

ROMANS CHAPTER 1

The Revelation of YaHuWaH's Righteousness and the Beginning of the Covenant Argument

The book of Romans is one of the most significant writings of Sha'ul because it brings together the covenant story that begins in Genesis and carries forward through the Torah, the Prophets, and the writings of Yisra'El. Yet Romans has often been approached through later theological frameworks that separate Sha'ul from the very Scriptures that shaped his thinking. To understand Romans faithfully, we must first recognize that Sha'ul is not writing as someone abandoning the Scriptures of Yisra'El. He is writing as one who believes those Scriptures have reached their intended purpose through Yahusha the Messiah. Romans is not a letter explaining how YaHuWaH replaced one people with another. It is a letter explaining how the Elohim of Yisra'El remains faithful to His covenant promises and how His purposes extend to the nations through the Messiah.

The opening of Romans establishes this foundation immediately:

"Sha'ul, a servant of Yahusha Messiah, a called emissary, separated to the Good News of Elohim, which He promised before through His prophets in the Set-apart Scriptures." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:1-2

Before Sha'ul explains righteousness, belief, Torah, Yisra'El, the nations, or restoration, he establishes one essential truth: The message he carries did not begin with him. The Good News was already promised. The Good News was already spoken through the prophets. The Good News was already embedded within the Scriptures of Yisra'El. This statement is the doorway into understanding the entire letter.

The Historical Setting of Romans

Sha'ul writes to believers living in Rome, the center of the greatest political empire of his day. Rome represented human authority, military strength, cultural influence, and imperial power. The empire stretched across many nations, bringing different peoples under Roman rule. The city itself was a mixture of cultures, languages, religions, and social classes. Within Rome lived Roman citizens, foreigners, slaves, merchants, soldiers, philosophers, and religious communities from throughout the empire. Among these communities were Yahudim (Hebrew people) who had lived in Rome for generations. The presence of Yahudim in Rome created both cultural and religious tension, especially as the message concerning Yahusha spread.

During the reign of Claudius, Yahudim were expelled from Rome, according to first-century historical records. When some later returned, they entered an assembly that had increasingly become Gentile in composition. This created questions concerning identity, covenant, Torah, food practices, sacred days, and what it meant to belong to the people of YaHuWaH.

Romans must be read against this background. Sha'ul is not answering abstract theological questions. He is addressing the covenant question: How does the faithfulness of YaHuWaH toward Yisra'El and His promises relate to the nations who are now being brought near through the Messiah? This question will eventually reach its fullest discussion in Romans 9-11, but the foundation is laid from the beginning.

The Meaning of the Good News

Sha'ul says he was separated to the Good News of Elohim. The Greek word is *euangelion*, but the Hebrew concept behind this word is **besorah** (בשורה). In the Hebrew Scriptures, good news is not merely information that makes someone feel encouraged. It is a proclamation that something decisive has happened. A messenger brings news from a battlefield because victory has been achieved. A messenger announces the arrival of a king. A messenger declares deliverance.

This is the background of Isaiah's words:

"How pleasant upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings good news of good, who proclaims deliverance, who says to Tsiyon, 'Your Elohim reigns!'" - Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 52:7

The Good News is fundamentally a kingdom announcement. It declares: YaHuWaH reigns. His promises stand. His covenant purposes continue. His appointed King has come.

This is why Yahusha's proclamation began:

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

The message is not merely that individuals can receive forgiveness. The message is that the rightful rule of YaHuWaH is being revealed.

The Good News Was Promised Through the Prophets

Sha'ul's statement that the Good News was promised beforehand is a direct rejection of the idea that the Messiah's work created a new religion disconnected from the past. The prophets spoke of restoration. They spoke of a time when YaHuWaH would gather His scattered people. They spoke of a renewed heart. They spoke of His Spirit being placed within His people. They spoke of the restoration of Dawid's fallen tent. They spoke of the nations turning toward the Elohim of Yisra'El. The Good News is therefore the continuation of the covenant story. The Scriptures begin with creation. They move into mankind's rebellion. They reveal the calling of Abraham. They establish Yisra'El as a covenant people. They reveal the Dawidic promise. They announce exile and restoration. Romans enters that story. Sha'ul is explaining where the story is going.

Sha'ul the Eved of Yahusha Messiah

Sha'ul introduces himself as a servant of Yahusha Messiah. The Hebrew concept behind servant is **eved** (עבד). This word carries a much deeper meaning than simple employment. An eved belongs to another and represents the interests of the master. Mosheh was called the servant of YaHuWaH. Dawid was called the servant of YaHuWaH. The prophets were servants entrusted with carrying YaHuWaH's words. Therefore, when Sha'ul calls himself a servant, he is placing himself within a long line of covenant messengers. His authority does not originate from human approval. His authority comes from the One who called him.

Yahusha the Seed of Dawid

Sha'ul continues:

"...concerning His Son, who came of the seed of Dawid according to the flesh." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:3

This statement is foundational because it places Yahusha within the covenant promises made to Yisra'El. The Messiah is not presented as a figure disconnected from the history of YaHuWaH's people. He is the promised King.

The promise given to Dawid was:

"And your house and your reign shall be steadfast forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever." - Shemu'el Bet (2 Samuel) 7:16

The prophets continued to speak of this coming ruler.

Isaiah proclaimed:

"For a Child is born unto us, a Son is given unto us, and the rule is on His shoulder..." - Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 9:6

Jeremiah declared:

"See, the days are coming," declares יהוה, "when I shall raise for Dawid a Branch of righteousness..." - Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 23:5

Sha'ul begins Romans by declaring that these promises are not forgotten. YaHuWaH remembers.

The identification of Yahusha as the seed of Dawid is not a minor detail. Sha'ul is establishing that the Messiah is the answer to a covenant promise that reaches back through the entire history of Yisra'El. The Messiah is not simply a spiritual deliverer detached from earthly history. He is the King promised to Dawid, the One through whom YaHuWaH would restore His righteous rule. This is important because the entire biblical narrative is concerned with the restoration of proper authority. Mankind was created to represent the Creator, but through rebellion mankind distorted that calling. Kings were raised up in Yisra'El to reflect the rule of YaHuWaH, yet even Dawid, the greatest earthly king, could not establish an everlasting righteous kingdom. The promise therefore pointed beyond Dawid himself to a greater Son who would perfectly represent the will and character of YaHuWaH. Romans begins by placing Yahusha within this prophetic expectation.

Declared the Son of Elohim Through Resurrection

Sha'ul continues:

"...declared to be the Son of Elohim with power according to the Spirit of Set-apartness by the resurrection from the dead, Yahusha Messiah our Master." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:4

The resurrection is not merely presented as an event proving that Yahusha defeated death. It is presented as YaHuWaH's declaration concerning His appointed King. The Greek word translated "declared" carries the idea of being appointed, demonstrated, or publicly shown. The resurrection revealed what was already true: Yahusha is the Son of Elohim and the rightful ruler.

This connects directly to the pattern seen in Psalms 2:

"Why do the nations rage, and the peoples meditate emptiness? The sovereigns of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together, against יהוה and against His Anointed..." - Tehillim (Psalms) 2:1-2

The nations resist YaHuWaH's authority. Human rulers attempt to establish their own order.

But YaHuWaH responds:

"I have set My King on Tsiyon, My set-apart mountain." - Tehillim (Psalms) 2:6

The resurrection is therefore a Kingdom declaration. The world rejected Yahusha. YaHuWaH vindicated Him. Mankind judged Him according to earthly standards. YaHuWaH revealed His heavenly judgment.

The Spirit of Set-Apartness and the New Creation Pattern

Sha'ul's mention of the Spirit of Set-Apartness is also significant. Throughout the Scriptures, the Spirit of YaHuWaH is connected with creation, renewal, empowerment, and restoration.

In the beginning:

"And the Spirit of Elohim was moving on the face of the waters." - Bereshith (Genesis) 1:2

The Ruach (Spirit) is present at creation.

Later, through the prophets, YaHuWaH promises that His Spirit will bring restoration:

"And I shall put My Spirit within you and you shall come to life..." - Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 37:14

The resurrection of Yahusha is therefore not an isolated miracle. It is the beginning of the renewed creation work of YaHuWaH. Death entered through rebellion. Life begins through the faithfulness of the Messiah. Sha'ul will later develop this theme in Romans 8, where he speaks of creation itself waiting for liberation.

Grace, Apostleship, and the Purpose of the Mission

Sha'ul writes:

"Through whom we have received favor and office of emissary for belief-obedience among all the nations for His Name." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:5

The phrase "belief-obedience" is one of the most misunderstood concepts in Romans. Many later interpretations have separated belief and obedience as though obedience belongs to a different covenant reality. However, Sha'ul does not present belief and obedience as opposites. The Hebrew Scriptures consistently reveal that genuine trust in YaHuWaH produces a faithful response. The Hebrew word **emunah** (אמונה) comes from the root **aman** (אמן), carrying the ideas of firmness, stability, trustworthiness, and faithfulness.

This is the same root connected to the declaration:

"Elohim, the trustworthy One..."

A person who truly trusts YaHuWaH does not merely acknowledge His existence. They align themselves with His ways. This is seen in Abraham.

The Torah says:

"And he believed in יהוה, and He reckoned it to him for righteousness." - Bereshith (Genesis) 15:6

Yet Abraham's belief was revealed through his obedience. When YaHuWaH called him to leave his homeland, Abraham went. When YaHuWaH tested him concerning Yitshaq, Abraham responded in trust. Belief moved him. Trust produced obedience. This is the pattern Sha'ul is describing.

To the Nations and the Restoration Question

Sha'ul states that his mission concerns the nations. This phrase must be understood within the prophetic framework. The nations were never an afterthought in the Scriptures.

From the beginning, YaHuWaH declared to Abraham:

"And in you all the clans of the earth shall be blessed." - Bereshith (Genesis) 12:3

The calling of Abraham was always connected to the nations. Yisra'El was chosen not because YaHuWaH rejected the nations, but because through Yisra'El He would reveal Himself to the nations. The problem was never that the nations were excluded from YaHuWaH's purposes. The problem was that mankind as a whole had fallen into rebellion.

The prophets anticipated a day when the nations would seek YaHuWaH:

"And many peoples shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of יהוה, to the House of the Elohim of Ya'aqob...' " - Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 2:3

Therefore, when Sha'ul speaks of his mission to the nations, he is not describing the creation of a separate people replacing Yisra'El. He is describing the fulfillment of the promise that through the restored covenant purposes of YaHuWaH, the nations would come and worship the Elohim of Yisra'El. This becomes central later in Romans when Sha'ul explains the restoration of the olive tree and the relationship between natural branches and branches brought in.

The Assembly in Rome and the Identity Question

Sha'ul writes:

"Among whom you also are the called ones of Yahusha Messiah." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:6

The believers in Rome are described as called ones. The Greek word *ekklesia* is often translated as "church," but the Hebrew background is important. The concept reflects the gathering or assembly of a people called out for a purpose. The Septuagint frequently uses this idea when referring to the assembly of Yisra'El. This means Sha'ul is not introducing a completely new identity detached from Yisra'El's Scriptures. He is describing a renewed covenant community centered around Messiah.

The question Romans will answer is: How does one become part of this covenant people? The answer cannot be separated from the promises made to Abraham, Yisra'El, and Dawid.

The Righteousness of Elohim Revealed

Sha'ul now arrives at the central theme:

"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 Yahudi first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of Elohim is revealed from belief to belief..." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:16-17

The phrase "righteousness of Elohim" is the theological foundation of the entire letter. The Hebrew concept behind righteousness is **tsedaqah** (צדקה). This word is not merely about legal innocence. It speaks of being aligned with what is right according to YaHuWaH's standard. YaHuWaH Himself is righteous because His actions perfectly express His character. His righteousness is revealed through His covenant faithfulness. This is why the question underneath Romans is not simply: "How can guilty people become innocent?" The deeper question is: "How will YaHuWaH remain faithful to His covenant promises?" The answer Sha'ul unfolds is: Through Yahusha the Messiah.

From Belief to Belief

The phrase: **"...from belief to belief..."** has been debated, but within the Hebraic framework it reflects a movement from beginning trust to mature faithfulness. YaHuWaH's faithfulness produces human faithfulness. He acts first. His people respond. This pattern is seen throughout Scripture. YaHuWaH delivered Yisra'El from Mitsrayim (Egypt) before He gave them the instructions of covenant life. The order is important. Deliverance comes first. Obedience follows. The Torah was not given as a means to earn freedom. It was given to a people who had already been redeemed. This same pattern is present in Romans. YaHuWaH reveals His righteousness. Mankind responds through faithful trust.

The Wrath of Elohim Revealed

After revealing the righteousness of Elohim, Sha'ul introduces the opposite reality:

"For the wrath of Elohim is revealed from heaven against all wickedness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:18

Sha'ul moves from revelation to rebellion. The Creator has revealed Himself. Mankind has rejected Him. The issue is not that mankind has no knowledge of Elohim. The issue is that mankind suppresses what it knows. The Hebrew Scriptures consistently describe rebellion as turning away from revealed truth. The Hebrew word **avon** (און) describes crookedness, distortion, or deviation from the proper path. Sin is not merely breaking a rule. It is becoming bent away from the design of the Creator. This is why Torah reveals the path of restoration. Torah is not simply a list of restrictions. It reveals the straight path of YaHuWaH's character.

The Witness of Creation and Mankind Without Excuse

Sha'ul continues:

"Because what is known of Elohim is manifest among them, for Elohim has manifested it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible qualities have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, both His everlasting power and Mightiness, so that they are without excuse." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:19-20

Here Sha'ul establishes an important principle: YaHuWaH has not left mankind without witness. Creation itself testifies. The heavens declare His glory. The order, design, and sustaining power of creation reveal that there is a Creator who stands above creation. Sha'ul is drawing from a deeply Hebraic understanding found throughout Scripture. The created world is not divine itself, nor is creation to be worshiped. Creation is a testimony pointing beyond itself to the One who made it.

Psalms declare:

"The heavens are proclaiming the esteem of El, and the expanse is declaring the work of His hand. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night reveals knowledge." - Tehillim (Psalms) 19:1-2

The creation speaks. The problem is not that mankind has no evidence of Elohim. The problem is that mankind refuses to respond rightly to what has been revealed. This connects directly to the biblical pattern established in Genesis. Adam and Hawwah were not ignorant of YaHuWaH. They walked with Him in Gan Eden. They heard His voice. They knew His instruction. The first rebellion was not caused by a lack of revelation. It was caused by rejecting the authority of the One who revealed Himself. Romans 1 is therefore not primarily addressing intellectual doubt. It is addressing covenant rebellion.

Knowing Elohim Yet Refusing to Honor Him

Sha'ul writes:

"Because, although they knew Elohim, they did not esteem Him as Elohim, nor gave thanks, but became vain in their reasonings, and their undiscerning heart was darkened." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:21

This statement is deeply Hebraic.

In Scripture, knowledge of Elohim is not merely possessing information about Him. The Hebrew concept of knowing, **yada** (יָדָה), carries the idea of relationship, recognition, and intimate understanding. To "know" YaHuWaH is to acknowledge His authority and walk according to His ways. This is why the prophets repeatedly rebuked Yisra'El, not because they lacked knowledge of YaHuWaH, but because they knew about Him while turning their hearts away from Him.

Through Jeremiah, YaHuWaH says:

"But this people has a backsliding and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away." - Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 5:23

The problem is the heart.

The Hebrew word **leb** (לב), often translated as heart, is not limited to emotion as modern Western thinking often understands it. The lev represents the inner person: thoughts, intentions, desires, and the place where decisions are formed. Mankind's rebellion begins internally. The issue is not merely external actions. The issue is that the heart turns away from the Creator.

The Exchange of Glory

Sha'ul continues:

"And having claimed to be wise, they became fools, and changed the esteem of the incorruptible Elohim into the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds and of four-footed beasts and of reptiles." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:22-23

This is one of the strongest echoes of the Torah found in Romans. Sha'ul is describing the great exchange: Mankind exchanged the glory of the Creator for created things. This returns us to the fundamental issue of idolatry. Idolatry is not merely worshiping a statue. At its deepest level, idolatry is replacing YaHuWaH's authority with something else. The human heart seeks something it can control. The Creator cannot be controlled. Therefore, mankind creates substitutes. This pattern appears clearly with the golden calf. After YaHuWaH delivered Yisra'El from Mitsrayim with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, the people quickly attempted to create an image representing Elohim. The tragedy was not that they stopped believing in Elohim. The tragedy was that they attempted to redefine Him according to their own imagination. They exchanged His glory for something they could see and manage. This is exactly the pattern Sha'ul describes in Romans 1.

Idolatry and the Image of Elohim

The language Sha'ul uses connects deeply with the creation account.

In Genesis, mankind was created in the image of Elohim:

"And Elohim said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...'" - Bereshith (Genesis) 1:26

Mankind was created to reflect the Creator. Yet Romans 1 describes mankind reversing that order. Instead of reflecting Elohim, mankind creates images according to itself. Instead of being formed by YaHuWaH, mankind forms its own gods. The image-bearer begins worshiping images. This is the tragedy of rebellion. The one created to represent the Creator becomes enslaved to creation.

The Pattern of Exile

The language of Romans 1 also carries the pattern of exile. Throughout Scripture, exile occurs when mankind or Yisra'El rejects the order of YaHuWaH and pursues other ways. The movement is always similar: YaHuWaH reveals. Mankind rebels. The relationship is broken. The consequences follow. Gan Eden leads to exile from Gan Eden. Yisra'El's rebellion leads to exile from the land. The nations' rebellion leads to separation from the knowledge of Elohim. Romans 1 presents mankind as being in an exile condition. Separated from the Creator. Distorted in worship. Darkened in understanding. This is why restoration is necessary.

YaHuWaH Gave Them Over

Sha'ul writes:

"Therefore Elohim also gave them up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves..." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:24

Three times in this passage Sha'ul uses the expression that Elohim "gave them over." This is a difficult phrase because many misunderstand it as though YaHuWaH suddenly abandons people without mercy. But the biblical pattern shows something deeper. Judgment sometimes comes through allowing rebellion to reveal its own consequences. YaHuWaH does not force mankind into righteousness. He allows mankind to experience the result of rejecting His order. This is seen throughout the Scriptures.

In Psalms 81, YaHuWaH speaks of Yisra'El's rebellion:

"So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own counsels." - Tehillim (Psalms) 81:12

The judgment is that mankind receives what it insists upon. When people reject the Creator's design, they experience life apart from that design.

The Corruption of Worship Produces the Corruption of Life

Romans 1 demonstrates a connection often forgotten: False worship produces distorted living. Mankind does not begin with immoral behavior. Mankind begins by rejecting the Creator. The behavior follows the worship. The heart follows the object of worship.

This is why Torah begins with:

"I am יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land of Mitsrayim, out of the house of slavery. You have no other mighty ones against My face." - Shemoth (Exodus) 20:2-3

The first commandment establishes the foundation. Who is worthy of worship? Who defines good and evil? Who determines the path of life? The answer is YaHuWaH alone.

The Nations and the Abrahamic Promise

At this point, we must understand how Romans 1 fits into the restoration of the whole house of Yisra'El and the nations. Sha'ul begins by speaking about the nations because the nations are part of the larger problem of human rebellion. However, he also writes with the promise of restoration in view.

The calling of Abraham included the nations:

"And in you all the clans of the earth shall be blessed." - Bereshith (Genesis) 12:3

The restoration plan of YaHuWaH was never merely about one ethnic group being saved from another. It was about restoring mankind to its proper relationship with the Creator through the covenant promises given through Yisra'El. The Messiah comes as the Seed of Abraham and the Son of Dawid. Through Him, the nations are brought near. But they are not brought near by abandoning the covenant story. They are brought near by being joined into what YaHuWaH has already established. This is why Sha'ul later uses the imagery of the olive tree in Romans 11. The nations are not a replacement tree. They are branches being brought into an existing covenant reality.

The Depth of Mankind's Rebellion

Sha'ul continues:

"And even as they did not think it worthwhile to possess the knowledge of Elohim, Elohim gave them over to a worthless mind, to do what is improper..." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:28

The progression is important. Mankind suppresses truth. Mankind rejects the Creator. Mankind exchanges glory. Mankind becomes darkened. Mankind experiences the consequences. This is not because YaHuWaH's instructions are burdensome. It is because mankind was never designed to function

independently from the One who created it. Just as a branch separated from a tree withers, mankind separated from YaHuWaH loses the source of life.

Chapter 1's Final Condition

Sha'ul concludes by describing the result of mankind's rebellion:

"...who, though they know the righteous judgment of Elohim, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." - Romiyim (Romans) 1:32

The final picture of Romans 1 is not merely a list of sinful behaviors. It is a picture of mankind that has exchanged the Creator for creation. The problem is worship. The problem is the heart. The problem is rebellion against covenant order. Romans 1 therefore sets the stage for everything that follows. Before Sha'ul explains restoration, he must establish the need for restoration. Before he explains righteousness, he must reveal unrighteousness. Before he explains mercy, he must reveal the depth of rebellion.

Conclusion of Romans Chapter 1

Romans Chapter 1 begins with the proclamation that YaHuWaH has revealed His righteousness through Yahusha the Messiah. The Good News is not a new message separated from the Scriptures of Yisra'El. It is the fulfillment of the promises spoken through the Prophets. Yahusha is revealed as the Son of Dawid, the promised King, and the One vindicated through resurrection. The righteousness of YaHuWaH is revealed because He remains faithful to His covenant purposes. Mankind's greatest problem is revealed as the exchange of the Creator for creation. The nations have fallen into darkness because they rejected the One who gave them life. Yet this very exposure of mankind's condition prepares the way for the restoration that Sha'ul will unfold throughout Romans. Romans 1 begins with creation's failure. The rest of Romans will reveal YaHuWaH's faithfulness.

The question introduced at the end of this chapter is the question that drives the entire letter: **How can unrighteous mankind stand before a righteous Elohim?** The answer will unfold as Sha'ul continues explaining the righteousness of YaHuWaH revealed through Yahusha the Messiah.

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