



*Parasha Vayishlach*

December 2, 2023

*Torah:* Genesis 32:3-36:43

*Haftarah:* Obadiah 1:1-21

*Ketuvim Shlichim:* Ephesians 1:3-14

*Talmidim Shel Yeshua, Session 17*

*Shabbat shalom Mishpacha!* Our *parasha* this week, *Vayishlach*, continues with the interaction of the twins Jacob and Esau. Their encounters after becoming adults included both conflict and stress. At one point, Esau even planned to kill Jacob. Now back in Canaan from Haran, Jacob is preparing to meet his brother Esau and is very afraid. They met and nothing happened, but they lived their lives apart with no relationship except to come together to bury their father Isaac. This relationship developed into hatred through Esau's descendant Amalek (Exodus 17:8-16) and ADONAI commanded Israel to blot out the memory of Amalek under heaven when they entered the Land of Promise. (Deuteronomy 25:17-19). The hatred exhibited by Amalek is now found spread throughout the mixture of Arab peoples in modern society, especially in the terror groups of *Hamas*, *Fatah*, *Hezbollah* and the Iranian leaders. Our *Haftarah* reading from Obadiah speaks to the destruction of Edom, the country founded by Esau and it is no more. But, the only final and permanent solution to this hatred and continuing conflict is by either the circumcision of their hearts or their defeat by King Messiah, the Son of David, *Yeshua HaMashiach*. There is a choice for them. May He come soon!

We continue today with *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*, Session 17. As most of our past sessions have been detail-oriented, it may seem to some that our theology is based upon works, but nothing could be further from the truth. Our relationship with Yeshua and ADONAI is completely spiritual, beginning with an encounter through the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit. It was for me. Just as John Wesley had an encounter at which he said "his heart was strangely warmed," that is what I also experienced when the *Ruach* touched my heart and I received the promise of salvation. I say promise, because my belief is that I must complete the service of Yeshua all my life before receiving it. My experience was at a small Methodist Church just two days before my thirteenth birthday, seventy-three years ago. It is still real to me today. I was introduced to Jesus by my Sunday school teacher during a week of teaching our special class. Others may respond to altar calls in churches, while some have independent visions of Yeshua. There are multiple ways that Yeshua has revealed Himself to people through the years, but in each case His *Ruach* has indwelt the believer's heart when they trusted in Him.

After my salvation experience, I would have to say that I was milk-fed for the next number of years. Possibly, I was too worldly, just like the Corinthian congregation which *Sha'ul* fed milk for a time. Twenty-three years after my encounter with Yeshua, I was baptized in the Holy Spirit and my search for solid food began. It doesn't necessarily happen that way for everyone, but it is the premise of our teaching in this series that committed followers of Yeshua can and should grow spiritually. We are no longer infants living on spiritual milk

and must now not only desire solid food, spiritual food requiring spiritual teeth to chew, but actually be eating it. The writer of Hebrews said: *13 For anyone living on milk is inexperienced with the teaching about righteousness—he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who through practice have their senses trained to discern both good and evil.* (Hebrews 5:13-14 TLV). *Sha'ul* has been our major teacher about righteousness. As *Shimon Kefa* said: *15 Bear in mind that the patience of our Lord means salvation—just as our dearly loved brother Paul also wrote to you with the wisdom given to him. 16 He speaks about these matters in all of his letters. Some things in them are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist (as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures)—to their own destruction.* (2Peter 3:15-16 TLV). We want to understand *Sha'ul* in the untwisted, real meaning, of his teachings regarding righteousness.

Regarding righteousness and speaking to Jews, *Sha'ul* wrote: *25 Circumcision is indeed worthwhile if you keep the Torah; but if you break the Torah, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.* (Romans 2:25 TLV). He points out that Jews (males) have circumcision of the flesh, but if they keep the *Torah*, they also have circumcision of the heart. *Sha'ul* continued: *26 Therefore, if the uncircumcised (Gentiles) keeps the righteous decrees of the Torah, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?* (Romans 2:26 TLV). Righteousness is about the righteous decrees of the *Torah* and they are for both Jew and Gentile. To refresh your memory about this, review *Lekh Lekha*, Session 12, October 28, 2023.

After we trust in *Yeshua*, what theologians call justification, we enter into covenant fellowship with *Yeshua* and the Father. As covenant members of the New Covenant, there are covenant rules to be followed, just as there were for the members of the Covenant made at Sinai. Covenant members of that covenant received group justification, but it is not so under the New Covenant. Each of us must have a personal relationship with our G-d through the Holy Spirit who lives in our spirits, our *mikdash*, the Holy of Holies of our *mishkan*, the Temple of our bodies. (See *Vayera*, Session 13, November 4, 2023). The rules of the New Covenant, the righteous decrees of the *Torah*, are written on our hearts by ADONAI as He states in Jeremiah 31:32. Included in these righteous decrees are Laws which relate vertically, that is from us to *Yeshua* and ADONAI, but also horizontally between us and, not only, our fellow covenant members, but also, our neighbor who is not a covenant member.

As we begin to eat solid spiritual food and to grow spiritually, we begin to undergo what theologians call sanctification. The word sanctified means that our bodies and lives are only to be for holy use. Usually, our increase in holiness is gradual. Being human, complete sanctification is an impossibility, but we should all leave milk behind and be growing in righteousness toward that goal. As we grow spiritually, we become more and more like our Messiah. *Sha'ul* again is our guide: *14 I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua. 15 Therefore let all who are mature have this attitude;..* (Philippians 3:14-15a TLV). Each of us is pressing upward and our major goal is to be able to walk in the deeper things of ADONAI's Word.

There is much more that we need to learn from *Sha'ul*, the Messianic Jew, to continue trying to understand what he, as a *Shaliach*, an Apostle, has taught us. What is a Messianic Jew? In *Sha'ul's* case, it was a Jew who had trusted in *Yeshua* and was faithful to *Torah* observance. We showed that in Session 12 (*Lekh Lekha*, October 28, 2023) with Romans chapters 2 and 3 and also *Sha'ul's* own confession. But, as a Jew called to minister to the Gentiles, he also identified with them. In 1Corinthians 9:19-23, he described how he had

made himself a slave to all in order to win more of them. To the Jew, he identified as a Jew, to those under *Torah*, he became like one under *Torah*, even though he said that he, himself, was not under *Torah*. Being under *Torah* meant that some Jews of that day believed that along with being a part of the Jewish people, keeping *Torah* was their means of salvation. As a follower of Yeshua, *Sha'ul* recognized the importance of following *Torah*, but not that it could save you. He identified with those outside *Torah*, the Gentiles, and also with the weak, those *Torah* observing followers of Yeshua who could not bring themselves to eat kosher meat which had been offered to idols. *Sha'ul* had taught that there was nothing wrong with eating it except when it makes your brother stumble. He concluded by saying: 22 ... “*I have become all things to all men, so that by all means possible I might save some.*” (1Corinthians 9:22b TLV). This does not mean that he did the things that these others did, far from it. He identified with them where they were in order to bring them to salvation through Yeshua. And then, after their salvation was when the teaching began. In Athens, he identified with the pagan Greeks by saying: 22 ..... “*Men of Athens, I see that in all ways you are very religious. 23 For while I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an Unknown God.’ Therefore what you worship without knowing, this I proclaim to you.*” (Acts 17:22b-23 TLV). Then, he proclaimed the Gospel to them. Some scoffed, but a few met with him later for further instruction.

Romans chapter 7 is another difficult chapter to understand. *Sha'ul* begins by saying: 1 *Or do you not know, brothers and sisters (for I speak to those who know law), that the law is master over a person as long as he lives?* (Romans 7:1 TLV). *Sha'ul* said this to those who knew the Law, the *Torah*. Of Yeshua's followers of today, we here at *Beit Shalom* certainly should know the Law. To demonstrate the mastery of Law over a person, He gives an example of a married woman. If she has relations with another man, the *Torah* condemns her as an adulteress. But, if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning him and is free to marry again: 3 .... *But if her husband dies, she is free from the law—so she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man.* (Romans 7:3b TLV). She is not an adulteress because, with ADONAI's permission, she is married to another man. Some make the mistake of emphasizing “the law” in this verse, believing that it means “free from all of the law.” But, in *Sha'ul's* example, the woman is only free from the law which would make her an adulteress if her husband were alive. *Torah* allows her to remarry after her husband dies. She is not an adulteress within her new marriage, but she will be a violator of the law as an adulteress if she engages in sex outside of her new marriage.

What is the result? This hypothetical woman is not free from that law. The law about adultery is still master over her. What *Sha'ul* was doing here was making a *midrash*, the use of Scripture to present a related truth, a method of biblical interpretation. His point is that we are delivered from the “condemnation” of the *Torah*. *Torah* condemns us if we try to keep it for justification with ADONAI, something we are not doing. The death of the woman's husband, to which he referred, is an allusion to Yeshua's death. His death freed us from the condemnation that comes when one tries to follow the Law outside of faith. This is the important point. It's alright to try and follow the Law after you have come to faith, in fact, you should! But, if you don't know Yeshua, no matter how well you keep the Law, it will do nothing for you, in fact, it will condemn you, the “condemnation of the *Torah*.” Even after we have trusted in Yeshua, the Law still has a purpose. If we violate it, it condemns us as sinners. Yeshua's disciple, Yochanan, John, said: 4 *Everyone practicing sin also practices lawlessness—indeed, sin is lawlessness.* (1John 3:4 TLV). What is lawlessness? The Greek word used here is *anomia* (an-om-ee'-ah). “Everyone who practices *hamartia* (ham-ar-tee'-ah), sin, practices *anomia*, lawlessness.” “A” in Greek means without and “*nomos*” means

law. According to Strong's Online Concordance, this properly means "without law." The Complete Jewish Bible makes it even clearer. *4 Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah — indeed, sin is violation of Torah.* (1John 3:4 CJB). *Yochanan and Sha'ul thought alike. Sha'ul wrote: 7 What shall we say then? Is the Torah sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the Torah.* (Romans 7:7a TLV). If the *Torah* tells us what sin is, shouldn't we listen?

Some may say that this is too complicated for the average follower of Yeshua to grasp. But, the people to whom the different letters of the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the Writings of the Apostles, were written had no formal education, not even what we would consider the high school level today. Some of those that were Jewish may have had some education within the synagogue and some training in the Hebrew language. Don't forget that although these letters were written in Greek, the underlying language and thought for the Jew was Hebrew. But, what about the poor Gentile? Most of them were former idol worshippers and who knows what their educational level was. How did they grasp what *Sha'ul* and the other letter writers were writing about? They grasped it by study. They had to want to understand. They had to want the truth of the Scriptures. And, the truth which *Sha'ul* wrote was difficult to understand. We read what *Shimon Kefa* said about *Sha'ul* being difficult to understand in 2Peter 3:15-16. The most serious thing about this is found in *Kefa's* last statement, "they twist his words to their own destruction." *Sha'ul's* words are being twisted today. If his words were difficult to understand for those who were right there in the culture in that day, how much more difficult is it for the follower of Yeshua today? It's very difficult to understand *Sha'ul*. He trained at the feet of the Pharisee, *Gamli'el*, the grandson of *Hillel*, and had the equivalent of a PhD in *Torah* and his teaching was to those who comparatively, were grammar schoolers. Then, how hard is it for us who are 2000 years removed and in a completely different culture? It's very difficult and most in Yeshua's body have not understood *Sha'ul*.

Truth is what we are all seeking, or at least, we should be. A person satisfied with just what they already know about the faith they have professed, are like stagnant water. Water that can't flow eventually becomes stagnant. *Mayim chayim*, living water, the water of the Spirit given to us by Yeshua, is flowing water, water which is alive, life giving. And, while we may think we already have all truth and don't need more, that is a complete falsehood. Several years ago, I heard a man make a series of statements which I believe to be profound truth. He said that "the Holy Spirit was constantly moving him." He said: "the Spirit, doesn't change, but was constantly moving him." His meaning was that while the Spirit doesn't change, ADONAI's *Ruach* is constantly opening his eyes to more truth. There is always more truth. You have to go back to the origin of a matter if you want to get the best answers. Truth is what we're about, not just for the sake of truth, but so that our actions will be in line with ADONAI's truth.

You have all seen a cartoon of a guru sitting on a mountain top. People go up to ask him different questions, but frequently "the meaning of life." Picture this: The guru is sitting on the mountain top and a man with a backpack and climbing ropes has just reached the top and is standing before the guru. The guru says: "You better have a seat. People tend to fall down the mountain when I tell them the meaning of life!" We ask the question, "What is the meaning of life?" How many will "fall down the mountain," fall down before the feet of Yeshua, when they learn the real truth of what *Sha'ul* was teaching? How many of us today don't understand what Yeshua is saying to us and what His disciples are trying to teach us through their written words? Today, there are many within the body who don't understand and many others who are satisfied with what they know. We cannot be satisfied with where

we are. We have learned “more” of ADONAI’s truth and we can’t go back to where we were. You have to want truth! But to find it, you have to continually be a student.

*Sha’ul* wrote: *1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and death.* (Romans 8:1-2 TLV). The law of sin and death is the complete opposite of the Law, *Torah*, in the faith of Yeshua. Some of the difficulty in understanding *Sha’ul* is that there was only one Greek word, *nomos*, which he could use to communicate the different Hebrew meanings of *Torah*, *choq*, *mishpat*, *edah*, *mitzvah* and others. According to Strong’s Concordance, *nomos* means “that which is assigned, hence usage, law.” In *Sha’ul*’s writings, he sometimes meant “*Torah*,” teaching and instruction, but the only way he had to say it was “Law,” *nomos*. The Greek language doesn’t have a word that conveys the meaning of *Torah* as meaning “teaching and instruction” and that is the situation in these verses. We could better understand this statement as: “For the *Torah* of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the *torah* of sin and death.” They are two completely opposite things. Ezekiel prophesied about the first *Torah*, the *Torah* of the *Ruach*, the Spirit: *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 36:27 TLV). Both *Sha’ul* and *Yehez’kel*, Ezekiel, were prophesying about the *Torah* of the *Ruach*, the “Spirit of Life in Messiah Yeshua.” ADONAI said that He would place His Spirit within us and cause us to follow His *Torah*. In this verse, the word translated “My laws,” *בְּחֻקַי*, *bechuqei*, means ADONAI’s statutes. The word translated “My rulings” *וּמִשְׁפָּטַי*, *umishpatei*, means ADONAI’s judgments. These are two of the different types of ADONAI’s laws along with a third type, witnesses. Because ADONAI has placed His Spirit in us, we are to walk in obedience to His statutes, His judgments and His witnesses. For those of us who have trusted in Yeshua and become covenant members of the New Covenant, these laws are written on our hearts as it says in Jeremiah: *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). It is a desire in our hearts to know and to understand what ADONAI requires of us, but we still must study to learn and understand.

ADONAI has given us *mitzvot*, commandments to follow, and we find them described by one of three terms. We continue to study *Torah* as an essential part of the way that ADONAI instructs His people. We know about Yeshua’s sacrifice and the eternal life that comes with it. We know that if a person accepts Yeshua’s sacrifice by faith coupled with ADONAI’s grace, he has the promise of salvation. We know how to be saved and we have trusted in Yeshua. What we know less about, is how to live after we have trusted in Yeshua. That is the process involved in being a *talmid*, a disciple of Yeshua. Through his letter to the Roman congregation, *Sha’ul* is the pre-eminent *Torah* teacher and that is just about all that he writes about in it. It is especially important that we as Messianic Gentiles grasp this. Yes, Messianic Jews also. But, as we discussed last *Shabbat* (Session 16), in concluding the Book of Romans in 16:26, we read that *Sha’ul* prayed to ADONAI regarding the Gentiles. In essence, his prayer was that the mystery of the Gospel as revealed by the prophets had been communicated to the Gentiles according to ADONAI’s command to bring about in them trust-grounded obedience (Complete Jewish Bible). He was the Apostle to the Gentiles and was talking about bringing about obedience to the commandments by the Gentiles who have trusted in Yeshua by faith, that is, we add, those commandments which are active for us today. *Sha’ul* taught that those who are saved should follow *Torah*, but today most of His Gentile followers believe the exact opposite, that the Law has been done away with.

Here is a brief look at the different types of commands which ADONAI has given us. *Mishpat*, מִשְׁפָּט, plural *mishpatim*, meaning judgments, is the Hebrew term which includes ADONAI's moral and ethical laws. They fundamentally deal with what is right or wrong such as prohibitions against murder, robbery, covetousness, adultery, etc. Some of these are in the Ten Commandments, but there are also others throughout the *Torah*. Micah spoke about *mishpatim*: *8 He has told you, humanity, what is good, and what Adonai is seeking from you: Only to practice justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.* (Micah 6:8 TLV). The word underlying justice is *mishpat*. When we don't lie, steal, murder, bear false witness, etc., we are keeping ADONAI's *mishpatim*.

*Edah*, plural, עֵדוּת, *edot*, is Hebrew for "witnesses." These commands refer to ADONAI's festivals such as *Shabbat*, *Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and the others. One of these, *Shabbat*, is found in the Ten Commandments. The *edot*, or "testimonies" can also be referred to as "instructions." These commandments involve us directly in our relationship with ADONAI. The *Shabbat* is an example. We would not have kept *Shabbat* had not ADONAI commanded it. Those who keep *edot* mark their identity as "covenant keepers." These regulations, the *edot*, made by ADONAI, are to be obeyed and are eternally binding laws. They are fixed and unchangeable. In order to serve Him we must pursue and observe exactly what He has commanded. Also found in this group of commands are the festivals which He has commanded to be observed. Leviticus 23 is a complete list of them. They are called *moadim*, appointed times, times in which ADONAI has commanded His covenant members to appear before Him.

*Choq*, plural, חֻקִּים, *chukkim*, meaning statutes, is Hebrew for all of ADONAI's commands which have no apparent explanation because ADONAI has not given one. The dietary laws are among these. Israel is commanded to eat or not eat certain things even though ADONAI doesn't explain why. We obey because our Father has commanded it. Why is this important? It is important because *Sha'ul* has taught us that we are to have trust-grounded obedience to ADONAI's *mitzvot*, that is, believing in faith that we are to keep His commands. And, that also implies that we also must know what they are. Other examples of the *chukkim* include the commands about the Red Heifer, not sowing two kinds of seeds together, the purity laws, not mixing wool and linen, not to crossbreed animals and not to plow an ox and donkey together. These commands are not logical and ADONAI doesn't explain them. We don't understand why He gave them, but we remember what *Sha'ul* said about the *Torah*: *12 So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.* (Romans 7:12 TLV).

We read this a moment ago: *2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and death.* (Romans 8:1-2 TLV). We saw that ADONAI proclaimed the law of the Spirit through Ezekiel (36:27) and also through Jeremiah (31:32). It is that ADONAI's *Torah*, the *Torah* of Moses, and the additional *Torah* which Yeshua proclaimed during His life on earth has been written on our hearts. *Sha'ul* said that this was done: *4 so that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Ruach.* (Romans 8:4 TLV). If we have the Holy Spirit, ADONAI's commandments have been written on our hearts. The requirement of the *Torah* is that those in Messiah must be obedient, that is, have trust (faith) grounded obedience. This means that after we trust in Yeshua, there are things required of us. And, we are in no way putting ourselves under the curse of the law by keeping commandments.

The opposite of “the *Torah* of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua,” “the *torah* of sin and death,” is easier to explain. Understanding that *torah* means teaching and instruction, the *torah* of sin and death is the desires of our old nature. Without Yeshua, we follow a *torah* of sin and death provided by our old nature. There is no redemption in it. We sin and when we die, that’s it. The sin nature is our inheritance from our father Adam. ADONAI created Adam sinless and good, but because of our ancestor’s sin, sin entered the life of every human being and every person today has a natural inclination to sin. Keeping *Torah*, obeying laws, without Yeshua in our lives, cannot save us. *Sha’ul* said: *3 For what was impossible for the Torah—since it was weakened on account of the flesh—God has done. Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering, He condemned sin in the flesh—* (Romans 8:3 TLV). It is impossible to keep *Torah* for salvation. When we accept Yeshua, we get a new nature, but we don’t completely lose our old nature, our sin nature. We still occasionally have a desire to sin and sometimes we do. That old nature is still in there somewhere. But, most of the time, for followers of Yeshua, our new nature, strengthened by the *Ruach*, the Holy Spirit living in us, suppresses it. But sometimes, it manages to cause us to sin. In Romans 7:15-25, *Sha’ul* describes his struggle with his sin nature. He was a man who had had a direct communication with Yeshua, but he still struggled with his old nature. He wrote: *24 Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25 Thanks be to God—it is through Messiah Yeshua our Lord! So then, with my mind I myself serve the Torah of God; but with my flesh, I serve the law of sin.* (Romans 7:24-25 TLV). Scripture teaches us that the ability to sin remains in us. We will struggle with our old nature as long as we live. The *torah* of sin and death remains a part of our lives, but, praise ADONAI, we have the Comforter, the *Ruach Kodesh*, the Holy Spirit of G-d, living in us and He supplies the strength we need to overcome the pull of the sin nature in us.

It’s not easy to be a committed follower of Yeshua. As the greatest commandment implies, loving ADONAI with all our heart, mind and strength means that we are to obey His commands. The second greatest commandment commands us to love our neighbor as our self. This includes our loving actions of help, giving and moral support. When we are offended, He commands us to forgive and then to forget the offense, putting it as far as is the symbolic distance between the east and west. The symbolism of *Torah*, the teaching and instruction of ADONAI, includes all this and more. Today, we live in an imperfect world, but the coming world is the perfect world of our King, *Yeshua HaMashiach*. Until that day comes, we have been given our marching orders. We are to be *Talmidim Shel Yeshua*, His disciples who are walking in the life of the New Covenant, following His commandments to the best of our ability, commandments based upon G-d’s love. Seeking to be continually filled with ADONAI’s *Ruach* is our key to spiritual success. Call upon Yeshua. He said: *7 “Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it shall be opened.”* (Matthew 7:7-8 TLV). May Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven! *Shabbat shalom!*