deuteronomy 31:17a TLV). During the 6th Century BCE, ADONAI's patience ran out and He began to judge Israel. In the midst of His judgment, He announced through Jeremiah that He would make a new covenant with the whole house of Israel. (Jeremiah 31:30). Jeremiah was in Judea during the judgment and also in Jerusalem when the Temple was destroyed. He had been put in prison by the Judean officials on a trumped up desertion charge, but more likely because of his continued condemnation of the sin of Israel and urging them to surrender to the Babylonians. When Jerusalem finally fell, the Babylonians released Jeremiah. He was later taken to Egypt against his will by a group of Judean rebels, where he eventually died.

Everything happening during this time period was due to ADONAI's judgment of Israel and His plan to make a new and better covenant with them. In his first assault on Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar took some captives from Israel including some young noblemen. Among the

first captives taken was a young man from the Tribe of Judah named Daniel. He and the others were taken to Babylon in 605 BCE, about twenty-five years before the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Daniel figured greatly in ADONAI's plan for Israel and He would use Him to prophesy the coming of the Messiah which would inaugurate the New Covenant and even when it would be cut. Daniel realized why the Kingdom of Judah had been judged. He wrote: *9 The Lord our God is compassionate and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against Him. 10 We have not obeyed the voice of Adonai Eloheinu by walking in His Torah that He set before us through His servants the prophets. 11 Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your Torah and has turned away—not obeying Your voice. “Therefore the curse and sworn judgment written in the Torah of Moses the servant of God has been poured out upon us, for we have sinned against Him. 12 So He has confirmed His words that he spoke against us and against our rulers who ruled over us by bringing on us a great calamity. Under the whole heaven nothing like this has ever been done to Jerusalem! (Daniel 9:9-12 TLV).* Israel was judged because they did not walk in ADONAI's *Torah*.

At the time of ADONAI's judgment, His judgment was of “all Israel,” even though it took place in the south in the Kingdom of Judah. Ezekiel prophesied the coming together of the two sticks, the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah and that had happened prior to the Babylonian Captivity and “all Israel” was taken into captivity. To understand how I reached this conclusion, read my message “*Talmidim Shel Yeshua 10*” of September 30, 2023. It is on our website, www.beitshalom.us. As Daniel said, “We have not obeyed ADONAI's voice by walking in His *Torah*. Shall we make the same error with His New Covenant? We hope not, but to not make the same error, we have to listen to His voice, His written Word, and walk in His *Torah*. Doing that is keeping His covenant. But, how to keep His covenant is not something on which all of Yeshua's followers can agree. How are we to keep His covenant? As Messianic followers of Yeshua, we can only determine that for ourselves and we are not speaking to the Church. They must determine how to keep the New Covenant for themselves. But, as Yeshua's followers within Messianic Judaism, we are trying to do His will as best we understand it. And, to do that, we can't just go off willy-nilly. We have to study and seek to understand what He requires of us. The first step, to trust in Yeshua is very simple. It's a matter of the heart. We do it by faith and that is our entry into His covenant. But, after becoming a covenant member, we must know what Yeshua and the New Covenant requires and that is more difficult.

What we do know is that we must be obedient to our Master and obey His voice as indicated by Daniel. Within the body of Messiah today, there is a broad dichotomy, that's a very big word, but it accurately describes the difference in thinking between Yeshua's followers. It is defined as “a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different.” Yeshua's followers who understand that ADONAI has not done away with what some call “Old Testament Laws,” are at one end of the spectrum while those who believe He has done away with them, are at the other end. The word *Torah* means “teaching and instruction,” but it also contains laws, laws which have been written on the hearts of those who have trusted in Yeshua. Read it in Jeremiah 31:32. There is a decision which all followers of Yeshua have to make. They must decide between antinomian belief, that is, an anti-*Torah* approach to the Scriptures on one end of the spectrum and what Christian scholars call legalism on the other end. But, we do not call what we believe legalism. Our name for what we believe and follow is what we refer to as pro-*Torah* or as some have said, pronomian.

To us, being pro-Torah is not being legalistic. We enter into ADONAI's New Covenant by faith. *Sha'ul* wrote, as interpreted by the TLV: 16 *For I am not ashamed of the Good News, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who trusts—to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 In it the righteousness of God is revealed, from trust to trust. As it is written, “But the righteous shall live by emunah.”* (Romans 1:16-17 TLV). The Good News is what is also called “the Gospel,” the message of ADONAI's redemption through Yeshua's death and resurrection. The TLV interprets the Greek *pistis* as *emunah* meaning “faith.” In the Septuagint, the Greek language version of the Hebrew Bible, *emunah* is frequently translated as *pistis*. *Emunah*, אֱמוּנָה, is generally translated as “faith,” but it also includes ideas of faithfulness, loyalty, firmness, reliability, reliance, or trust. We become covenant members of ADONAI's New Covenant by faith by trusting in Yeshua's sacrificial death as the price for our sins provided by ADONAI's grace. But then, as covenant members, we must then walk in faithfulness, following *Torah* which can be obeyed today. *Sha'ul* was quoting Habakkuk who wrote: 4 “*Look at the proud: he is inwardly not upright; but the righteous will attain life through trusting faithfulness.*” (Habakkuk 2:4 CJB). In my opinion, the CJB better explains what both *Sha'ul* and Habakkuk meant. This is it. We begin our walk with Yeshua with faith, trust, but we continue our walk in His New Covenant with faithfulness, faithfulness to *Torah*, ADONAI's teaching and instruction. This is the way that we understand ADONAI's Word. For us, it is pro-Torah. We are only teaching ourselves and not the Church, but Gentiles whom ADONAI leads to follow this path are welcome to join us. But, it is our fervent prayer that traditional Jews would consider our approach.

As Daniel understood, we also understand, “walking in ADONAI's *Torah*” is what He requires. And after faith, there is only one way to know how to do it, and that is by study! A fact which needs much more emphasis in the Body of Messiah is that in order to be *kohanim*, Yeshua's priests, we have to be His *talmidim*, תַּלְמִידִים, His disciples. *Talmidim* is the plural word for a group of male and female disciples, but there is a different term for individual male and female disciples. Males are *talmid*, תַּלְמִיד, and females are *talmidah*, תַּלְמִידָה. But, the point is that we are all students and we never stop being students. The term *talmid* usually refers to a student of a *rabbi* or a teacher. Our *rabbi* is *Rabbi Yeshua*.

There is great danger in trying to understand what is written in the Scriptures by reading just the English translation. For the best understanding, we must consider it in the original language, but also examine it in terms of its historical use. These coming verses show us that danger when trying to understand it by just reading the English: 8 “*But you are not to be called rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And call no man on earth your father; for One is your Father, who is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Messiah*” (Matthew 23:8-10 TLV). Some take this very literally and call us out of order for using *rabbi* to refer to our leaders. But, there is an explanation. To understand Yeshua's words, we can determine for Scriptural purposes that the Greek *rhabbi* (hrab-bee') means “my teacher” and the Greek word translating “teacher” *kathégétés* (kath-ayg-ay-tace'), means teacher. The Hebrew word *p'shat*, is used to describe the literal meaning of a statement, what it meant when it was said, in this case, what Yeshua meant when He said it. We cannot understand what it means for us today without first knowing what Yeshua intended it to mean when He said it. The problem in that day was not being called *rabbi* or teacher as much as it was what the person calling someone by that name or the one being called interpreted it to mean. In the 1st century and before, there were many rabbis who gathered disciples for themselves. They ate together, slept together, travelled about together and were taught by their leader, the *rabbi*. The schools of *Hillel* and *Shammai* about a generation before Yeshua were the best known examples of this. They each had a

following who trusted them explicitly for spiritual guidance. And, there were also many others in Yeshua's day who used the title *rabbi* with the purpose of declaring that their interpretation of *Torah* was the correct one. This was also about many of the Pharisees described in the Gospels. They interpreted *Torah* for the people and declared their view correct. Many of Yeshua's condemnations throughout the Gospels were addressed to hypocritical Pharisees and He was also speaking to them in these verses.

In His statement, Yeshua wasn't reaching down through the generations to say not to call those who wear their title correctly by that title. What He meant was that the problem was with the individual's heart and their reason for wanting to be called *rabbi* or Father or Teacher. He was addressing certain Pharisees and pointing out to them their hypocrisy. His point was, that leaders are to be humble, serving in humility, something which many of the Pharisees did not do. But, Yeshua did not indict all Pharisees, as some tend to do today. There were also many good Pharisees and some were even Yeshua's disciples. One outstanding example was *Sha'ul*, who never stopped being a Pharisee. Standing before the Sanhedrin, he testified of his Messianic faith while saying to them: "I am a Pharisee." (Acts 23:6).

What these verses mean is that there is one Rabbi with a capital R, Yeshua, and we who serve under Him are *rabbis* with a small r. Human *rabbis*, Christian priests called Father and Teachers in the Church are all under-shepherds. Yeshua is the important one, we are His servants. There is one Father over all, ADONAI, but some of us are fathers, with a small f, of children. There is one Teacher, capital T, and we are teachers, a small t, under Him. We are not to make ourselves more important than we are. But, the hypocritical Pharisees were doing just that, seeking to be noticed by everything which they did, as Yeshua pointed out, by making their *tephillin* broad and their *tzitzit* long. (Matthew 23:5).

So, each of us, whether congregant or *rabbi*, are all *talmidim* under *Rabbi Yeshua* who said: 11 "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted." (Matthew 23:11-12 TLV). We are all called to be servants, both leaders and congregants. The ninth candle of the *chanukkah*, the *Chanukkah menorah*, is a visual example. It is called the *shamash*, the servant or helper candle, because of its role in lighting the other eight candles. This is also the Hebrew term for the individuals described by *Sha'ul* to Timothy: 8 Servant-leaders likewise must be dignified, not double-speaking, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. (1Timothy 3:8 TLV). Called Deacons in the Church, the Hebrew plural for servant-leaders is *Shamashim*. In reality, we are all called to be servant leaders. As Yeshua said: 12 *Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.*" In the end, all leaders, and for that matter, all followers of Yeshua, must stand before Him at His judgment seat. (2Corinthians 5:10; Romans 12:10). We are called to be servants to ADONAI and to each other. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled in the end. Being a servant is just one facet of being Yeshua's *talmidim*.

Daniel chapter 9 begins in Darius's first year as king of Media-Persia, which according to Daniel Bruce was 539 BCE. According to his timeline, Israel had now been captive for 70 years. There will be several references to his book, *Daniel Unsealed* (available on amazon.com) in the following discussion. I encourage you to read it for yourselves. Daniel wrote: 2 ... "I, Daniel, understood from the books that according to the word of Adonai to Jeremiah the prophet, the number of the years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem would be 70 years." (Daniel 9:2b TLV). Daniel knew that the time to end the captivity was

drawing near. After much confession and pleading before ADONAI, Daniel said: 19 “Lord, hear! Lord, forgive! Lord, listen and act! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay! For Your city and Your people are called by Your name.” (Daniel 9:19 TLV). In response to Daniel’s prayers, ADONAI sent the *Malakh Gavri’el*, the Angel Gabriel, to give him a message. It is very interesting that it was also Gabriel whom ADONAI sent to Joseph in prophecy about Yeshua (Matthew 1:20-21) and Zechariah in prophecy about his son John (Luke 1:11-20) who was to be the Elijah messenger for that generation. There is a very real connection between these three events.

Let’s consider Gabriel’s prophecy given in Daniel 9:24-27. The added bold comments in these verses are from *Daniel Unsealed*. Gabriel said: <19> 24 “Seventy weeks (**According to Dan Bruce, 70 weeks refers to seventy Shavuots, that is, Feasts of Weeks, Pentecosts, representing about 70 years and not 490 years.**) are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to put an end to transgression to bring sin to an end, to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of Holies (**The Hebrew: *kodesh kodashim*, “most holy,” is not referring to the Holy of Holies of the Temple, but to the anointing of Yeshua by ADONAI at His immersion in the Jordan River.**). <20> 25 So know and understand: From the issuing of the decree to restore and to build Jerusalem (**It was issued by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.**) until the time Mashiach (**Hebrew: anointed one**), the Prince (**Not Yeshua, but the High Priest Hyrcanus II.**), there shall be seven weeks (**There were seven Shavuots from 42-36 BCE.**) and 62 weeks (**62 following Shavuots, approximately 62 years.**). It (“It” refers to **Jerusalem’s fortifications BCE during the time of Pompey.**) will be rebuilt, with plaza and moat, but it will be in times of distress. <20> 26 Then after the 62 weeks (**62 Shavuots, from 35BCE and ending in 27CE.**) Mashiach (**Hebrew: “anointed one,” referring to Yeshua.**) will be cut off (**Not Yeshua’s death. He was יָקָרַת *yikaret*, that is, anointed by ADONAI to begin mediating a new covenant at His immersion by John in 27 CE.**) and have nothing (**This means He shall choose to be nothing; referring to selflessness, ie., the servant prophesied in Isaiah.**). Then the people of a prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary (**Done by Titus and the Roman Army during the years 66-73 CE.**). But his end (“his” refers to the Temple which was destroyed in 70 CE.) will come like a flood. Until the end of the war that is decreed there will be destruction. <21> 27 Then he (**Yeshua**) will make a firm covenant with many (**the people of Israel**) for one week (**7 days, His last week on earth.**), but in the middle of the week (**I believe it was Wednesday. Dan Bruce says Thursday.**) he (**Yeshua**) will put an end to sacrifice and offering (**by dying on the cross in 30 CE and becoming the only effective sacrifice**). And on a wing of abominations will come one who destroys (**Hadrian completely destroyed Jerusalem following the 2nd Jewish Revolt against Rome, 132-135 CE**), until the decreed annihilation is poured out on the one who destroys.” (Daniel 9:24-27 TLV).

As was shown, Yeshua fulfilled Daniel’s prophecy of the 70th week by dying in the middle of the last week of His life, a week begun with the crowds proclaiming Him King, and ending with Him rising from the dead. Yeshua died in the middle of the week on *Nisan* 14, the day that lambs were to be slaughtered for Passover. In His death, He cut the New Covenant promised through Jeremiah with the nation of Israel: 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—.” (Jeremiah 31:30 TLV). Three days later, Yeshua fulfilled His own prophecy by rising from the dead. He said: 40 “For just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.” (Matthew 12:40 TLV). All those who trusted in Yeshua, His

disciples and many others, entered into ADONAI's New Covenant and received the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit, into their lives. Written on their hearts (and ours) at the time that Yeshua was trusted was ADONAI's *Torah*: 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 number 40 is frequently seen throughout the Scriptures and it is said to be a time of testing, trial, purification and renewal. Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. Yeshua was tried by *HaSatan* in the wilderness for 40 days. (Matthew 3:17). Yeshua died in 30 CE and the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, another period of 40 years. This time after Yeshua's death was a time of testing and trial for His disciples, men and women who faced the scorn and persecution of those who crucified Yeshua and others of similar persuasion. But, Yeshua's followers were victorious in their walk and the number of His followers greatly multiplied.

During this 40 year period, Yeshua's followers continued "to follow *Torah*." This was shown by *Ya'acov*, Yeshua's brother, the *Nasi* of the Jerusalem congregation and the Elders who said to *Sha'ul*: 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). We see two things in this verse. First, Yeshua's followers had grown to number in the tens of thousands in Judea. Second, they were not making the same mistake which Daniel had pointed out because they were all zealously following the *Torah*. *Sha'ul* wrote: 12 So then, the *Torah* is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. (Romans 7:12 TLV). (also Psalm 119:160). It is definitely not a bad thing and we are expected to follow ADONAI's *Torah*.

ADONAI has told us that we can be His *kohanim*: "if you listen closely to My voice, and keep My covenant." (Exodus 19:5-6). As members of His New Covenant, it is important that we follow His *mitzvot* which remain active and by doing so, we are keeping His Covenant. With the destruction of the Temple, about 2/3 of the *mitzvot* were rendered inactive. Those that remain are our covenant responsibility. As Yeshua's *talmidim*, it is our responsibility to find out what they are so that we can follow them. For us, the Scriptures are clear. They are pro-*Torah* and it is our duty to follow them. May we all be zealous for the *Torah*! If you need my help in doing this, please ask. *Shabbat shalom!*