

The Book of Galatians: From The Complete Jewish Bible

From: Sha'ul, an emissary—I received my commission not from human beings or through human mediation but through Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—also from all the brothers with me

To: The Messianic communities in Galatia: Grace and shalom to you from God our Father and from the Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who gave himself for our sins, so that he might deliver us from the present evil world-system, in obedience to the will of God, our Father. To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

I am astounded that you are so quick to remove yourselves from me, the one who called you by the Messiah's grace, and turn to some other supposedly "Good News," which is not good news at all! What is really happening is that certain people are pestering you and trying to pervert the genuine Good News of the Messiah. But even if we—or, for that matter, an angel from heaven!—were to announce to you some so-called "Good News" contrary to the Good News we did announce to you, let him be under a curse forever! We said it before, and I say it again: if anyone announces "Good News" contrary to what you received, let him be under a curse forever!

Now does that sound as if I were trying to win human approval? No! I want God's approval! Or that I'm trying to cater to people? If I were still doing that, I would not be a servant of the Messiah.

Furthermore, let me make clear to you, brothers, that the Good News as I proclaim it is not a human product; because neither did I receive it from someone else nor was I taught it—it came through a direct revelation from Yeshua the Messiah. For you have heard about my former way of life in [traditional] Judaism—how I did my best to persecute God's Messianic Community and destroy it; and how, since I was more of a zealot for the traditions handed down by my forefathers than most Jews my age, I advanced in [traditional] Judaism more rapidly than they did.

But when God, who picked me out before I was born and called me by his grace, chose to reveal his Son to me, so that I might announce him to the Gentiles, I did not consult anyone; and I did not go up to Yerushalayim to see those who were emissaries before me. Instead, I immediately went off to Arabia and afterwards returned to Dammesek. Not until three years later did I go up to Yerushalayim to make Kefa's acquaintance, and I stayed with him for two weeks, but I did not see any of the other emissaries except Ya'akov the Lord's brother. (Concerning these matters I am writing you about, I declare before God that I am not lying!) Next I went to Syria and Cilicia; but in Y'hudah, the Messianic congregations didn't even know what I looked like—they were only hearing the report, "The one who used to persecute us now preaches the Good News of the faith he was formerly out to destroy"; and they praised God for me.

Then after fourteen years I again went up to Yerushalayim, this time with Bar-Nabba; and I took with me Titus. I went up in obedience to a revelation, and I explained to them the Good News as I proclaim it among the Gentiles—but privately, to the acknowledged leaders. I did this out of concern that my current or previous work might have been in vain.

But they didn't force my Gentile companion Titus to undergo b'rit-milah. Indeed, the question came up only because some men who pretended to be brothers had been sneaked in—they came in surreptitiously to spy out the freedom we have in the Messiah Yeshua, so that they might enslave us. Not even for a minute did we give in to them, so that the truth of the Good News might be preserved for you.

Moreover, those who were the acknowledged leaders—what they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by outward appearances—these leaders added nothing to me. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the Good News for the Uncircumcised, just as Kefa had been for the Circumcised; since the One working in Kefa to make him an emissary to the Circumcised had worked in me to make me an emissary to the Gentiles. So, having perceived what grace had been given to me, Ya'akov, Kefa and Yochanan, the acknowledged pillars of the community, extended to me and Bar-

Nabba the right hand of fellowship; so that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the Circumcised. Their only request was that we should remember the poor—which very thing I have spared no pains to do.

Furthermore, when Kefa came to Antioch, I opposed him publicly, because he was clearly in the wrong. For prior to the arrival of certain people from [the community headed by] Ya'akov, he had been eating with the Gentile believers; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he was afraid of the faction who favored circumcising Gentile believers. And the other Jewish believers became hypocrites along with him, so that even Bar-Nabba was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not walking a straight path, keeping in line with the truth of the Good News, I said to Kefa, right in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Goy and not like a Jew, why are you forcing the Goyim to live like Jews? We are Jews by birth, not so-called 'Goyishe sinners'; even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of Torah commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous.

But if, in seeking to be declared righteous by God through our union with the Messiah, we ourselves are indeed found to be sinners, then is the Messiah an aider and abettor of sin? Heaven forbid! Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor. For it was through letting the Torah speak for itself that I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation, so that I might live in direct relationship with God. When the Messiah was executed on the stake as a criminal, I was too; so that my proud ego no longer lives. But the Messiah lives in me, and the life I now live in my body I live by the same trusting faithfulness that the Son of God had, who loved me and gave himself up for me. I do not reject God's gracious gift; for if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then the Messiah's death was pointless.

You stupid Galatians! Who has put you under a spell? Before your very eyes Yeshua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as having been put to death as a criminal! I want to know from you just this one thing: did you receive the Spirit by legalistic observance of Torah commands or by trusting in what you heard and being faithful to it? Are you that stupid? Having begun with the Spirit's power, do you think you can reach the goal under your own power? Have you suffered so much for nothing? If that's the way you think, your suffering certainly will have been for nothing! What about God, who supplies you with the Spirit and works miracles among you—does he do it because of your legalistic observance of Torah commands or because you trust in what you heard and are faithful to it?

It was the same with Avraham: "He trusted in God and was faithful to him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness." Be assured, then, that it is those who live by trusting and being faithful who are really children of Avraham. Also the Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Avraham in advance by saying, "In connection with you, all the Goyim will be blessed." So then, those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Avraham, who trusted and was faithful.

For everyone who depends on legalistic observance of Torah commands lives under a curse, since it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the Scroll of the Torah." Now it is evident that no one comes to be declared righteous by God through legalism, since "The person who is righteous will attain life by trusting and being faithful." Furthermore, legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, but on [a misuse of] the text that says, "Anyone who does these things will attain life through them." The Messiah redeemed us from the curse pronounced in the Torah by becoming cursed on our behalf; for the Tanakh says, "Everyone who hangs from a stake comes under a curse." Yeshua the Messiah did this so that in union with him the Gentiles might receive the blessing announced to Avraham, so that through trusting and being faithful, we might receive what was promised, namely, the Spirit.

Brothers, let me make an analogy from everyday life: when someone swears an oath, no one else can set it aside or add to it. Now the promises were made to Avraham and to his seed. It doesn't say, "and to seeds," as if to many; on the contrary, it speaks of one—"and to your seed"—and this "one" is the Messiah. Here is what I am saying: the legal part of the Torah, which came into being 430 years later, does not nullify an oath sworn by God, so as to abolish the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the legal part of the Torah, it no longer comes from a promise. But God gave it to Avraham through a promise.

So then, why the legal part of the Torah? It was added in order to create transgressions, until the coming of the seed about whom the promise had been made. Moreover, it was handed down through angels and a mediator. Now a mediator implies more than one, but God is one.

Does this mean that the legal part of the Torah stands in opposition to God's promises? Heaven forbid! For if the legal part of the Torah which God gave had had in itself the power to give life, then righteousness really would have come by legalistically following such a Torah. But instead, the Tanakh shuts up everything under sin; so that what had been promised might be given, on the basis of Yeshua the Messiah's trusting faithfulness, to those who continue to be trustingly faithful.

Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the Torah into legalism, kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed. Accordingly, the Torah functioned as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on the ground of trusting and being faithful. But now that the time for this trusting faithfulness has come, we are no longer under a custodian.

For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness; because as many of you as were immersed into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one.

Also, if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise.

What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a minor he is no different from a slave, even though he is the legal owner of the estate; rather, he is subject to guardians and caretakers until the time previously set by his father. So it is with us—when we were “children” we were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe; but when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the Torah was the norm, so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God’s sons. Now because you are sons, God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, the Spirit who cries out, “Abba!” (that is, “Dear Father!”). So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son you are also an heir.

In the past, when you did not know God, you served as slaves beings which in reality are non-gods. But now you do know God, and, more than that, you are known by God. So how is it that you turn back again to those weak and miserable elemental spirits? Do you want to enslave yourselves to them once more? You observe special days, months, seasons and years! I fear for you that my work among you has been wasted!

Brothers, I beg of you: put yourselves in my place—after all, I put myself in your place. It isn’t that you have done me any wrong—you know that it was because I was ill that I proclaimed the Good News to you at first; and even though my physical condition must have tempted you to treat me with scorn, you did not display any sign of disdain or disgust. No, you welcomed me as if I had been an angel of God, as if I had been the Messiah Yeshua himself! So what has become of the joy you felt? For I bear you witness that had it been possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me. Have I now become your enemy because I tell you the truth? True, these teachers are zealous for you, but their motives are not good. They want to separate you from us so that you will become zealous for them. To be zealous is good, provided always that the cause is good. Indeed, whether I am present with you or not, my dear children, I am suffering the

pains of giving birth to you all over again—and this will go on until the Messiah takes shape in you. I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone of voice. I don't know what to do with you.

Tell me, you who want to be in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism, don't you hear what the Torah itself says? It says that Avraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. The one by the slave woman was born according to the limited capabilities of human beings, but the one by the free woman was born through the miracle-working power of God fulfilling his promise. Now, to make a midrash on these things: the two women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai and bears children for slavery—this is Hagar. Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Yerushalayim, for she serves as a slave along with her children. But the Yerushalayim above is free, and she is our mother; for the Tanakh says, "Rejoice, you barren woman who does not bear children! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the deserted wife will have more children than the one whose husband is with her!" You, brothers, like Yitz'chak, are children referred to in a promise of God. But just as then the one born according to limited human capability persecuted the one born through the Spirit's supernatural power, so it is now. Nevertheless, what does the Tanakh say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for by no means will the son of the slave woman inherit along with the son of the free woman!" So, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

What the Messiah has freed us for is freedom! Therefore, stand firm, and don't let yourselves be tied up again to a yoke of slavery. Mark my words—I, Sha'ul, tell you that if you undergo b'rit-milah the Messiah will be of no advantage to you at all! Again, I warn you: any man who undergoes b'rit-milah is obligated to observe the entire Torah! You who are trying to be declared righteous by God through legalism have severed yourselves from the Messiah! You have fallen away from God's grace! For it is by the power of the Spirit, who works in us because we trust and are faithful, that we confidently expect our hope of attaining righteousness to be fulfilled. When we are united with the Messiah Yeshua,

neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is trusting faithfulness expressing itself through love.

You were running the race well; who has stopped you from following the truth? Whatever means of persuasion he used was not from the One who calls you. "It takes only a little hametz to leaven the whole batch of dough." I am confident that since you are united with the Lord, you will take no other view; and I am confident that the one who has been disturbing you, whoever he may be, will have to bear his punishment.

And as for me, brothers, if I am still preaching that circumcision is necessary, why am I still being persecuted? If that were the case, my preaching about the execution-stake would cause no offense whatever. I wish the people who are bothering you would go the whole way and castrate themselves!

For, brothers, you were called to be free. Only do not let that freedom become an excuse for allowing your old nature to have its way. Instead, serve one another in love. For the whole of the Torah is summed up in this one sentence: "Love your neighbor as yourself";but if you go on snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other!

What I am saying is this: run your lives by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your old nature wants. For the old nature wants what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is contrary to the old nature. These oppose each other, so that you find yourselves unable to carry out your good intentions. But if you are led by the Spirit, then you are not in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism.

And it is perfectly evident what the old nature does. It expresses itself in sexual immorality, impurity and indecency; involvement with the occult and with drugs; in feuding, fighting, becoming jealous and getting angry; in selfish ambition, factionalism, intrigue and envy; in drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you now as I have warned you before: those who do such things will have no share in the Kingdom of God!

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, self control. Nothing in the Torah stands against such things. Moreover, those who belong to the Messiah Yeshua have put their old nature to death on the stake, along with its passions and desires. Since it is through the Spirit that we have Life, let it also be through the Spirit that we order our lives day by day. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Brothers, suppose someone is caught doing something wrong. You who have the Spirit should set him right, but in a spirit of humility, keeping an eye on yourselves so that you won't be tempted too. Bear one another's burdens—in this way you will be fulfilling the Torah's true meaning, which the Messiah upholds. For if anyone thinks he is something when he is really nothing, he is fooling himself. So let each of you scrutinize his own actions. Then if you do find something to boast about, at least the boasting will be based on what you have actually done and not merely on a judgment that you are better than someone else; for each person will carry his own load. But whoever is being instructed in the Word should share all the good things he has with his instructor. Don't delude yourselves: no one makes a fool of God! A person reaps what he sows. Those who keep sowing in the field of their old nature, in order to meet its demands, will eventually reap ruin; but those who keep sowing in the field of the Spirit will reap from the Spirit everlasting life. So let us not grow weary of doing what is good; for if we don't give up, we will in due time reap the harvest. Therefore, as the opportunity arises, let us do what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful.

Look at the large letters I use as I close in my own handwriting. It is those who want to look good outwardly who are trying to get you to be circumcised. The only reason they are doing it is to escape persecution for preaching about the Messiah's execution-stake. For even those who are getting circumcised don't observe the Torah. On the contrary, they want you to get circumcised so that they can boast of having gained your adherence. But as for me, Heaven forbid that I should boast about anything except the execution-stake of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! Through him, as far as I am concerned, the world has been

put to death on the stake; and through him, as far as the world is concerned, I have been put to death on the stake. For neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is being a new creation. And as many as order their lives by this rule, shalom upon them and mercy, and upon the Isra'el of God! From now on, I don't want anyone to give me any more tsuris, because I have scars on my body to prove that I belong to Yeshua! The grace of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.