

ROMANS

A Hebraic Covenant Commentary

Introduction: Before We Read Romans

"For whatever was written before was written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and encouragement of the Scriptures we might possess the expectation." - **Romiyim (Romans) 15:4**

Notice something remarkable. When Sha'ul wrote those words, there was **no "New Testament."**

The "Scriptures" he referred to were: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. Everything he taught came from them. This single observation changes how we must approach Romans. Sha'ul does not write to replace the Hebrew Scriptures. He writes because of them. He assumes his readers either know them or will learn them. Every major argument in Romans reaches back into the Tanakh. Sometimes he quotes directly. Sometimes he echoes a passage without naming it. Sometimes he expects his audience to recognize a covenant pattern from only a few words. If we ignore those foundations, we risk hearing Sha'ul answer questions he was never addressing.

The World Before Romans

Romans did not begin with Sha'ul. Nor did it begin with Yahusha. Nor even at Sinai. The story begins in Genesis. The Bible is one continuous covenant narrative. It is not a collection of disconnected books. The thread begins with creation. Creation leads to rebellion. Rebellion leads to exile. Exile leads to promise. Promise leads to covenant. Covenant leads to kingdom. Kingdom leads to scattering. Scattering leads to restoration. Romans is written within that story. It is not introducing another one.

The Story Sha'ul Assumes You Already Know

Most Western readers begin Romans asking: "How can an individual be saved?" That is an important question, but it is not the only question, and often not the first question, driving Sha'ul's argument. The story of Scripture begins with a different reality. YaHuWaH created mankind to image His rule over creation. Mankind rebelled. The consequence was not merely guilt. It was exile. Adam and Hawwāh were driven eastward from Gan Eden. From that point onward, exile becomes one of the great themes of Scripture. Qayin goes farther east. Mankind scatters after Bābel. Yisra'El goes into exile. Yahudah goes into exile. The prophets promise restoration. Romans belongs to that movement from exile toward restoration.

The Covenant Is the Framework

One of the greatest interpretive mistakes is reading Romans primarily through the lens of systematic theology rather than covenant. The Hebrew Scriptures are structured around YaHuWaH's covenants. These include His covenants with: Noach, Abraham, Yitshaq, Ya'aqob, Yisra'El at Sinai, Pinchas, and Dawid. The prophets then speak of the renewed covenant in Jeremiah 31 and the promise of a transformed heart in Ezekiel 36. Sha'ul assumes this covenant history. He does not redefine it. Rather, he explains how YaHuWaH remains faithful to His covenant promises while dealing justly with human sin. That tension, between divine faithfulness and human unfaithfulness, is one of the driving forces of Romans.

Romans Is a Hebrew Letter Written in Greek

This cannot be overstated. Sha'ul is a Hebrew. Of the tribe of Benjamin. Trained under Gamli'el. Deeply immersed in the Torah and the Prophets. He writes in Greek because of his audience and the common language of the eastern Roman world. But his thinking remains deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. This means that Greek words often carry Hebrew ideas. One of our tasks throughout this commentary will be to ask not only, "What does this Greek word mean?" but also, "What Hebrew concept is Sha'ul expressing through this Greek vocabulary?" Sometimes the answer will be obvious. Sometimes it will require tracing the Septuagint, the Hebrew text, and Sha'ul's argument together.

Rome: The Heart of the Empire

To understand Romans, we must understand Rome. Rome was not merely another city. It was the political center of the Mediterranean world. It represented: Imperial authority. Military power. Economic influence. Legal order. Cultural prestige. Religious pluralism centered on loyalty to the empire. The emperor was increasingly honored with divine titles. Public life was saturated with displays of Roman power. Citizenship was prized. Patronage shaped social relationships. Honor and shame governed public reputation. Into that environment came assemblies confessing that ultimate allegiance belonged to YaHuWaH and that Yahusha was Master. This confession had social and political implications that modern readers can easily overlook.

The Assemblies in Rome

The Roman assemblies were likely formed before Sha'ul wrote to them. Acts 2 records that visitors from Rome were present in Yahrushalayim at Shavuot. It is possible that some returned home with the message about Yahusha, contributing to the earliest assemblies there, though Scripture does not explicitly trace their later history. By the time Sha'ul wrote Romans, the assemblies included people from different backgrounds: Yahudim. People from the nations who had turned from idols to the Elohim of Yisra'El. Possibly descendants of the dispersed tribes who had long lived among the nations, though identifying specific individuals or groups from the text requires caution. Whatever their backgrounds, they were learning to live together as one covenant community while bringing different histories, customs, and assumptions into that shared life.

The Crisis Before the Letter

A crucial historical event shaped the situation. Around A.D. 49, the emperor Claudius expelled many Yahudim from Rome. Acts 18:2 mentions this expulsion in connection with Aquila and Priscilla. When many Yahudim left, leadership patterns changed, congregational life continued, and those who remained adapted to new circumstances. After Claudius died, many returned. Now the assemblies had to navigate renewed relationships among believers with different experiences and perspectives. Questions naturally arose about Torah, identity, being in covenant, and life together. These realities form part of the background against which Romans should be read.

The Central Question of Romans

Many summaries reduce Romans to: "How can sinners be justified?" While that question is certainly present, Sha'ul's argument reaches further. One of the central concerns running through the letter is: **How does YaHuWaH remain righteous and faithful to His covenant promises while extending mercy to sinful humans?** That question touches every major section of Romans. It leads naturally to discussions of Abraham, Torah, sin, the Spirit, and Yisra'El. It also explains why chapters 9-11 are not a parenthesis but a vital part of the letter's overall argument.

The Story of Scripture Is the Story of a Kingdom

One of the greatest obstacles to understanding Romans is that many people approach it as a book about **individual deliverance**, whereas the Scriptures themselves begin with something much larger: the establishment of **the Kingdom of YaHuWaH on earth**. From the opening words of Bereshith, the Scriptures reveal that YaHuWaH is not merely creating a planet populated by individuals. He is establishing His ordered realm. Creation is presented as the work of a sovereign King bringing order out of chaos, assigning boundaries, appointing lights to govern times and seasons, filling the earth with life, and finally placing mankind within His creation as His image-bearers.

"And Elohim said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth and over all the creeping creatures that creep on the earth.'" - Bereshith (Genesis) 1:26

The Hebrew word translated as **image** is **tselem (צלם)**. In the ancient Near East, an image was not merely a likeness; it represented the authority of the one whom it depicted. Kings erected images throughout their territories to proclaim their dominion. In Genesis, mankind is appointed as the living representation of YaHuWaH's rule within His creation. This royal commission establishes the Kingdom theme that unfolds throughout the rest of Scripture.

The First Exile

The fall in Genesis 3 is often described only as "the entrance of sin into the world." While true, the narrative is also the account of mankind's first exile. Adam and Hawwāh are driven from Gan Eden, which had functioned as the place where heaven and earth met. They lose access to the Tree of Life and are removed from the immediate presence of YaHuWaH. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, exile becomes one of the defining judgments for covenant unfaithfulness. The pattern repeats: Adam is exiled from Gan Eden. Qayin is driven farther east. Mankind is scattered after Bābel. The northern kingdom is exiled by Assyria (Ashshur). Yahudah is exiled to Babylon. The prophets proclaim that YaHuWaH will one day reverse exile through restoration. This pattern provides an important backdrop for Romans. Sha'ul's language of reconciliation, adoption, new creation, and life in the Spirit echoes the broader biblical movement from exile toward restoration.

Why Abraham Matters

Many readers first encounter Abraham in Romans 4 and assume Sha'ul introduces him merely as an illustration of faith. He is doing far more. Abraham is the turning point in the covenant story.

After the rebellion at Bābel, where mankind sought to establish its own name and kingdom, YaHuWaH called one man and promised: **"And in you all the clans of the earth shall be blessed."** - *Bereshith (Genesis) 12:3*

The promise to Abraham contains several inseparable elements: a chosen family, a promised land, numerous descendants, blessing to the nations, and the establishment of an enduring covenant. Throughout Romans, Sha'ul returns repeatedly to Abraham because the questions facing the assemblies in Rome concern the fulfillment of these promises. How are the nations blessed? Who belongs to Abraham's family? What is the relationship between promise, covenant, Torah, and inheritance? These are not abstract theological questions; they arise from the narrative begun in Genesis.

The Formation of Yisra'El

The descendants of Abraham became the nation of Yisra'El through Ya'aqob, whose name was changed after wrestling with Elohim. YaHuWaH did not choose Yisra'El merely to privilege one ethnic group over others. Rather, He called them to be a kingdom of priests and a set-apart nation through whom His character would be displayed among the nations.

At Sinai, YaHuWaH declared:

"And you shall be to Me a reign of priests and a set-apart nation." - *Shemoth (Exodus) 19:6*

The covenant at Sinai gave shape to this calling. The Torah revealed what covenant faithfulness looked like for a redeemed people. It did not create the covenant with Abraham, nor did it replace it. Instead, it instructed the people how to live as those who had already been brought out of slavery by YaHuWaH's grace. This distinction will become essential throughout Romans, where Sha'ul discusses Abraham, Torah, and the promises without setting them against one another.

The Division of the Kingdom

Following the reigns of Dawid and Shelomoh, the united kingdom divided into two houses: the House of Yahudah in the south, and the House of Yisra'El (often associated with Ephrayim) in the north. This division is not a minor historical detail. It shapes the message of the prophets and provides the backdrop for many of the restoration promises later echoed in the Apostolic Writings. The northern kingdom was eventually exiled by Assyria, while Yahudah later experienced exile in Babylon. Yet the prophets consistently proclaimed that YaHuWaH's covenant purposes had not failed. He would gather His scattered people, cleanse them, give them a new heart, and reunite them under one Shepherd. When we reach Romans 9-11, these prophetic themes become especially important. At that point, we will examine in detail how Sha'ul engages with passages from Hoshea, Yeshayahu, and other prophets, carefully distinguishing what the text explicitly says from conclusions that readers have sometimes drawn beyond it.

The Kingdom Yahusha Proclaimed

When Yahusha began His public ministry, His first recorded proclamation was not, "Believe in Me so that you may go to heaven."

It was:

"Repent, for the reign of the heavens has drawn near." - *Mattithyahu (Matthew) 4:17*

This announcement stands within the expectations created by the Torah and the Prophets. The hope was that YaHuWaH would act decisively to establish His reign, gather His people, judge evil, and fulfill His covenant promises. The Kingdom message proclaimed by Yahusha forms the backdrop for Sha'ul's mission. Romans is therefore best read as part of that same Kingdom proclamation, explaining how YaHuWaH is faithfully accomplishing His purposes through the Messiah while calling people into covenant faithfulness.

Why This Matters Before Romans 1

By the time we reach the opening words of Romans, we have already traversed: Creation, the fall, exile, Abraham, the covenant, Sinai, the kingdom, division, scattering, prophetic hope, and the proclamation of the Kingdom by Yahusha. Only against that backdrop can we appreciate why Sha'ul writes as he does. His

letter is not detached theology; it is a sustained exposition of how the Elohim of Yisra'El is acting in faithfulness to His covenant promises within the unfolding story of Scripture.

Who Was Sha'ul?

One of the greatest tragedies in biblical interpretation is that many readers encounter Sha'ul as though he were the founder of a new religion. Others see him as the man who replaced Torah with "grace," abandoned Judaism, or corrected what Yahusha supposedly left unfinished. None of these portraits emerges from the text itself. If we are going to understand Romans, we must first understand the man who wrote it, not through later theological systems, but through his own testimony and the witness of Scripture.

Sha'ul Never Claimed to Leave His Faith

When Sha'ul stood before the Roman governor Felix, he made a statement that should govern how we read every one of his letters:

"But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the Elohim of my fathers, believing all that has been written in the Torah and in the Prophets." - *Ma'asei (Acts) 24:14*

Notice what he does **not** say. He does not say: "I no longer believe the Torah." "I have started a new religion." "The Law has been replaced." "The Prophets no longer apply." Instead, he declares before a Roman court that he continues to worship **the Elohim of his fathers** and believes **everything written in the Torah and the Prophets**. This is not a casual remark. It is sworn testimony given under legal examination.

A Pharisee Trained in the Scriptures

Sha'ul identifies himself as:

"...a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees..." - *Ma'asei (Acts) 23:6*

And elsewhere:

"...brought up in this city at the feet of Gamli'el, instructed according to the exactness of the Torah of our fathers..." - *Ma'asei (Acts) 22:3*

Gamli'el was one of the most respected teachers of his generation. This means Sha'ul possessed an extraordinary knowledge of: The Torah. The Prophets. The Writings. Hebrew methods of interpretation. Covenant law. The history of Yisra'El. When we read Romans, we are not reading the reflections of a novice. We are reading the work of a highly trained Torah scholar who has become convinced that Yahusha is the promised Messiah of Yisra'El.

A Hebrew Writing in Greek

This fact changes everything. Romans is written in Greek. But it is **not** fundamentally a Greek book. It is Hebrew thought expressed through the common language of the Roman world. This distinction is crucial. Languages do more than communicate words. They communicate ways of thinking. Greek often emphasizes categories, abstraction, and philosophical precision. Hebrew frequently communicates through narrative, covenant, concrete imagery, parallelism, and lived relationships. Sha'ul writes Greek sentences carrying Hebrew assumptions. Our task is not merely to translate vocabulary but to recover the conceptual world beneath the vocabulary.

The Importance of the Septuagint

Because Sha'ul writes in Greek, he often quotes the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint (LXX). This raises important interpretive questions. When his wording differs slightly from the Hebrew text, we should ask: Is he following the Septuagint? Is he paraphrasing? Is he emphasizing a particular aspect of the passage? Does the difference affect his argument? Throughout this commentary, we will compare: The Masoretic Hebrew text. The Septuagint where relevant. Sha'ul's quotation. The surrounding context of the original passage. Only then will we ask how the quotation functions in Romans.

Sha'ul's Method of Interpretation

Modern readers often expect arguments to proceed like a systematic theology textbook. Sha'ul does not write that way. His method reflects the Scriptures he knows so well. He reasons by quoting the Torah, echoing the Prophets, weaving together multiple passages, building arguments from patterns in Yisra'El's history, using rhetorical questions, anticipating objections, and returning repeatedly to key themes. For example, a single paragraph may contain echoes of Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and Psalms without explicitly naming each source. This is why cross-references are not optional in Romans; they are essential.

The Covenant Lawsuit Pattern

One feature we will pay careful attention to is the prophetic **covenant lawsuit** pattern. The prophets frequently present YaHuWaH as bringing a legal case against His covenant people. The pattern often includes: a summons, a statement of YaHuWaH's covenant faithfulness, charges against the people, evidence, a call to repentance, judgment, and hope of restoration. This pattern appears repeatedly in books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Micah, and others. Many interpreters have observed that parts of Romans, especially the opening chapters, bear similarities to this prophetic style. As we work through the text, we will examine those parallels carefully, asking where they illuminate Sha'ul's argument without assuming more than the text supports.

The Courtroom Language of Romans

Romans contains legal terminology throughout. Words translated: justify, condemn, witness, judgment, accusation, and righteousness all carry judicial overtones. However, this courtroom imagery must be understood within the covenant relationship between YaHuWaH and His people. The legal language does not stand apart from covenant; it serves covenant. YaHuWaH is both Judge and Covenant Keeper. The courtroom exists because there is a covenant. This perspective will shape our reading of key passages, especially in Romans 2-5.

The Hebrew Concept of Righteousness

One example demonstrates why Hebrew thought matters. The Hebrew word **tsedaqah** (righteousness) is rooted in the idea of what is right, just, and faithful within the covenant relationship. When applied to YaHuWaH, His righteousness is consistently displayed in His faithfulness to His promises, His justice, and His acts of deliverance. The Greek word **dikaïosynē** is used to translate this concept, but readers influenced by later Western legal categories have often heard it primarily as a declaration of legal status. Both legal and covenant dimensions appear in Romans, yet the covenant background supplied by the Tanakh helps explain why Sha'ul can speak of YaHuWaH's righteousness as something **revealed** in His saving action (Romans 1:16-17). Throughout this commentary, we'll explore how these concepts work together rather than reducing them to a single definition.

Why We Must Read Slowly

Romans has often been mined for doctrinal proof texts. That approach can obscure the way Sha'ul actually builds his case. He expects his readers to think. To remember. To connect passages. To follow his reasoning from one paragraph to the next. For that reason, we will not rush. Some verses may require several pages of commentary because they stand at the intersection of history, covenant, language, and the larger story of Scripture. That is not unnecessary detail; it is often where the meaning becomes clear.

The World of Rome

"For our citizenship is in the heavens..." - Pilipiyim (Philippians) 3:20

Although this statement appears in another letter, it illustrates a reality that permeates Sha'ul's ministry. The assemblies to whom he wrote lived under the shadow of the Roman Empire. To confess Yahusha as Master was not merely a private spiritual conviction; it carried social, political, and religious implications. To understand Romans, we must first understand Rome.

Rome Was More Than a City

When modern readers hear the word "Rome," they often think of a geographical location. In the first century, however, Rome represented something much greater. Rome was an empire unlike anything the Mediterranean world had previously known. By the middle of the first century, its authority stretched from Britain in the northwest to the borders of Mesopotamia in the east, and from the Rhine and Danube rivers to North Africa. Its influence touched nearly every aspect of life: Government, Military power, Economics, Commerce, Transportation, Law, Education, Religion, Architecture, Language, and Culture. To many throughout the empire, Rome appeared invincible. The Latin phrase **Pax Romana** ("Roman Peace") described the stability that Rome claimed to provide. Roads were safer than in previous generations. Trade flourished. Cities prospered. Yet this peace came at a cost. It was maintained through military conquest, taxation, political control, and the constant reminder that resistance would be crushed.

For the people of Yisra'El, Rome was not simply another government. It was a foreign empire ruling over the land promised to Abraham's descendants. Memories of Assyria, Babylon, and Persia were still alive in the collective consciousness. Rome now occupied that same role as the latest Gentile power exercising dominion over the covenant land. This historical reality forms part of the backdrop for the expectation that YaHuWaH would ultimately establish His own Kingdom.

The Emperor and the Imperial Cult

By the time Sha'ul wrote Romans, Nero had become emperor (A.D. 54). The early years of his reign were generally more stable than the later period for which he became infamous. Throughout the empire, loyalty to Caesar was increasingly expressed through what historians call the **imperial cult**. Temples, sacrifices, festivals, and public honors celebrated the emperor and the imperial household. Participation varied across regions, and attitudes toward the emperor differed within Rome itself and in the provinces. Even so, public expressions of loyalty to the emperor were woven into civic life. Against this backdrop, consider the language found throughout the Apostolic Writings: Yahusha is called "Master." He is proclaimed "Son." His message is called "Good News." These expressions carried deep roots in the Hebrew Scriptures, but they also stood in contrast to imperial claims about authority and allegiance. Declaring ultimate loyalty to Yahusha as the Messiah of Yisra'El inevitably challenged the prevailing

worldview of the empire. This tension helps explain why the early assemblies often faced misunderstanding and, at times, persecution.

Rome's Social Structure

Roman society was highly stratified. At the top stood the emperor and the senatorial elite. Below them were equestrians, wealthy merchants, local officials, artisans, freedmen, and enslaved people. Social status shaped nearly every aspect of life: Where one lived. What one wore. Who one could marry. Access to education. Legal protections. Political influence. Many of the assemblies described in the Apostolic Writings brought together people from vastly different social backgrounds. Wealthy householders, laborers, freedmen, and slaves could all gather around the same table. This was extraordinary within the Roman world. When Sha'ul later writes about humility, mutual acceptance, and honoring one another, those instructions address real tensions within communities composed of people whose society normally remained sharply divided.

Patronage: The Invisible Framework of Roman Society

One of the most influential features of Roman life was the patron-client system. Powerful individuals acted as patrons. Those with fewer resources became clients. Patrons offered protection, financial assistance, legal help, or opportunities. Clients responded with: Loyalty. Public honor. Political support. Personal service. These reciprocal relationships permeated Roman society. Understanding this system sheds light on why Sha'ul repeatedly emphasizes that YaHuWaH's favor cannot be purchased, manipulated, or earned through social obligations. His relationship with His people is rooted in His covenant faithfulness rather than the transactional expectations common in Roman patronage. While the analogy is not exact, awareness of this cultural background can illuminate aspects of Sha'ul's discussion about boasting, obligation, and grace.

Slavery in the Roman World

Slavery was widespread throughout the empire. Enslaved persons worked in households, agriculture, commerce, mines, education, and government administration. Unlike some forms of later race-based chattel slavery, Roman slavery arose through multiple avenues, including war, debt, birth, or piracy. Conditions varied considerably, though many enslaved people endured severe hardship and lacked legal freedom. When Sha'ul uses the language of being a "slave" or "servant" of Messiah, he employs imagery his audience understood well. Yet he transforms it. Instead of bondage to sin, death, or oppressive powers, he speaks of willing allegiance to the righteous reign of YaHuWaH. The metaphor is powerful precisely because his readers knew what slavery meant.

Roman Citizenship

Citizenship carried significant privileges. Citizens possessed legal rights not available to everyone. Sha'ul himself was a Roman citizen, as Acts records. This status afforded him protections such as the right to appeal to Caesar and freedom from certain forms of punishment without trial. Yet in his letters, Sha'ul consistently places earthly citizenship beneath a higher allegiance to the Kingdom of Elohim. This perspective helps explain why believers could respect governing authorities while recognizing that their ultimate loyalty belonged elsewhere.

The Hebrew Community in Rome

Hebrew communities had existed in Rome for generations before Sha'ul wrote. They maintained synagogues, observed Shabbat, read the Scriptures, and preserved their ancestral identity within the

larger Roman society. These communities were diverse in language, customs, and levels of engagement with Greco-Roman culture. Some Gentiles were drawn to the synagogue because they admired the ethical monotheism of the Scriptures and the worship of the Elohim of Yisra'El. This mixed environment helps explain why the assemblies in Rome included people from different backgrounds who nevertheless shared a commitment to the Elohim of Abraham, Yitsḥak, and Ya'aqob.

The Claudian Expulsion

One event profoundly affected the Roman assemblies. The Roman historian Suetonius records that Emperor Claudius expelled Hebrews from Rome because of disturbances associated with someone he calls "Chrestus." Scholars continue to debate exactly what this reference means, though many understand it to reflect disputes connected in some way with the proclamation of the Messiah.

Acts confirms that Aquila and Priscilla had recently left Rome because of Claudius' decree:

"And having found a certain Hebrew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with Priscilla his wife (because Claudius had ordered all the Hebrews to leave Rome), he came to them." - *Ma'asei (Acts) 18:2*

This expulsion likely disrupted established patterns of leadership within the assemblies. When many Hebrew believers later returned after Claudius' death, they encountered congregations that had continued in their absence. It is not difficult to imagine the questions that followed: How should Torah be lived out together? What customs should shape community life? How do Hebrew and Gentile believers relate within the covenant people? What does faithfulness look like in a diverse assembly? These questions echo throughout Romans.

Why This Matters

Romans is not written into a vacuum. It addresses real people living under imperial rule, navigating cultural pressures, social divisions, and questions of identity. Understanding their world does not replace careful exegesis of the text, but it enriches it. It helps us hear the letter with ears closer to those of its first recipients. As we move into the commentary itself, this historical setting will remain in the background, helping us appreciate why Sha'ul chooses particular illustrations, rhetorical strategies, and theological emphases.

Understanding Romans as a First-Century Letter

Before examining Sha'ul's opening words, we must understand the nature of the document itself. Romans is not a systematic theology. It is not a church creed. It is not a philosophical treatise. It is a **first-century covenant letter** written by an emissary of Yahusha to assemblies living in the capital of the Roman Empire. Yet it is unlike any other letter Sha'ul wrote.

Why Did Sha'ul Write Romans?

Unlike Galatians, Romans was not written to correct one immediate crisis. Unlike Corinthians, it was not written to address a long list of congregational problems. Unlike Philippians, it was not primarily a letter of friendship. Romans is unique. Sha'ul is introducing himself to a community that largely knows him by reputation rather than personal relationship. He intends to travel westward to Spain (Romiyim (Romans) 15:24, 28), and he hopes the Roman assemblies will support that mission. Before arriving, however, he writes a comprehensive explanation of the message he proclaims so that they may understand both him and the good news he serves. Romans therefore functions as a carefully reasoned presentation of his

understanding of YaHuWaH's covenant faithfulness, the work of Yahusha, and the place of Yisra'El and the nations within the unfolding purposes of Elohim.

A Letter to House Assemblies

One of the first misconceptions to remove is the image of a single large congregation meeting in a church building. There were no church buildings. The followers of Yahusha met primarily in homes. Romans 16 mentions several individuals and households, suggesting multiple gatherings throughout the city. Each assembly would have its own personalities, strengths, questions, and social dynamics, yet together they formed one community of believers within Rome. When Phoebe delivered the letter (Romiyim (Romans) 16:1-2), it was likely read aloud in these gatherings. Remember that most people in the first century did not possess personal copies of the Scriptures. They listened. This means Romans was originally experienced as an oral message. The rhythm, repetition, rhetorical questions, and carefully constructed arguments were designed to be heard. This is one reason we must resist reading isolated verses apart from their surrounding argument.

The Oral Nature of the Letter

Modern readers often study Romans in small sections. The first audience heard the entire letter read aloud. Imagine sitting in a crowded room while someone read the whole document from beginning to end. You would hear: repeated themes, recurring vocabulary, questions raised and answered, arguments developed over many chapters. For example: When Sha'ul discusses Abraham in chapter 4, the listeners would still remember everything he had argued in chapters 1-3 because they had just heard it. Likewise, Romans 8 would naturally flow from Romans 7, and Romans 11 would complete the argument begun much earlier in the letter. This continuous hearing is essential to understanding Sha'ul's reasoning.

The Rhetorical Style of Romans

Romans employs several literary techniques common in the ancient world.

1. Diatribe

One of Sha'ul's favorite methods is the diatribe. He imagines an objector. He raises objections. He asks questions. He answers them. Examples include: "What then shall we say...?" "By no means!" "But someone will say..." These questions are often rhetorical devices rather than quotations from actual conversations. Recognizing this style prevents us from misunderstanding whom Sha'ul is addressing at any given moment.

2. Stringing Together the Scriptures

Another hallmark of Sha'ul's method is his use of chains of quotations. Rather than quoting only one passage, he frequently weaves together multiple texts from the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. To a modern reader, these may appear disconnected. To a first-century student of the Scriptures, they formed a coherent tapestry. Each quotation carried with it the larger context of the original passage. Throughout this commentary, we will always return to those original contexts before explaining Sha'ul's use of them.

3. Covenant Reasoning

Sha'ul reasons as a covenant theologian. He continually asks: What has YaHuWaH promised? Has He remained faithful? How does human unfaithfulness relate to divine faithfulness? What role does the Torah play within the covenant? How do the promises to Abraham unfold in history? These questions drive Romans from beginning to end.

The Structure of Romans

Although scholars differ on some details, the broad movement of the letter can be summarized as follows:

Romans 1:1-17

Opening greeting and statement of the letter's central theme.

Romans 1:18-3:20

The universal problem of human rebellion.

Romans 3:21-5:21

YaHuWaH's righteousness revealed through His covenant faithfulness.

Romans 6-8

The transformed life of those who belong to Messiah.

Romans 9-11

The place of Yisra'El within YaHuWaH's continuing purposes.

Romans 12-15

Practical covenant living within the community.

Romans 16

Personal greetings and final exhortations.

Notice that chapters 9-11 are not an interruption. They are the climax. If YaHuWaH has failed His promises to Yisra'El, then everything argued in chapters 1-8 would stand on uncertain ground. Therefore, Sha'ul must demonstrate that YaHuWaH remains faithful to His covenant people.

The Thesis of Romans

Every carefully written letter has a central thesis. Many scholars identify Romans 1:16-17 as the thesis statement of the entire epistle.

"For I am not ashamed of the Good News of Messiah, for it is the power of Elohim for deliverance to everyone who believes, to the Yehudi first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of Elohim is revealed from belief to belief, as it has been written, 'But the righteous shall live by belief.'" - *Romiym (Romans) 1:16-17*

This passage introduces themes that will dominate the rest of the letter: Good News. Deliverance. Hebrew and Greek. The righteousness of Elohim. Faith. (Habakkuk 2:4). Every one of these expressions has deep roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. None originated with Sha'ul.

Reading Romans Through the Tanakh

Perhaps the most important principle for this commentary is this: **Romans is not self-interpreting.** Sha'ul expects his readers to know the Scriptures. When he speaks of righteousness, covenant, promise, seed, circumcision, faith, sacrifice, firstfruits, adoption, redemption, olive trees, hardening, and stumbling, he assumes the reader already understands these themes from the Torah and the Prophets. If we ignore those foundations, we risk assigning meanings shaped by later theological vocabulary rather than by the Scriptures Sha'ul himself cites.

The Unity of Scripture

One conviction will guide this entire commentary. The Scriptures speak with one voice because they reveal one faithful Elohim. The Torah lays the foundation. The Prophets call the people back to covenant fidelity. The Writings reflect on life within that covenant. Yahusha proclaims the Kingdom promised by the prophets. Sha'ul explains how the work of Messiah fits within that same covenant story. The goal is not to pit one part of Scripture against another but to see how each contributes to the unified revelation of YaHuWaH.

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