

~ *Table of Contents* ~

Introduction 1
The Hebrew Roots of Our Faith 2
The Way of Life 6
If I Make It 16
Where Is Love? 21
A Wall of Fire 27
Sources 32

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~ *The Hebrew Roots* ~
~ *Of Our Faith* ~

The righteous will never be removed,
But the wicked will not inhabit the earth.
The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,
But the perverse tongue will be cut out.
The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable,
But the mouth of the wicked *what is* perverse.
Proverbs 10:30-32



Many Christians are just not ready to learn anything from Judaism. In fact, some say the Jews were the ones that had rejected *Y'shua* (Yeh-shoo'-ah = Jesus) as their Messiah and were responsible for His being put to death on the stake. As a result, their erroneous replacement theology was birthed. They forget about the thousands of first century Jews who were Believers in Messiah *Y'shua* and were also zealous for the *Torah* (the commandments contained in the first five books of the Bible):

"And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; ...'" (Act 21:20)

Our personal interest in the Hebrew roots of our faith grew gradually over a period of several years. One step forward was the purchase of a book entitled *The Complete Book of Jewish Observance*, by Leo Trepp, pub. by Behrman House, Inc./Summit Books, New York, 1980. This book presented some important ideas about the meanings that Jews place on certain aspects of the Festivals. It was an eye opener.

Sometime later, about 1989 or so, we acquired two interesting books in a Christian bookstore. They were *The Fall Feasts of Israel*, by Mitch and Zhava Glaser, pub. by Moody Press, Chicago, 1987; and *Celebrate the Feasts: Of the Old Testament in Your Own Home or Church*, by Martha Zimmerman, pub. by Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 1981. At the time it seemed quite amazing that Christian bookstores would carry books that dealt with the Festivals. For all we knew, within Christianity, information on the Festivals appeared to be the private domain of a particular wing of the Church of God. What could these "Christian" authors possibly know about the Holydays?

Quite a bit, we found out.

Then in 1991 a friend gave us a book entitled *Rosh HaShanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come*, (A Messianic Jewish Interpretation of the Feast of Trumpets) written by a man named Joseph Good, pub. by Hatikva Ministries. What a revelation! Here was a man who had never heard of the Festival keeping Churches of God, had formerly been an evangelical, charismatic, first-day Christian; who knew more about many aspects of the Festivals than did most members of

those Churches of God who had been keeping the Feasts for years.

Learning about the Hebrew roots of our faith was like a return to first love. The early spirit of Ephesus returned (Rev. 2:4). Coming to understand that, humanly, *Y'shua* really was a Jew and that Judaism (as it was practiced in the first century) was a key to unlocking many of the scriptures, was a great revelation to us personally.

As a result, books were purchased, hours of reading took place and intense Bible study was accompanied by discussions with friends who were also back into their first love. Gradually, the big picture began to come into focus.

Later we learned that a similar phenomena was taking place among people all over the North American continent. Many others were becoming aware of the Jewishness of *Y'shua* and of the early Church.

Then came another revelation. There are thousands of believers out there who call themselves "Messianic Jews"; Jewish people who have accepted *Y'shua* as their personal Saviour but have not given up their Jewish heritage. In fact, it was out of their movement that much of this new literature was being written. Yes, it is true that we, and probably you too, do not agree with everything the Messianic Jews teach. To be fair, let us also admit that the Messianic Jews probably do not agree with everything we teach either. Did not *Y'shua* Himself say:

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, one shepherd." (John 10:16)

We believe this passage is a key to understanding what God is doing at this time.

~ *Who Constitutes the Family of God?* ~

Brethren, it is time for us to rethink who is a part of the Family of God. The true Church, the Bride of Messiah, is not one organization or a small group of organizations that have received their doctrines through one particular man. The Church of God, the Bride of Messiah, the *eklesia*, is composed of those whom God has called and chosen to be His own and who have accepted the blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoo'-ah Hah Mah-shee'-akh = Jesus the Messiah) in payment for their sins. The 'wheat' and the 'tares' grow up together in various congregations. They will be harvested together; the 'wheat' to be gathered into the barn and the 'tares' to be burned. (Matt. 13:30). In ancient Hebrew tradition, the Bride is veiled until after the wedding. Only then will the world know who she is.

Maybe you, in times past, felt that certain individuals in your local congregation might be 'tares' who "crept in unawares". Maybe you have had the not so unique experience of learning that someone in the congregation thought you were a 'tare'. It is time we put this type of thinking behind us. We are to love both the 'wheat' and the 'tares', for *Y'shua* said:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the

your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess." (Deut. 32:45-47)

If we refuse to learn how to properly build our House of Righteous Works in this life, how can God intrust us to be leaders in the *Malchut Shamayim* (the Kingdom of Heaven)? Consider the Parable of the *Minas* (Pounds):

"So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come." ...

"¹⁵ And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

"¹⁶ Then came the first, saying, "Master, your mina has earned ten minas." ¹⁷ And he said to him, "Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities."

"¹⁸ And the second came, saying, "Master, your mina has earned five minas." ¹⁹ Likewise he said to him, "You also be over five cities."

"²⁰ Then another came, saying, "Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. ²¹ For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow."

"²² And he said to him, "Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. ²³ Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?"

"²⁴ And he said to those who stood by, "Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas." ²⁵ (But they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas.") ²⁶ For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." (Luke 19:13-26)

~ *Summary* ~

For centuries, Believers have wrestled with the relationship between the free gift of forgiveness (Grace) and the keeping of the commandments (Works). Because so many Christian theologians live in Western society, they have been trained to think in terms of Greek philosophy, where concepts are required to be one thing or another, black or white, good or bad. Therefore, many have taught that one is either under

Grace or under Works, and that Grace is better because it is a free gift, while Works can only earn a person death because of sin:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)

The Scriptures, however, were not written by Greeks, they were written by Hebrews who have no problem balancing two divergent ideas within one concept. It is not a matter of Grace vs. Works, it is a matter of Grace and Works; finding the proper balance between the two.

In this chapter, we have presented an analogy which we hope helps sort out the interaction between Grace and Works. Grace is likened to the protective wall that is built around a city to help deter would be attackers. In the case of Believers, those attackers are *HaSatan* and his demons. Meanwhile, inside the city, each Believer is commanded to build for himself a house based upon the blueprints (commands) found in the *Torah*.

By looking at Grace and Works in this manner, it becomes clear what exactly should be the role of each. Grace is needed so that we can be forgiven of our sins and justified before God. Works is needed so that we may show our appreciation of God's great gift of Grace and also to build ourselves a special reward in the *Malchut Shamayim* and the *Olam Haba* (the Kingdom of Heaven and the World to Come).

The gift of Grace is freely given by God to those who have faith in the sacrifice of *Y'shua HaMashiach*:

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (II Cor. 9:15)

The free gift of the *Torah* instructs us in how to perform good Works:

"Therefore I love Your commandments More than gold, yes, than fine gold!" (Psalm 119:127)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

government is bad. Considering the fact that the vast majority of US citizens would absolutely refuse to live under a government ruled by God, what we have is undoubtedly the best of human governmental forms currently possible because it grants us great individual freedom. It seems clear that God's hand was in the forming of our western democracies so that people would be free to worship Him in safety and so that the Good News could be spread (If you ever wondered what it would be like not to have freedom of religion, may we suggest you read the history of the Jews in Europe during the middle ages.)

However, do not expect that King Messiah will set up His government like a Western democracy. *Y'shua* will not run for office every four or six years. He will reign as King of kings and Lord of lords over the entire earth for one thousand years. A one world government ruled by the Son of God, not by man:

"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."
(Rev. 19:16)

~ Who Was and Is *Y'shua*? ~

He would have been known as *Y'shua ben Yoseif* (Jesus son of Joseph). His mother's name was *Miriam* (Meer-ee-ahm), known as Mary in English. *Y'shua* was born of a fleshly mother, but *Yoseif* (Yo-safe') was actually his stepfather. You all know the story so it need not be recounted here. Just let it be said that He was the Son of Man and the Son of God. Of this we must not doubt if we wish to be counted among His Believers.

Y'shua was born in *Beit-Lechem* (Bait Lehk-hehm' = Bethlehem) the "House of Bread:"

"And Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to them, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.'" (John 6:35)

Beit-Lechem is a very interesting town. It lies about five miles south of Jerusalem in the hill country that was assigned to the tribe of Judah. It was prophesied to be the birthplace of the Messiah:

**"Now gather yourself in troops,
O daughter of troops;
He has laid siege against us;
They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod
on the cheek.**

**² But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth are from of old,
From everlasting.'**

**³ Therefore He shall give them up,
Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth;
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel."** (Micah 5:1-3)

This is a rather complicated prophecy concerning not just the birth of the Messiah, but also an allusion to His fate

("...they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod...") and to the final outcome of God's plan of salvation ("...the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.").

Today, when one enters *Beit Lechem* from the north they find that it and the city of Jerusalem are run together. It would be difficult to know where one city ends and the other begins were it not for the Israeli and Palestinian guards at the border.

In the first century there was open land between the two communities on which the shepherds pastured their flocks. The interesting thing about this area is that it is within the domain where animals were raised for sacrifice at the Temple; especially the lambs offered at Passover. If one goes into Bethlehem proper, where the so-called Church of the Nativity is located, they are outside the area permissible for the raising of sacrificial lambs. From this information we can deduce that *Y'shua* (our Passover Lamb) was probably born at the northern edge of Bethlehem in that area known as *Ephrathah*, for He needed to qualify as the ultimate and final Passover sacrifice.

One might ask: "What difference does it make, whether He was born within a certain area of Bethlehem or not? Could God have designated Him as the ultimate Passover sacrifice anyway?"

Of course, God is God and He can do whatever He pleases. However, that is not how He reveals Himself in Scripture. God is certainly the author of all things. By being the author of authority, He has chosen to set limits and abide by them in order to show that He is God and knows all things in advance of their happening. In other words, God plays by the rules that He, Himself, previously set down. He does not change things on a whim like people might do:

**""For I am the LORD [*YHVH*],
I do not change;
Therefore you are not consumed,
O sons of Jacob.""** (Mal. 3:6)

It was God who determined, through oral traditions handed down from Moses through the sages, what area was legal to be used for the raising of sacrificial animals. Since *Y'shua* was the ultimate sacrifice, it is evident that God had preordained that He be born within that prescribed area. Praise God that *Y'shua* met all of the physical, as well as the spiritual requirements to fulfill His role as our Passover sacrifice.

Another interesting aspect is learned when we come to understand that the raising of the sacrificial animals was not left to ordinary shepherds. The shepherds watching over their flocks by night in the area of *Bethlehem Ephrathah*, would, in all probability, have been members of the tribe of Levi, who were dedicated to Temple service. The ordinary Levites were not permitted to function as priests, only those directly descended from Aaron could work in that capacity. The Levites, however, assisted the priests by performing many duties connected with the Temple. These included singing, acting as doorkeepers, and taking care of the treasury. Another Levitical duty was to raise the animals to be used for sacrifice according to the prescribed standards:

**"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.
⁹And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and**

"If a man sells a house in a walled city, then he may redeem it within a whole year after it is sold; within a full year he may redeem it." (Lev. 25:29)

The person who owned a house in a city was responsible for its maintenance and upkeep, while the city wall was the responsibility of the leadership of the community.

~ Building a Righteous Wall ~

The relationship of Grace and Works can be likened to the difference between the building and upkeep of a defensive wall around a city vs. the building and upkeep of individual homes within the city. However, in this analogy the city wall is not built by the leadership of the church, but by God:

**"In You, O LORD [*YHVH*], I put my trust;
Let me never be ashamed;
Deliver me in Your righteousness.
² Bow down Your ear to me,
Deliver me speedily;
Be my rock of refuge,
A fortress of defense to save me.
³ For You are my rock and my fortress;
Therefore, for Your name's sake,
Lead me and guide me."** (Psalm 31:1-3)

In this analogy our spiritual defensive city wall is built and maintained purely by God's Grace and represents the Righteousness of God which surrounds those citizens who believe and have accepted *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their personal Savior. They are the ones who have been chosen to live within God's Wall of Righteousness.

This Wall of Righteousness (built by the Grace of God) serves to justify Believers in *Y'shua* to God (thereby putting Believers under His protection), even though all have previously been unworthy to live there because all have committed sins which required the death penalty:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)

This act of Grace shows that God's righteousness is separate from the law, for Grace overrides the penalty of the Law:

**"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], ²⁵ whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus [*Y'shua*]."** (Rom. 3:21-26)

God's Wall of Righteousness cannot be built or maintained privately through individual or community effort. In other words, the protective wall around us, which is God's love, has absolutely nothing to do with our individual or corporate Works, but it has everything to do with the Work of *Y'shua* which provided forgiveness for our sin. Those who believe in *Y'shua* and accept His sacrifice (His work) in their stead, have God's protective Wall of Righteousness surrounding them.

~ Building a House ~

It is great to have a protective wall around the city, but unless individuals then build dwellings within those walls, they spend their entire life camping on the ground. This is where individual Works come into play, for it is the responsibility of each individual to build his own Righteous Spiritual House (the Work of his life) within the framework of the Righteous City Wall (grace, justification, and forgiveness) that has been provided for us by God through *Y'shua*. He is the 'Rock' on which we are to build our House of Faith.

Living within the City Wall of Righteousness makes us righteous in God's sight and provides the protection we need from our enemies -- *HaSatan* (the Adversary) and his demons:

"We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself [from sinning], and the wicked one does not touch him." (1 John 5:18)

This Wall of Righteousness (*Y'shua*) is also our firm foundation (Rock) upon which each one of us can build our individual Spiritual House of Works:

""Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matt. 7:24-27)

Our House of Works is worthy of standing only if it is built upon the Rock (obedience to *Y'shua's* words).

~ Building the Wrong Structure ~

Believers sometimes get into trouble when they try to build the protective Wall of Righteousness themselves, instead of building their House of Works inside God's Wall of Righteousness. They do this thinking they can provide themselves protection against the Adversary by keeping the *Torah* perfectly. This is a great mistake, for that kind of protection can come only through God's Grace. He is the only one who can keep the Adversary at bay:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8)

petitioned him for the funds. He refused. They then concocted a story and went back to him. They told the king that Jesus' own half-brother had the same name as the king and that he had written an entire book in the Bible which carried the king's name. When the king heard this, he was more than happy to supply the funds needed for the new translation. As a result we have the King James Bible and ever since, we have called *Ya'akov* (or Jacob) by that English king's name, James.

Peter's Hebrew name was *Shimon* (She-moan). It is actually Simeon or Simon in English, and means "God hears". *Simon* is the Greek form. *Y'shua* gave him a surname, that of *Kefa* (in Hebrew) or *Petros* (in Greek.) Both words mean a 'piece of stone'. In Hebrew the complete name would be *Shimon Kefa*, in Greek it would be *Simon Petros*, while in English we call him Simon Peter. He was another Jewish, Galilean fisherman.

Jude was another half-brother of *Y'shua*. We also see another English form of his name as Judah. In Hebrew it is *Y'hudah* (Yah-hoo'-dah) and means 'praise'. Judas Iscariot carried the same name. The difference in spellings and pronunciations can be attributed to derivations of the basic name *Y'hudah*. We have similar forms today. For example, someone named John might be called John, Johnny or Jack.

Finally we come to the most prolific writer of the New Testament, Paul. His name in Hebrew is *Sha'ul* (Shah-ool'). We know him as Saul before *Y'shua* changed his name to Paul. *Sha'ul* in Hebrew means 'to demand', and the name Paul in Greek means 'little'.

It is almost a certainty that the gospel of Matthew (*Mattityahu*) was originally written in Hebrew, not in Aramaic as long believed. Some fragments of a Hebrew version have apparently been discovered, but the age of that document is in question. Some recent scholarship holds that almost all of the original manuscripts of the New Testament were composed in Hebrew or Aramaic and then translated into Greek. It is interesting to note that the gospel of *Mattityahu* is the most Hebraic of all the gospels. There are many examples in this book where distinctly Jewish idioms are used. These idioms are a key to a more complete understanding of what *Y'shua* was teaching.

~ Summary ~

Y'shua was a first century Jew, reared in an observant Jewish home. Everything about His birth and life pointed to the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the first coming of the Messiah (known in Judaism as the "Suffering Servant").

All of the New Testament writers were Jewish with the possible exception of Luke who was, in all probability, a Jewish proselyte or had one parent who was Jewish. The New Testament is a Jewish book -- originally written by Jews for other Jews.

As presumed Gentiles, grafted into the *Olive Tree of Israel*, we believe the modern Christian can benefit greatly by learning about the life and culture of *Y'shua's* time. Not only does such a study draw us closer to our Betrothed Husband, it also opens up a more correct understanding of the Scriptures.

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## ~ The Way of Life ~

For the commandment *is* a lamp,  
And the law a light;  
Reproofs of instruction *are* the way of life.  
*Proverbs 6:23*



any years ago a national US magazine ran a series of articles on the major religious faiths of the world. In their article on Christianity, the point was made that being a Christian depended solely upon faith in Jesus Christ and that Christianity was not a "way of life," and most definitely not "the way of life." In other words, in that author's view, correct belief took precedence over proper behavior.

Is this true? Is the Christian walk not a "way of life" as well as a "belief?" Is it more important to have a correct "belief" about God and His Son *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'ach = Jesus the Messiah) than it is to walk a righteous walk? If that is so, then what exactly is that "correct belief" which one must have in order to be saved, and who defines that "correct belief?" Are belief and behavior mutually exclusive traits?

#### ~ Salvation ~

New Testament Scripture leaves no doubt, that an individual must believe *Y'shua* is Messiah and Savior in order to receive salvation. Consider the jailor's question to Paul and Silas:

**"And he [the jailor] brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"**

**"<sup>31</sup> So they [Paul and Silas] said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], and you will be saved, you and your household.'"** (Acts 16:30-31)

The Greek word translated "believe" is the verb *pisteuo* and it means:

"to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in ... the thing believed."

Belief, by itself, may contain a measure of doubt, depending upon the conviction of the person doing the believing. Nevertheless, belief is the basis of "faith" and must precede it. Belief becomes faith only when a person believes totally and completely from the depths of their heart:

**"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?'"**

**"<sup>37</sup> Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.'"**

**"And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] is the Son of God.'"** (Acts 8:36-37)

## ~ A Wall of Fire ~

"For I," says the LORD,  
"Will be a wall of fire all around her,  
And I will be the glory in her midst."  
*Zechariah 2:5*



uring its many years of publication, *Hebrew Roots* has worked diligently to show how important it is for Believers to learn the *mitzvot* (meets'-vote = commandments) of the *Torah* and apply them in their lives. Even so, no matter how hard we work, and no matter how much we accomplish, and no matter how many *mitzvot* we keep, it is insufficient to attain salvation.

#### ~ Sufficient Grace ~

Salvation to eternal life is a free gift given by God to those who Believe that *Y'shua* is the Messiah and are willing to accept His sacrifice as payment, in full, for their sins. The decision as to when each individual will receive the spiritual understanding pertaining to the free gift of salvation is totally in the hands of God. Some have already received it while others will receive it later:

**"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Eph. 2:8-9)

Everything is according to His plan and is a result of His Grace, not as a result of Works, either individually or collectively:

**"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. <sup>6</sup> And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."** (Rom. 11:5-6)

Indeed, if we attempt to gain salvation through our own physical works, then we err greatly and, as a result, we may:

**"... have become estranged from Christ [*Messiah*], you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith."** (Gal. 5:4-5)

Believers must not think they can be justified (made righteous despite past sins) by their own Works. In Paul's day many Believing Jews knew they were not justified by Works because they had already found that path to be ineffectual in the pursuit of eternal life:

**"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], even we have believed in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], that we might be justified by faith in Christ [*Messiah*] and not**

**by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."** (Gal. 2:15-16)

Believers will not be forgiven for past sins merely because they turn around and begin living a sin free life from that moment on. Someone who has committed murder is still a murderer even if they never kill again. The sin of murder (or any other sin for that matter) can only be atoned for by the Grace of God through our Faith in the blood of *Y'shua*. Anything less is totally ineffectual:

**"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup> For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it."**

(Heb. 4:1-2)

#### ~ Sin Be Gone ~

Paul taught that once a Believer had been forgiven their sins, they should not go out and sin again:

**"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ [*Messiah*], we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ [*Messiah*] therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! <sup>18</sup> For if I build again those things which I destroyed [i.e. *build sin again after being forgiven*], I make myself a transgressor."**

(Gal. 2:17-19)

Once Believers have had their sins justified (forgiven and removed) by Grace through *Y'shua*, they are not supposed to turn around and commit sin again. And exactly what are the sins the Believers should no longer commit? They are spelled out for us in the *Torah*:

**"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law [*Torah*]: for sin is the transgression of the law [*Torah*]."**

(I John 3:4 KJV)

Certainly the Apostle Paul taught that Believers cannot be saved by their own efforts, for no matter what we might achieve in this physical life, it is totally insufficient to grant us eternal life in the spirit. He also made it clear that we are not to go back to sinning once we have been justified by Grace.

#### ~ Works Too ~

The Apostle Paul also taught Believers to perform good Works, for it is through good Works that the Grace God has bestowed upon us is made evident:

**"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."** (II Cor. 9:8)

In this particular instance, Paul was exhorting the Corinthians to take from the abundance God had bestowed upon them and share it with the saints in Jerusalem who were in need at that time. In other words, to do a good work of charity.

Paul taught the Romans that evil deeds (which by their very nature are sin or transgression of the *Torah*) bring destruction to the one committing those sins, while those who

If *Y'shua* had "done away" with the *Written Torah* (Old Testament Law) at His resurrection, then the foundation of the moral teachings of the New Testament would also have collapsed and there would no longer be any "absolutes" (*Written Torah* commandments) by which the Messianic Believer could measure the moral behavior of their life. This is certainly not the teaching of *Y'shua*, who said:

**""Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [*Torah*] or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [complete].<sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.""** (Matt. 5:17-18)

*Y'shua* proclaimed, in this passage, that His ministry was to be built upon the *Torah* and the *Prophets*, not in opposition to them.

Of course, there is a wealth of good moral teaching in the New Testament, especially from our Lord and Savior *Y'shua*, but also from the examples recorded in the book of *Acts* and the teachings found in the epistles of the Apostles. Nevertheless, if the foundation (*Torah*, *Prophets*, and *Writings*) were destroyed, the entire structure (New Testament as well) would collapse.

### ~ The Mystery of Lawlessness ~

By casting away the Old Testament Law (*Torah*), the New Testament Church has made itself party to the "mystery of lawlessness." For it is in the *Torah* where the Law of God is to be found. Paul addressed this issue when he wrote:

**"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; ..."** (II Thess. 2:7)

The Greek word translated as "lawlessness" is *anomia* and it means:

*"1) the condition of without law 1a) because ignorant of it 1b) because of violating it 2) contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness."*

One who proclaims that the *Written Torah* (Old Testament Law) has been "done away," is guilty of participating in *anomia* and has become a part of the "mystery of lawlessness" of which Paul spoke. Christians need to be very careful about embracing the "mystery of lawlessness," for *Y'shua* Himself said such people would not go unpunished:

**""Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'<sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"** (Matt. 7:22-23)

In the *Parable of the Tares*, *Y'shua* set the price for "lawlessness" extremely high:

**""Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.<sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,<sup>42</sup> and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.""** (Matt. 13:40-42)

The "righteous" will have a much different fate than the "lawless:"

**""Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!""** (Matt. 13:43)

Hear the Word of the Lord!

### ~ The Power of Love ~

Some say that the only thing Christians are required to do is to "love one another." They say, if we truly "love," then that love, coupled with the leading of the Holy Spirit, will guide us into correct behavior.

If every Believer was truly and completely following the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Reu-ach' Hah Koh-desh' = the Holy Spirit) then it is possible that, in time, everyone would agree on what constituted correct and loving behavior. However, since there is often sharp disagreement among Christians on the exact nature of true Christian love, one can only conclude that not every Believer is following the *Ruach* in the full or proper manner.

### ~ Moral Relativism ~

If the *Written Torah* had been "done away," then there would be no moral standard by which behavior could be properly measured. This would lead to the situation mentioned at the beginning of this article, where Christianity can only be determined by "belief." However, belief can be a shaky thing. Sometimes it is difficult for an individual to know what they themselves believe, until some major personal event occurs to test or define their "belief" or "faith."

Proclaiming that Christianity does not involve a "way of life" leaves the Believer wandering in a sea of *Moral Relativism*, along with most of the rest of the people in the modern Western world. *Moral Relativism* is the point of view that what is right or wrong is not absolute, but is relative to the society in which a person lives, or to his own personal understanding of right and wrong, or to the situation at hand (sometimes called *Situation Ethics*). *Moral Relativism* goes back at least as far as *Protagoras*, a 5th century BCE Greek philosopher. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Ethical [moral] Relativism* is:

"... the view that what is really right depends solely upon what the individual or the society thinks is right. Because what one thinks will vary with time and place, what is right will also vary accordingly. Ethical [moral] relativism is, therefore, a view about the truth status of moral principles, according to which changing and even conflicting moral principles are equally true, so that there is no objective way of justifying any principle as valid for all people and all societies." (*CD-ROM Version* - underlining ours.)

*Moral Relativism* teaches that there are no absolutes which apply to mankind on a worldwide basis, but rather that each society is capable of deciding what is right and wrong for their culture. Some take this concept even further, to the point where each individual is said to be capable of deciding what is right and wrong for themselves, regardless of society as a

did not want the repentant fornicator to be so caught up in sorrow and depression that he might be tempted to seek comfort with the profane. So he instructed them to "reaffirm their love" for the repentant sinner. But Paul was also concerned that the brethren doing the punishing also needed to have a forgiving attitude, lest they also be taken advantage of by *HaSatan* (Satan the Adversary).

Remember what *Y'shua* said when *Shimon Kefa* (She-moan' Key'-phah = Simon Peter) asked Him about forgiveness?

**""Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'<sup>22</sup> Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'"** (Matt. 18:21-22)

E.W. Bullinger, in his classic work, *Number in Scripture*, says that seventy:

"...signifies *perfect* spiritual order carried out with all spiritual power and significance." (p. 270)

While the number seven:

"...stamps with perfection and completeness that in connection with which it is used." (p. 168)

To forgive a brother seventy times seven can be interpreted as saying that our forgiveness must be "spiritually perfect and complete."

### ~ True Love ~

How are we to truly love one another? Basically there are three different types of love. All of them are important, but each has its own role to play in the lives of the Believers. In the Greek language the three types of love are: *agape*, *phileo*, and *eros*. Only the first two, *agape* and *phileo*, are used in the New Testament Scriptures. *Eros* is the romantic or sexual love that is to be reserved for the marriage relationship.

The Greek word *phileo* (fill-lay'-oh, Strong's #5368) is defined as: "*to be a friend, to have affection.*" It can also mean: "*to kiss,*" as in friendship. It is the warm fuzzy feeling we have for people to whom we feel a closeness. It is the bond of true friendship between two or more people. *Phileo* is used only twenty-five times in the New Testament.

The other Greek word for love, the highest form of love that man can have, is *agape*. This is the same kind of love that God shows towards us and, therefore, it is the type of love that Believers must learn to have for one another. The noun *agape* (ah-gah'-pay, Strong's #26), means 'love' or 'esteem;' while the verb form, *agapao* (ah-gah-pay'-oh, Strong's #25), means "to love."

To fully understand the meaning of *agape* and *agapao* would require an extensive study of their many uses in Scripture, a total of 253 appearances combined. Some attributes of *agape* are:

- ◆ To love in a social sense.
- ◆ To love in a moral sense.
- ◆ To give and receive nothing in return.

- ◆ To center one's concern on the other person rather than on one's self.

One definition of the verb form, *agapao* is: "Embracing especially the judgment and the deliberate assent of the will as a matter of principle, duty and propriety." In other words, *agapao* is:

- ◆ Taking a positive action based on correct judgment rather than feelings.
- ◆ Making the deliberate decision of one's will to do something that is right, even when one does not wish to do it.
- ◆ Taking a right action based on principle rather than desire.
- ◆ Taking a right action based on duty rather than convenience.
- ◆ Taking a right action based on what is proper, rather than following one's heart and exposing a matter which should not be exposed.

As you can see, these are truly the higher forms of love, and have nothing to do with feelings. Paul sums up *agape* (love) in the famous 'Love Chapter.' Once again he is writing to the Corinthians:

**""Love is patient and kind, not jealous, not boastful, not proud, rude or selfish, not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs."**

**""Love does not gloat over other people's sins but takes delight in the truth."**

**""Love always bears up, always trusts, always hopes, always endures."**

**""Love never ends..."** (I Cor. 13:4-8)

Through *phileo* (brotherly love) we can exhibit these traits of love towards those whom we feel a real warmth of brotherly affection. However, it is very difficult to exhibit the attributes of *phileo* towards someone we do not like. This is when *agape* love is demanded; reserved for those brethren in the Body of Messiah whom we have a hard time liking, much less loving in a *phileo* (brotherly) manner.

It is important to remember that we are not required to like every brother and sister in the Body of Messiah. Many times people will have such strong personality clashes that it is nearly impossible to "like" a brother or sister in the faith, much less feel the warm fuzzies of *phileo* (brotherly affection) towards them. However, we must *agapao* them. We must make a "deliberate assent of our will" to be kind, and considerate to those "unlikeable" brothers and sisters, even though their personality and manner may seem to us like chalk screeching on a blackboard. We must learn to put their needs before our own needs; even when everything within our carnal nature cries

"But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent -- not to be too severe. <sup>6</sup> This punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority is sufficient for such a man, <sup>7</sup> so that, on the contrary, you *ought* rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. <sup>8</sup> Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. <sup>9</sup> For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. <sup>10</sup> Now whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ [*Messiah*], <sup>11</sup>lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices." (II Cor. 2:5-11)

~ Be Changed ~

Being a follower of *Y'shua HaMashiach* is more than belief, it is *The Way of Life*. On the first *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) after *Y'shua* was resurrected, Peter spelled out what should be the path of the Messianic Believer:

"Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' <sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:37-38)

After hearing that the promised Messiah had been put to death, the first question the devout men asked was a very agitated, "What shall we do?" Peter's answer was quick and typically Jewish: "Repent!"

Peter did not tell them to take revenge upon the ones who were responsible for Messiah's crucifixion. He did not tell them to take up arms and fight against the Roman occupation. What he told them was to "repent." But what exactly does it mean to "repent?"

*metanoeo* {met-an-o-eh'-o} 1) to change one's mind, i.e. to repent 2) to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins."

The first step of repentance is to change one's mind to a better direction. The parallel Hebrew word for repentance (*metanoeo*) is *teshuvah* (teh-shoe'-vah). *Teshuvah* comes from the root word *shuv*, and it means to "return." In this case, it means a return to God and His way of life.

The first aspect of *teshuvah* is the feeling of genuine remorse. However remorse, by itself, changes nothing unless it is accompanied by some kind of concrete act which confirms that the remorse felt was deep enough to make a profound change in the life of the individual.

There are two aspects to the act of *teshuvah*. The first is the process of ceasing to do evil. The second is the process of replacing the evil one has been doing with good deeds:

**"Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean;  
Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes.  
Cease to do evil,  
<sup>17</sup> Learn to do good;  
Seek justice,**

**Rebuke the oppressor;  
Defend the fatherless,  
Plead for the widow."** (Isa. 1:16-17)

This step is a "heart matter," for God looks on the heart to determine an individual's motivation:

**"But the LORD [*YHVH*] said to Samuel,  
"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD [*YHVH*] looks at the heart.*"** (I Sam. 16:7)

The Scriptures also teach that God looks upon man's actions as well as upon his heart. When the prophet *Jonah* went to the city of *Nineveh* and proclaimed the coming wrath of God, it was not only their remorse, but their discernible turning from evil which caused God to look upon them favorably:

**"Then God saw their works, that they turned [*shuv*] from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."** (Jonah 3:10)

It has been said that "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Many times, the good intentions that follow a remorseful repentance are quickly replaced by a carnal desire to drift back into old sinful ways. The real proof of repentance is when a discernible change for the better can be seen in the life of the individual over a long period of time.

~ Be Immersed ~

The second part of Peter's command to the devout men, was that they should be baptized. This too, is a typical Jewish response, for in Jewish teaching, *teshuvah* (repentance) is followed by immersion in a *mikveh* (meek'-veh = a kosher immersion pool of living water). This "baptism of repentance" is exactly what John the Baptist was teaching in the wilderness:

**"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."** (Mark 1:4)

So too, the baptism Peter taught was a "baptism of repentance," but it was also much more. This New Covenant baptism (which was introduced on *Shavu'ot*) had a twofold purpose:

- ◆ Baptism into the family of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) in (through) the name (office) of *Y'shua HaMashiach*.
- ◆ Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

Not only was this *Shavu'ot* immersion greater than John's, the outcome was also more significant:

- ◆ Like John's baptism, the sins of the person being immersed were remitted.
- ◆ In addition, this new form of immersion (baptism) involved the receiving of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit).

It is all so easy and it happens so fast; too often without adequate thought. Someone posts a story on an Internet forum about another Believer. Portions of their story (if not all of it) may well be true. However, just because it is true does not mean that it bears repeating. Then the "righteous indignation" of other Believers begins to take over, and they start writing responses condemning the person being attacked. Once all of their anger and frustration has been released into what they have written on their computer disk, it is so easy to send it out to the world. All it takes is the push of a button. No envelopes to address, no letters to hand write or type, no postage to buy; just the push of a button and it is out there for all on their e-mail list or forum to read. Then when some other disgruntled Believer reads it they think: "Wow, this is strong 'meat.' [Of course it may well be unclean meat.] I think I'll pass it on to my forum and e-mail list."

The end result can be devastating for the person's spirit about whom all of this garbage is being written. Their spirit may well die right inside of them, or it may just shrivel up (figuratively speaking). When that happens they may wish they had never heard of these so-called brothers and sisters.

Brethren, these kinds of things must cease. This type of behavior does not make for a beautiful Bride. It would be far better if everyone quit this backbiting and spent the time they saved studying the real meaning of the *Torah*, and putting what they learn into practice.

~ What About Sin? ~

Now you may ask, what if the complaints are about a brother or sister who has committed a sin? Should that be broadcast to all of the Believing Community so that everyone can become aware that a sinner is dwelling within our midst?

In some extreme cases the answer may be yes, but it is our opinion that in the vast majority of cases the answer is just plain NO. Over the last thirty years the American public has been titillated by salacious (*lustful, lewd, obscene, indecent*) stories concerning famous Christian evangelists. In addition, we have been flooded with stories about the infidelities of political and military leaders. Was this information profitable to us? Did it cause us to increase our love for one another? Did it build up the Body of Messiah or the nation? Did it cause any of us to draw closer to God, or did it actually separate some from God because of its salacious nature? Did these stories cause some in the general public to look down their noses at the Believing community, or at our nation? Is it not generally known that some people have used the sins of errant Believers to condemn all who profess their hope in *Y'shua HaMashiach*?

What have we gained from all of this 'knowledge' about the sins of our leaders, be they in the Church or in the nation? Here is what we have gained: depression, despair, loss of faith, and in some cases, complete abandonment of any religious convictions!

Before any of us begin to speak evil about another person, we need to prayerfully consider what the outcome of our *Lashon Hara* might be. Certainly, in extreme cases, people need to be warned about individuals so they can protect themselves and their loved ones from possible harm. (This would be a constructive use of *Lashon Hara*.)

But how often is this the case within the Believing community? Yes it is true, sometimes Believers (or pseudo Believers) do some pretty terrible things, and occasionally a local congregation (or even the Believing community as a whole) needs to know about it and take some type of action to correct the problem. However, in the process of correcting the problem we must also be careful to protect the brethren from even greater sins. Once the original problem has been resolved, we need to make sure that the flames of anger and hatred are no longer being fanned through the continual evil vituperation from our tongues, pens and computers.

~ Caught In Sin ~

The Apostle Paul gave some very clear directives about what the Believing Community should do when sin was found within its house. First of all he said the person involved needed to be confronted. This was supposed to be done first by the person who knew about the problem. If that did not work, then the sinner needed to be confronted by two or three of their brethren. And if that did not work, then they needed to be brought before the court of the congregation -- called the *Beit Din* (Bait Deen = House of Judgment). This principle is set forth in Matthew 18. Please notice that Paul did not say that a single individual was supposed to take it upon himself to be the disciplinarian.

But there is more to it than just having the *Beit Din* condemn the errant individual. Notice how Paul instructed the Corinthian Church to deal with a very serious problem:

**"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife! <sup>2</sup> And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. <sup>3</sup> For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. <sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], <sup>5</sup> deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*]. <sup>6</sup> Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup> Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ [*Messiah*], our Passover, was sacrificed for us. (I Cor. 5:1-7)**

There are a couple of very important points hidden within this passage that are usually overlooked by those who delight in taking another Believer down. First of all, Paul wonders why they have not "mourned."

When a part of the physical body is filled with dis-ease, the entire body suffers. When the dis-ease is minor the body merely experiences discomfort. But when the dis-ease is bad enough, it may totally incapacitate the body and, in extreme cases, may cause the body to die.

The same is true with the spiritual body that constitutes the Believing Community. When the sins are minor in nature the

**"Therefore He says:  
'Awake, you who sleep,  
Arise from the dead,  
And Christ [Messiah] will give you light.'" (Eph. 5:14)**

Now instead of operating in one's old "way of life," the new Messianic Believer adopts a new "way of life." However, it is more than just another "way of life." This *Way* is "The Way of Life," as opposed to all other "ways," which all amount to the same thing, "The Way of Death:"

**"Now you shall say to this people, "Thus says the LORD [YHVH]: 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death.'"" (Jer. 21:8)**

This new "Way of Life" involves a steady "Walk" towards a goal. That goal is to walk in all the ways of God, to love and serve Him with all our mind, heart, soul, and strength:

**"And now, Israel, what does the LORD [YHVH] your God require of you, but to fear the LORD [YHVH] your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul,<sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12-13)**

Those who learn to *Walk* in this manner are blessed by God:

**"Blessed are the undefiled in the way,  
Who walk in the law of the LORD [YHVH]!  
<sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with the whole heart!  
<sup>3</sup> They also do no iniquity;  
They walk in His ways." (Psalm 119:1-3)**

The other "walk" follows a compass pointing toward the lusts of the flesh and the pulls of this world. Such a walk leads to death:

**"But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach]:<sup>18</sup> how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.<sup>19</sup> These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (Jude 1:17-19)**

The "walk" of death may seem to be the proper walk. However, that is only because minds have been darkened to the truth. Therefore, they follow the crowd to destruction:

**"There is a way that seems right to a man,  
But its end is the way of death." (Prov. 14:12)**

~ Stumbling ~

When a child is learning to walk he often stumbles. Even grown people, who have not only learned to walk but also to run, sometimes stumble. Therefore, it should come as no surprise when a person (who has begun a spiritual walk toward *The Way of Life*) stumbles. In a spiritual sense these "stumbles" are called "sins." Maybe this is why some preachers call a pathway that leads to sin a "slippery slope."

When a small child falls, his parents pick him up, dust him off, give him a hug and word of encouragement, and send him off on his "learning to walk" journey. The same is true for us. When we stumble and fall into sin, our heavenly Father is there to pick us up, clean us off through the blood of *Y'shua*, and send us forward on our spiritual journey:

**"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:9)**

However, if we deny that we have stumbled (sinned) and do not confess or repent of our sin (the breaking of the *Written Torah* commands), then that sin stays with us until the day when we do admit it and turn from it, as it is written:

**"For a righteous man may fall seven times  
And rise again,  
But the wicked shall fall by calamity." (Prov. 24:16)**

In Psalm 32, David recorded how he had failed to confess a sin, and how it weighed heavily upon him. However, once he did make his confession, God was faithful to remove it from him:

**"A Psalm of David.  
A Contemplation.  
Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.  
<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man to whom the LORD [YHVH] does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.  
<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.  
<sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.  
Selah.**

**<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I have not hidden.  
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to  
the LORD [YHVH],'  
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah." (Psalm 32:1-5)**

The only One who never stumbled in His spiritual walk was *Y'shua*, even though He was tempted even as we are tempted:

**"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15)**

Because *Y'shua* was tempted by sin, yet did not succumb to it, He is qualified to be our Advocate before God, our Father, in heaven:

**"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] the righteous. <sup>2</sup> And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (I John 2:1-2)**

God? How we answer that question will have a profound impact on the way we conduct our lives. If we see ourselves as a child of God we will want to act as one of His. If we see ourselves as the fleshly son of Adam, living according to our old sinful nature, we will be constantly trying (but never able) to overcome sin by our own strength.

God cannot raise us to our full potential as His son or daughter as long as we live by our old sinful nature. True, that was what we used to do, but now we are a child of God, begotten by the Holy Spirit -- the very power of God that indwells us. Not only that, but our very own fleshly body is the Temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells:

**"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? <sup>20</sup> For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6:19-20)**

We can look forward with great anticipation to the day when our physical body will be raised or changed (in the twinkling of an eye) into an immortal body -- when we will never sin again. In the mean time we can say:

"When I make it fully into the very Kingdom and Family of God..."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ Where Is Love? ~

If someone says, "I love God,"  
And hates his brother,  
He is a liar;  
For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,  
How can he love God whom he has not seen?  
*I John 4:20*

Charles Dickens was a British novelist of the mid-nineteenth century. Many of his stories centered around the wretched conditions that existed among the poor people of London, England during that time. One of his most famous novels is *Oliver Twist*, a story about an orphan who was forced, as a young child, to work in a parish workhouse under strict (if not cruel) taskmasters.

In 1960 the story of *Oliver Twist* was made into a musical play called *Oliver*. Early in the show, a scene develops where all of the children are eating their dinner of extremely meager rations, while the couple who run the parish workhouse are sitting in the front of the dining hall with plenty of food to eat. Oliver finishes his bowl of gruel and goes to the head table and asks a simple question: "More?" The headmaster responds angrily: "More? You want more?"

Of course Oliver does not get any more food, and neither do the other boys who are forced to live there, because the less food the couple feeds the children, the more money they have to keep for themselves. In the musical, this scene then develops into Oliver's first solo song. The title of that song is *Where Is Love?*

## ~ A Question for the Body of Messiah ~

Today, as we look at the spiritual condition of the Body of Messiah (those who have accepted *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their Lord and Savior and are trying to follow His ways and His example), we are shocked to see how some Believing members of our Body are treating one another. Oliver's question often comes to mind:

*Where Is Love?*

*Y'shua*, on the last night He spent with His disciples before being taken to His crucifixion, said that love was always to be found among those who follow Him:

**"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.'" (John 13:34-35)**

A short time later, that same evening, He made the very same point a second time:

**"This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. ... <sup>17</sup> These things**

~ Loving Neighbor ~

The last five commandments teach the basics when it comes to loving our neighbors.

- ◆ <sup>13</sup> **'You shall not murder.'**
- ◆ <sup>14</sup> **'You shall not commit adultery.'**
- ◆ <sup>15</sup> **'You shall not steal.'**
- ◆ <sup>16</sup> **'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.'**
- ◆ <sup>17</sup> **'You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.'**  
(Ex. 20:13-17)

While these 'neighbor' commandments seem pretty straightforward, *Y'shua* taught us that there is a difference between keeping the letter of the commandment (law) and the spirit of the commandment (law):

**"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' [empty headed; a derisive statement] shall be in danger of hell fire. ... <sup>27</sup> You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."**  
(Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28)

It is obvious from this teaching, that there is more to the commandments than just keeping the "letter of the law."

~ The Details ~

It must be remembered that the Ten Commandments (or Words) are the overall principles which are to be followed by a Messianic Believer. Much more detailed information on how to implement these commands is to be found among the 613 Commandments of the *Written Torah*, the teachings of *Y'shua*, and the writings of the Apostles.

One must be careful, when studying the details of the Law, to comprehend the intent of the Law. As we have seen above (in the example given by *Y'shua*), if one does not understand the spiritual intent of the Law they can fall short of it.

Learning the details of the *Torah* can be intimidating at first. There are so many instructions, and they are widely scattered throughout the first five books of the Bible. In addition, amplifications of the commands are to be found in the *Prophets* and the *Writings*.

When it comes to the *Brit Chadasha* (*Breet Hah-dah-shah'* = the ReNewed Covenant or New Testament), it gets even more complex. Finis Jennings Dake, in *Dake's Annotated*

*Reference Bible*, lists 1050 commandments which he claims to have found in the New Testament.

When starting out, all of these instructions can seem overwhelming and this has caused some Believers to throw up their hands and decide to follow those who teach that the law has been "done away." However, as we have seen, that point of view leads to *antinomianism*, or lawlessness, and is indeed a "slippery slope" condemned by *Y'shua*.

~ A Life Long Walk ~

A child does not learn to walk in one day and neither does a new Messianic Believer learn to walk *The Way of Life* in that short of time or even one year. In fact, this walk is a lifelong walk. As long as we have breath and are able to understand the Word of God, our walk must continue.

The leaders of the first century Messianic Community were faced with the same type of questions. Some of the Orthodox Jews, who had been observing the *Torah* commands since their youth, thought that the new Gentile Believers should convert to Judaism, be circumcised, and come under the Rabbi's tutelage so they could learn not only the *Written Torah*, but the *Oral Torah* as well. (See our booklet *Which Law?*) In order to allow the new Gentile Believers to have table and social fellowship with their Jewish brethren, the Jerusalem Council instituted their own very brief *Oral Torah* of only four items:

**"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, <sup>20</sup> but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood."**  
(Acts 15:19-20)

These four items were the minimum requirements which the new Gentile Believers had to agree to meet in order to be accepted into fellowship in the Messianic Community. Of course, there were other unstated requirements as well. For example, it went without saying that the Gentile Believers were expected to accept *Y'shua* as their promised Messiah and Savior.

Another assumption, on the part of the leadership of the Jerusalem Council, leads into our second recommendation -- to study the *Written Torah* each and every Sabbath. This was the same suggestion *Ya'acov* (Yah ah'-cove = Jacob aka James) made to the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council:

**"For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."**  
(Acts 15:21)

*Moshe* (Mow-shay' = Moses) was taught in the Synagogues every Sabbath day. Since it was assumed that the new Gentile Believers would be attending Synagogue each and every Sabbath, that meant they were going to learn about the *Written Torah* commandments each week. The ancient Jewish practice was to study the weekly *Torah* portion and expound on its meanings.

Today, we have our own Bibles which contain the *Written Torah*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* (together these comprise the Old Testament). In addition, we have the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). Therefore, even if we are in a situation

**"growing in grace and knowledge..."** (II Pet 3:18)

and:

**"...the perfecting of the saints..."** (Eph. 4:12)

It is a process, designed and initiated by God so that He can bring:

**"...many sons into glory..."** (Heb. 2:10)

**"But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day"**  
(Prov. 4:18)

There can be no question that you are able to make it because once you have received forgiveness you are under grace and not subject to the law of sin and death for that offense which is now covered by the blood of *Y'shua*. Does this mean that you cannot sin? NO, of course you can still sin. The instruction book still exists (the *Torah*) and its rules (laws) are still in effect. Shaul (Paul) addresses this very idea:

**"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. <sup>15</sup> What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! <sup>16</sup> Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine [a righteous lifestyle] to which you were delivered."**  
(Rom. 6:14-17)

~ Faith ~

What is required is complete trust and confidence (i.e. faith) that God will accomplish what He has already begun; to believe that He can and will do what He has promised to do. Faith was the very thing the children of Israel lacked when they refused to trust God to take them into the promised land. As a result they suffered forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and those who refused to trust were not allowed in, they all died in the wilderness. Those who say "If I make it..." are acting just like those faithless Israelites -- not trusting the great God of the Universe to accomplish His good work in them.

But where can we obtain this complete confidence, trust and faith? Even that comes from God:

**"... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus [YHVH], the author and finisher of our faith,..."**  
(Heb. 12:1b-2a)

Yes, even our faith is a gift from God. All we can provide is the willing vessel within which God works. Everything else is God's doing. We find ourselves in trouble when we try to take over the plan ourselves, when we try to do it our way instead of the way God wants us to do it. Have you not seen your own children suffer and chaff under that same kind of attitude, unwilling to do it the way you have instructed them, but wanting to do it their way instead? We are just like little children before God. What we need to develop is not

childhood rebellion, but that beautiful quality of openness to learning that a very young child has -- childhood faith:

**"... Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."**  
(Matt. 18:3)

~ Overcoming ~

Some may object to this positive interpretation of the process of salvation. After all, the scriptures say:

**"He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."**  
(Rev. 21:7)

**"Now  
If the righteous one is scarcely saved,  
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"**  
(I Pet. 4:18)

But the Peter passage goes right on to give us the true and faithful answer:

**"Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."**  
(I Pet. 4:19)

Yes, we must be overcomers, but the overcoming, just like our faith, is authored and accomplished in us by our agreeing with the power of God, the Holy Spirit that indwells us.

How does one go about overcoming? Is it by being scared to death if we break even the minutest rule? Or is it by allowing the Spirit to lead us into all righteousness? It is not a question of the need to overcome our sinful natures, rather it is a question of how we are to accomplish the overcoming. One is a salvation by works, where it is entirely up to us to live sinless lives, the other is salvation **"by grace through faith."** We must have a confidence wherein we trust God to give us the power we need to accomplish the task. The first is doomed to failure, the second is destined for success:

**"So, then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment -- that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement -- and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us, looking away to the Initiator and Completer of that trusting, Yeshua -- who, in exchange for obtaining the joy set before him, endured execution on a stake as a criminal, scorning the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Yes, think about him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you won't grow tired or become despondent. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in the contest against sin."**  
(Heb. 12:1-4 CJB)

~ The Leading Spirit ~

If you are a true son or daughter of God Almighty, then the Holy Spirit of God indwells you. This indwelling Spirit is the earnest payment, the guarantee from God, that He is going to accomplish that which He has set out to do:

**"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ [Messiah] and has anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup> who also has sealed**

~ Summary ~

Christianity is not only "a way of life," it is *The Way of Life*. This *Way of Life* begins with our belief, which must then evolve into trust and Faith (confidence) that *Y'shua's* blood offering on the stake was sufficient to forgive us of all our sins.

Once a Messianic Believer has come to faith (confidence and trust) in Messiah *Y'shua*, the next step is to begin to walk in *The Way of Life*. This new walk leads away from one's old sinful way of life and into the righteous *Way of Life*, which is initiated by repentance of past sins, and immersion (if possible) in a *mikveh* into the Family of God. Immersion is done in the name (authority or office) of *Y'shua* and symbolizes death to the old way of life and resurrection to the new way of life. The Messianic Believer then receives the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*, which empowers them to live godly lives.

The Messianic Believer also needs a map or guidebook to show them the way to walk. That guidebook is the *Written Torah*, as explained and amplified by the *Prophets, Writings*, and the *Brit Chadasha*. Without that spiritual guidebook, the Believer is in danger of becoming a *Carnal Christian* and thereby falling into *Moral Relativism*, which is a form of the "Mystery of Lawlessness."

Of course there will be obstacles and stumbling (in the form of sinful behavior) as this new creature in Messiah learns to walk the walk of righteous faith. However, being a loving Father, God is quick to forgive us of our stumbles (sins), if we are willing to confess them, have *Y'shua's* blood applied to them, and return to *The Way of Life*.

Thus, we, as Messianic Believers, set out on the journey of our lifetime. By walking in *The Way of Life* we journey toward our goal of eternal life in the Kingdom of God:

**"So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. <sup>33</sup> And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.' <sup>34</sup> Now when Jesus [*Y'shua*] saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'"**

(Mark 12:32-34)

May your journey lead you to the Kingdom of God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ If I Make It ~

"Watch out, brothers,  
So that there will not be in any one of you an evil heart lacking trust,  
Which could lead you to apostatize from the living God!  
Instead, keep exhorting each other every day,  
As long as it is called Today,  
So that none of you will become hardened by the deceit of sin.  
For we have become sharers in the Messiah,  
Provided, however, that we hold firmly to the conviction we began with,  
Right through until the goal is reached.  
*Hebrews 3:12-14 (CJB)*



There is a phrase that is sometimes heard in the more fundamentalist Christian churches which begins as follows: "If I make it into God's Kingdom..." and then goes on to say something about what that person hopes to be able to do or accomplish or how they want to be when that glorious day arrives. There is a problem here, however. By opening one's statement with the words; "If I make it..." one is implying that the possibility exists that they may not be in the Kingdom of God when *Y'shua HaMashiach* returns to set up the government of God over all the earth. It makes people feel uneasy, so they can never relax, never really enjoy their relationship with God, because if they make one little mistake, well; "God's gonna get you for that."

The source of this phrase may lie in our cultural background. We often begin statements with the word "If." "If it doesn't rain tomorrow I'll cut the grass..." "If I pass this course then I can get into the program I want..." and various kinds of similar statements. However, there is also a deeper and more troubling aspect to this phrase as it applies to our eternal life in the Kingdom of God. It implies that God may not finish what He has seen fit to begin in us; that somehow it depends on our efforts, our goodness, and our righteousness as to whether we will be a part of that privileged number.

Rest assured, that unless you turn your back on God, you are going to "make it." Of this there should be no doubt, for if you have accepted *Y'shua* as your personal Savior, you have been called by God to be one of His very "elect," and as Paul said:

**" He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."**  
(I Thess. 5:24)

Peter also taught that those called of God were a special 'election' and were therefore sanctified:

**"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.**  
(I Peter 1:1-2)

~ Election ~

We have been elected by the foreknowledge of God the Father. He knows that we can and will make it into His Kingdom. He would not have chosen us if we were destined to fail. It is not God's business to call people to failure, for He is choosing a family to join Him in eternal life:

**"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ..."**  
(I Pet. 2:9)

Oh yes, it behooves us to "... proclaim the praises of Him who called you..." to be the finest example of obedient children that we can be. But to think that God is just looking for an excuse to purge us out of the family into which He has called us is ludicrous:

**"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."**  
(Luke 12:32 KJV)

**"This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."**  
(John 6:39-40)

**"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. <sup>30</sup> I and My Father are one."**  
(John 10:27-30)

No man can ever take away your salvation. It is a free gift from God and will be fully accomplished when *Y'shua* returns. Yet for some, the doubt remains. They feel they are just not good enough to ever "make it" into the Kingdom of God.

~ Works, Grace, or Both? ~

The truth of the matter is, you are not "good enough" to "make it" into God's Kingdom, and if you are left to your own strength you never will be "good enough." For the work that God is working in you is not your work, it is the work of God the Father and the Messiah *Y'shua*. No matter how hard you try, you will never be able to achieve the righteousness needed to "make it" into God's Kingdom without God's help.

The prophet Isaiah was inspired by God to write about the righteousness of man:

**"But we are all like an unclean thing,  
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;  
We all fade as a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind,  
Have taken us away.**

**<sup>7</sup> And there is no one who calls on Your name,  
Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;**

**For You have hidden Your face from us,  
And have consumed us because of our iniquities.**

**<sup>8</sup> But now, O LORD [*YHVH*] You are our Father;  
We are the clay, and You our potter;  
And all we are the work of Your hand."**  
(Isa. 64:6-8)

The phrase "filthy rags" in the original Hebrew means menstrual cloths. Our righteousness, of and by itself, is no better than a soiled cloth from a woman's monthly cycle.

If this be true then how can there be even an inkling of hope for any of us, even the most righteous among us? The answer, of course, is that we must rely on God for everything, especially our righteousness.

Abraham was considered to be a righteous man. He did many great works during his lifetime, and was said to be the most hospitable man who ever lived. He sat outside his tent by the roadside so that he might stop any stranger who happened to pass by and invite him into his tent to rest and be refreshed. It was Abraham who rescued Lot, who attempted to talk God into sparing the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah if only a few righteous could be found therein. It was Abraham who was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac if that was what God required. Yet none of these acts, in and by themselves were counted to Abraham as righteousness:

**"What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup> For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup> For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"**  
(Rom. 4:1-3)

It was not the works of Abraham that accounted him to be righteous but rather his faith that made him so. Likewise, it is our belief, our faith, our confidence, our trust in the blood of the Messiah *Y'shua*, that accounts us righteous before God:

**"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast."**  
(Eph. 2:8-9)

Our righteousness before God, as well as our salvation into eternal life, comes entirely from God, it is a free gift:

**"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] our Lord."**  
(Rom. 6:23)

We cannot earn our salvation through works or by our own righteousness. That can only be obtained from God Himself as a result of our acceptance of *Y'shua's* blood in payment for our sins. This is called Grace.

Since we are saved by grace, shall we just forget about doing any good works? Of course not. Now we have all the more reason to glorify God by behaving towards others in like manner as He behaves towards us:

**"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"**  
(James 2:20)