



The Believer's Guide to Complete Righteousness

by: Dean and Susan Wheelock

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The Scriptures used in this article are:

The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB),
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Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc.,
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The Open Bible (New King James Version [NKJV]),
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~ *Forward* ~

ne of the great misunderstandings in the Body of Messiah today is the relationship between Work's Righteousness and Faith Righteousness. Some teach that if one even tries to keep the 'Old Testament Law' they are attempting to "earn their salvation," while others go so far as to teach that unless one keeps all of the law, as set forth by the Rabbis, they are doomed to lose their salvation.

We believe that both of these views represent extreme positions that do not square with the Scriptures and which cause profound division within the Body of Messiah.

It is our heartfelt hope that this booklet will assist Believers in their study of this most important topic and that it will cause many to want to develop the muscles of both legs of righteousness (Faith and Works) so that we may all one day::

"... stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. 4:12b)

May the peace of God
be with you always,

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom
April, 2002

~ ~ ~

~ An Introduction to Righteousness ~

"I say unto you,
That unless your righteousness
Exceeds *the righteousness* of the Scribes and Pharisees,
You will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:20



From where does a person's righteousness come? Is there more than one kind of righteousness? If so, which kind of righteousness is required to obtain eternal life?

These are a few of the important questions that all Believers need to consider, for as *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'-ach = Jesus the Messiah) said, only the 'righteous' will attain eternal life:

"And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matt. 25:46)

If only the 'righteous' will achieve eternal life, then it is essential that we understand what constitutes true righteousness, and the method required for obtaining it so that we may all **"...enter into life..."** (Matt. 19:17).

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now,

**'If the righteous one is scarcely saved,
Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'**

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. 4:17-19)

In this booklet we will be exploring two different types of human righteousness: *Righteousness by Works* and *Righteousness by Faith*.

~ Defining Righteousness ~

Before discussing Biblical terms, it is important to establish definitions so that our communication is clearly understood. Let us begin with a definition of the word *righteous* from *The American Heritage Dictionary*: "1. Morally upright; without guilt or sin: ... 2. In accordance with virtue or morality: ... 3. Morally justifiable: ..."

According to this definition, a righteous person is one who is "without guilt or sin," and who lives a "morally upright" life. This is a very workable definition, as it presents the two primary aspects of Biblical righteousness as it applies to mankind. However, one needs to go much deeper in order to fully understand all of the implications of what constitutes a 'righteous person' and/or a 'righteous life.' The trait of righteousness is so important that it is the only one which exemplifies the Bride of Messiah on her wedding day:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19:7-8)

The Bride is not pictured as being 'beautiful,' 'charming,' 'intellectual,' 'athletic,' or 'poised,' nor is she described by any other adjective. The only trait that is explicitly mentioned in connection with the Bride is that of being clothed in "righteous acts" (in other words, in righteousness).

In the English versions of both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures there is remarkable uniformity in definition and usage of the words which are translated as 'righteous,' or 'righteousness.' In addition, the English words 'just,' 'justify' and 'justification' are often used in place of some of those very same Hebrew and Greek words. For example, when an English Bible states that a person was a 'just' man, it could just as correctly be rendered a 'righteous' man, and vice versa.

There are four primary Hebrew words for 'righteous':

- ◆ *Tzadak* (tzah-dahk, Strong's #6663) is the root word from which all of the other Hebrew words for 'righteous' spring. It means; "to be or make right in a moral or forensic sense." (In this case the word

'forensic' has to do with someone establishing their innocence or righteousness in a court of law.) It is commonly translated as 'righteous,' or 'justified.'

- ◆ *Tzadik* (tzah-deek,' Strong's #6662) means: "a just, lawful or righteous man. One who has a just cause. Honest, virtuous, pious." This word almost always applies to a person who is righteous. For example: "...Noah was a just man (*Tzadik*), perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." (Gen. 6:9)
- ◆ *Tzedek* (tzeh-dehk,' Strong's #6664) means: "the right, the just cause, justice." *Tzedek* is most usually translated as 'righteousness,' whether it be related to God or man.
- ◆ *Tz'dakah* (tzeh-dah-kah,' Strong's #6666) means: "rightness, justice, moderately, righteousness, rectitude, piety, virtue, welfare." 'Righteousness' and 'justice' are the two primary renderings of this word.

In like manner, the companion words for 'righteous' and 'righteousness' in Greek are all derived from directly related words:

- ◆ *Dikaios* (dik-ah-yos, Strong's #1342) means: "equitable, innocent, holy, righteous, observing divine and human laws." This word is commonly translated as 'right,' 'righteous,' and 'just.'
- ◆ *Dikaiosune* (dik-ah-yos-oo-nay, Strong's # 1343) means: "justification, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God." It is always translated as 'righteousness.'
- ◆ *Dikaioo* (dik-ah-yo-o, Strong's #1344) means: "to render just or innocent, free, justify, to make righteous, to pronounce righteous." It is almost always translated as 'justified.'
- ◆ *Dikaioma* (dik-ah-yo-mah, Strong's #1345) means: "an equitable deed, a statute or decision." It is translated as 'ordinances,' 'judgment,' and 'righteousness.'

There are many nuances to these Hebrew and Greek words which the translators have tried to capture by using various English words. However, the bottom line is that in order to be considered a righteous man (a *Tzadik*), and thereby qualify for eternal life, one must practice right living (righteousness), AND be cleared of all accusations of wrongdoing through a court of law that has the power to render one innocent. As we shall see, both right living and acquittal of crimes committed have support in the Scriptures. Confusion arises when one tries to define all types of Biblical righteousness under only one of those headings.

~ Two Kinds of Righteousness ~

Apart from the righteousness of God, the Scriptures teach that there are two types of righteousness by which man is to be judged: The Righteousness of Works, and the Righteousness of Faith. It is imperative that we always keep these two differing types of righteousness separate when studying the Scriptures by continually asking ourselves: Which type of 'righteousness' is being addressed? Both are important, but each has its own very different role to play. The controversy between Faith Righteousness and Work's Righteousness is not a new one. It is the very same controversy that took place in the first century CE, when *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul, later named Paul) contended with those who believed that Work's Righteousness could do the job that had been given to Faith Righteousness. Meanwhile, *Ya'acov* (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob or James), taking the other side of the controversy, made it equally clear that Faith Righteousness must not be considered a replacement for Work's Righteousness. Let us endeavor, in the remainder of this study, to sort out the difference between these two types of righteousness and place each in its proper perspective so that we may:

"... stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. 4:12b)

~ The Righteousness of God ~

Before delving into the various aspects of righteousness as it applies to man, it is important to understand that the true definition of righteousness originates, not in a man made dictionary, but from our Creator God, the One who made all things. Both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures speak of God as being 'Almighty' or, in one instance (in the KJV), 'Omnipotent.' In Hebrew the word translated as 'Almighty' is *Shaddai* (Shad-die'). This appellation (name or title) signifies the All Powerful One above whom no other power can exist. In Greek the companion word is *Pantokrator* and it means the 'all-ruling One.'

Because *El Shaddai* (Almighty God) is the supreme ruler of the universe, and is the Creator of all things, He defines righteousness by His very nature. In other words, *El Shaddai* is inherently righteous. *Moshe* (Mow-shay' = Moses) recognized this fact and included it in the *Song of Moses*:

**"For I proclaim the name of the LORD:
Ascribe greatness to our God.**

***He is the Rock, His work is perfect;
For all His ways are justice,
A God of truth and without injustice;
Righteous and upright is He.***" (Deut. 32:3-4)

El Shaddai cannot sin because sin is, by its very definition, that which is opposed to God or God's will. Since God is the full embodiment of righteousness, it stands to reason that anything or anyone who places himself in opposition to God is unrighteous. Another way of saying the same thing is that God did not create 'evil' in order to plague mankind. Rather, 'evil' exists because it is that which is opposed to the righteousness of God. Because of the KJV translation, some cite the following passage in Isaiah to support their belief that God created 'evil':

**"I am the LORD, and there is no other;
I form the light and create darkness,
I make peace and create calamity; (*evil in KJV*)
I, the LORD, do all these things."** (Isaiah 45:6b-7)

However, God is not the father of evil. Rather, evil is that which stands in opposition to God; the only One who is truly good and righteous. God knows evil because He is God and He understands that which is opposed to His will and nature.

One way in which 'Righteousness' can be understood by men is through the direct experience of evil. This could be called the empirical (experiential, or through experimentation) method for determining what is righteous and what is not. This was the method used by *Chava* (Hah-vah' = Eve) when she decided to find out for herself whether eating from the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil* would really bring about her death, or if it would make her become "like God" as the serpent had claimed:

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?""

"And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

"And the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" (Gen. 3:1-5)

Certainly God understands good and evil, yet He has never partaken of that which is evil.

HaSatan's (Hah Sah-tahn' = Satan or the Adversary) lie to *Chava* (Eve) was not that she would become like God in the aspect of knowing good and evil, but that she would not die.

If *Adam* and *Chava* would have had complete trust (i.e. faith) in God, they could have remained sinless; not transgressing the will of God. In this state they could have come to understand righteousness from a completely different direction than the path they chose; understanding that being righteous means always doing the will of God. Of course, they eventually did come to this understanding, but, by the time they arrived at that point, sin had already entered the door and the death process had already taken hold of them.

According to Jewish tradition, when *Adam* and *Chava* were first created they were clothed with the radiance of God and that is why they did not know they were physically naked. However, God will not (indeed cannot) dwell with unrighteousness, so once they had sinned God removed His radiance from them. It was only when they saw and understood their nakedness (a physical representation of their spiritual condition which had been revealed to them through this event) that they realized the consequences of their actions.

While mankind became sinful by nature¹ the fact remains that God is inherently good. This is borne out from a clear statement made by our Savior, *Y'shua*:

**"So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.
But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.'"** (Matt. 19:17)

Thus, it is God who defines righteousness by who He is and what He does. Left to the opinions of men, the result of such folly creates the type of moral chaos which was found in the days of old, when:

"...everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judg. 21:25b)

¹ As a result of sin having entered into the first parents, all mankind inherits a sin nature but not sin itself. Each human being is only responsible for their own sins, never for the sins of others, whether they be parents, children, spouse, relatives, or neighbors (see Ezek. 14:12-33).

~ God Loves Righteousness ~

Since God is the inherent embodiment of righteousness, it stands to reason that He also loves those who are righteous:

**"For the LORD is righteous,
He loves righteousness;
His countenance beholds the upright."** (Psalm 11:7)

**"The LORD opens the eyes of the blind;
The LORD raises those who are bowed down;
The LORD loves the righteous.
The LORD watches over the strangers;
He relieves the fatherless and widow;
But the way of the wicked He turns upside down."** (Psalm 146:8-9)

He hears the cries of those who are righteous:

**"The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry. ...
The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
And delivers them out of all their troubles."** (Psalm 34:15, 17)

He upholds those who are righteous:

**"For the arms of the wicked shall be broken,
But the LORD upholds the righteous."** (Psalm 37:17)

The reason God has such an affinity for those who practice righteousness is because He is a just God:

**"Tell and bring forth your case;
Yes, let them take counsel together.
Who has declared this from ancient time?
Who has told it from that time?
Have not I, the LORD?
And there is no other God besides Me,
A just God and a Savior;
There is none besides Me."** (Isa. 45:21)

God is just and He is righteous. It is to Him that we must look if we are to come to a proper understanding of righteousness.

~ Chapter Summary ~

It is apparent from the Scriptures that only the 'Righteous' will be saved and granted a place in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-Bah' = The World to Come). Therefore, it is imperative that Believers understand what constitutes righteousness so that each one of us may direct our life toward that end.

The ultimate definition of righteousness is: *that which is in accord with the nature and will of God*. God, because of who He is, cannot sin. To do so would put Him in opposition to Himself, which would be a contradiction of terms.

There are two types of righteousness as applied to mankind: Righteousness by Works and Righteousness by Faith. Both are important but neither one can take over the role of the other. When all is said and done, the bottom line is that the ultimate standard for righteousness is God Himself:

**"Who is wise?
Let him understand these things.
Who is prudent?
Let him know them.
For the ways of the LORD are right;**

The righteous walk in them,
But transgressors stumble in them." (Hosea 14:9)

Whenever a man does that which is in accordance with the will of God, that man becomes righteous on that particular point. However, when a man does that which is contrary to the nature or will of God (when he sins), that act places him in direct conflict with the righteousness of God causing him to become unrighteous.

The Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are remarkably consistent in their definitions and usage of the words which translate into 'right,' 'just,' 'righteous,' 'justice,' 'righteousness,' 'made righteous,' and 'justified.' There is absolutely no contradiction between the concepts of righteousness found in the Hebrew Scriptures and the *Brit Chadasha*. This fact will become more evident as we explore the concept of righteousness more fully in the succeeding chapters.

~ ~ ~

~ Work's Righteousness ~

If you want to enter into life,
keep the commandments.
Matt 19:17b

Without a doubt, God set the ultimate standard for righteousness, a standard that can not be fully achieved by mortal man. Yet the fact that we cannot be totally and completely righteous like our Father in heaven does not excuse us from striving to achieve that goal, no matter how impossible the task might seem. In this chapter we will explore what it means to have righteousness through good works, and how Work's Righteousness results in great blessings to each member of the Bride.

The Scriptures abound with stories about both men and women who strove to be righteous. In fact, all of the great men and women of old exemplified Work's Righteousness in their individual lives. When the leaders of Israel and/or Judah were practicing righteousness, the nation as a whole tended to do the same. Likewise, when the leaders of Israel and/or Judah were wicked, the nation as a whole tended to fall into the same path of wickedness. In addition, when the children of Israel corporately practiced a degree of 'Work's Righteousness,' the nation as a whole was blessed accordingly.

Just like society today, all of the children of Israel were never completely righteous nor completely wicked. However, there were a fair number who did live righteous lives, at least to a degree. At one point *Eliyahu HaNavi* (El-lee-yah'-who Hah Nah-vee' = Elijah the Prophet) thought he was the only *Tzadik* (Zah-deek' = a righteous man) left in Israel, until God revealed to him that there were an additional seven thousand who had remained faithful:

"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (I Kings 19:18)

~ The Righteous Man ~

Many passages in the Scriptures testify to the simple fact that living a righteous life in the flesh (by observing and doing righteous acts) renders a person 'righteous.' People who lived such lives are referred to as *Tzadakim* (plural form of *Tzadik*) in Hebrew, or as *Dikaios* (dik-ah-yos) in Greek. Their righteousness is based upon the Scriptural understanding of righteousness which is achieved by works; by how well they have lived their lives in accordance to God's will.

The first *Tzadik* ('just' or righteous man) mentioned in Scripture is Noah:

"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. ... Noah was a just man, (*tzadik*) perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God." (Gen. 6:8-9)

The *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = ReNewed Covenant or New Testament) confirms this title for Noah and also adds *Lot* to the list:

"... Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, ...

"... And delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) ..." (II Pet. 2:5, 7-8)

David was recognized as a *Tzadik* by his predecessor, King Saul, when he spared Saul's life:

"Then he (Saul) said to David: 'You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. ... for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me.'" (I Sam. 24:17-18)

King David understood that he was considered to be a *Tzadik*, and he was brave enough to pray the following:

**"...Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to my integrity within me." (Psalm 7:8)**

God Himself, designated three particular men as being righteous, when He spoke through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel:

"The word of the LORD came again to me, saying: 'Son of man, when a land sins against Me by persistent unfaithfulness, I will stretch out My hand against it; I will cut off its supply of bread, send famine on it, and cut off man and beast from it. *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they would deliver only themselves by their righteousness,*' says the Lord God." (Ezek. 14:12-14)

(Notice the deliverance mentioned in this passage is only a physical one, it is not a deliverance from eternal death.)

Of course, the three primary 'righteous men' of the Hebrew Scriptures are the Patriarchs; *Avraham* (Ahv-rah-hahm' = Abraham), *Yitzhak* (Yeet'-sock = Isaac), and *Ya'acov* (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob). Several times in Scripture they are referred to as God's 'servants,' and the memory of their righteousness was often used by others (such as Moses) to remind God of their faithfulness to Him, and His promises to them:

""Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, ..." (Deut. 9:27)

There are a number of *Tzadakim* mentioned in the *Brit Chadasha* as well. The following six people were all central to the life of Messiah *Y'shua*.

Yoseif (Yoh'-safe = Joseph):

"Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, ..." (Matt. 1:19a)

Yochanan (Yoh-cah-nahn') the Immerser (John the Baptist):

"... Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. ..." (Mark 6:20)

Miriam (Meer-ree-ahm' = Mary) is not specifically called 'righteous.' However, the manner in which *Gabriel* addresses her tells us that she was considered to be so by God:

"Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'" (Luke 1:26-28)

Joseph of Arimathea:

"And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. ... who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God." (Luke 23:50-51)

Zacharias and Elizabeth:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:5-6)

In addition to proclaiming Zacharias and Elizabeth righteous (*dikaios*), Luke also wrote about the criteria which is used to determine righteousness. That criteria is to walk in (i.e. keep) all the "commandments and ordinances" of God in a "blameless" manner (Luke 1:6). This corresponds perfectly with the Hebrew Scriptures, where we read the following definition of righteousness:

**"My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness."** (Psalm 119:172)

It is generally accepted that the 'commandments' mentioned in this verse include all of the 613 commandments that are said to be found in the *Torah*. If all of God's commandments are considered to be 'righteous,' then the manner in which a person can be deemed righteous is how well he follows those commandments. Thus, Work's Righteousness can be attained by following all of the commandments of God as laid out in the Holy Scriptures. This includes, but is not limited to the 613 commandments that are said to be found within the *Torah*, the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, not all 613 commandments apply to any single person. Some apply only to men, others only to women, priests, or kings, etc.

Although Faith Righteousness is also very important (and will be covered in the next chapter), for the purposes of this discussion it is important to understand that the Scriptures (both Testaments) teach that obedience to the commandments of God (Work's Righteousness) is what causes an individual to be considered a *Tzadik* (a righteous person).

~ Righteous Commands ~

As we have seen, Psalm 119:172 gives the definition of righteousness as being all the commandments of God. Many Believers understand this to be referring only to the Ten Commandments. However, the interesting thing to note here is that the "Ten Commandments" are not called commandments in the Hebrew Scriptures. Instead they are called the 'Ten Words,' or even the 'Ten Things:'

""And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten ... [davar], which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me."" (Deut. 10:4)

The Hebrew word *davar* (dah-vahr', Strong's #1697) is defined as: *a word; a matter or thing*. There is a different Hebrew word that is almost always translated as 'commandments.' That word is *mitzvah* (meets'-vah, Strong's #4687). *Mitzvah* (*mitzvot* is the plural form) means: *a command, whether human or divine, law, ordinance, precept*.

In Jewish tradition, all 613 'commandments' found in the *Torah* constitute *mitzvot*. So, in this understanding, when a person abides by any one of the 613 *mitzvot* of the *Torah*, that person is said to be committing a righteous act, because, as Psalm 119:172 says; **"...all Your commandments (*mitzvot*) are righteousness."** Likewise, if a person performs a good deed, that good deed is also considered to be a *mitzvah*. Thus, the keeping of the commandments are *mitzvot*, and the doing of good deeds are also *mitzvot*. Now, if a deed is truly 'good,' it will, in some way, fulfill a command, for the fulfillment of any one of the commandments is, by its very nature, a good deed. One could say that keeping the commandments of God constitutes **"Living in the fullness of Torah."**

To live in the fullness of the *Torah*, means that the Believer is doing 'good deeds,' or *mitzvot*. There can be no 'law' against *mitzvot*, since it is *mitzvot* that make up 'the Law.' It is written:

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

In other words, performing *mitzvot* (good deeds) by properly caring for the orphans and widows, is religion in its purest form. But *Ya'acov* (Jacob or James) goes on to also instruct each one of us to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world." This too is a direct reference to the 613 *mitzvot* of the *Torah*, since it is within these commandments that we are given instruction about how to remain pure in God's sight. So, the keeping of the commandments is a *mitzvah* and the doing of a good deed is also a *mitzvah*, and all *mitzvot* are righteous.

~ Prominent Commands ~

In Jewish teaching the Ten Words are considered part of the 613 *mitzvot* of the *Torah*. However, because God designated the Ten as *davar* (words) rather than *mitzvot* (commandments), they receive a more prominent stature. This also stands in accord with the *Brit Chadasha* despite the fact that no differentiation is made (in the Greek) between the Ten and the other 603 *mitzvot*. In Greek all 'commandments' are called *entole* (Strong's #1785). Nevertheless, *Y'shua* also gave the Ten prominence by referring to them several times in His teaching; to the exclusion of the others. For example:

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?'

"So He said to him, '... if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.'

"He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus said, 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?'

"Jesus said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." (Matt. 19:16-22)

The young man had tried very hard to observe all of the *mitzvot*, yet he became sorrowful at the thought of giving away his riches and following *Y'shua*. *Y'shua* exposed the problem as "serving money" in the Sermon on the Mount when He said you cannot serve two masters. (Matt. 6:19-33).

A careful study of the Scriptures reveals that the 613 *mitzvot* can be structured into three levels. First of all, there are the two great commandments:

"Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?'"

"Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'" (Deut. 6:5) This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18) On these two commandments hang all the Law (Torah) and the Prophets. (Matt. 22:35-40)

Just beneath these two great commandments, lie the Ten Words. The first five (some say the first four) apply to the first of the Great Commands, which is to love God. The last five (some say the last six) pertain to loving one's neighbor. Underneath these twelve, lie the remaining 601 *mitzvot*. When viewing the commandments in this way, we can see that the first two levels summarize each lower level. In other words, to fully keep the two greatest commandments is to keep the Ten Words which, in turn, if totally kept, constitute the observance of the whole 613, for all of the 613 commandments are summarized by the Ten Words which are, in turn, summarized by the two Great Commandments.

~ Y'shua Taught Work's Righteousness ~

In the *Parable of the Wheat and the Tares*, Y'shua used plants to illustrate those who practice righteousness and those who practice lawlessness:

According to this parable, at the end of the age people will be divided into two groups:

- ◆ Those who are *antinomian* (ant-tea-noh'-mee-an = against law [Torah]), who practice lawlessness, sin, unrighteousness and commit evil acts. Y'shua pictured these as tares (weeds).
- ◆ Those who keep the law (Torah); who are sinless, righteous and commit acts of love and kindness. Y'shua **"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, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 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. 13:41-43)
- ◆ Pictured these as wheat (the good grain).

But, some may ask; How can we know for sure that Y'shua did not 'do away with the law' (Torah)? And so we answer; He did not do away with the law because He specifically said that He did not:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 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. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them (the Torah or Law) he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:17-19)

Controversy often erupts over the meaning of the words 'fulfill' and 'fulfilled' in the preceding passage. Interestingly enough, these two words are completely unrelated in the original Greek language. The word 'fulfilled' is *ginomai* (Strong's #1096) and means: "to cause to be," or "come to pass." It would be better translated "occurred." In other words, not even the smallest letter or decoration upon the letters will disappear until everything that is supposed to occur has occurred. Since heaven and earth still exist, all things have not yet 'occurred.'

The word 'fulfill' is *pleroo* (Strong's #4137). It means; "to make replete." It would be better translated as 'complete.' In other words, Y'shua did not come to abolish the Torah (Law or instruction), but to complete it. This means that He was sent to show Believers how to live in the fullness of the Torah. This is why Y'shua was known to His disciples as the Living Torah; the One who walked in (kept) the commandments and statutes perfectly; exactly the way God intended them to be kept when He gave the *Torah* at Mount Sinai.

This would also explain what Y'shua meant when He made the following statements:

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matt. 6:33)

"For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:20)

The followers of Y'shua are not only to appear righteous on the outside, they are to be dedicated to righteousness on the inside as well. They are to live righteously whether anyone is watching or not. For Y'shua said:

""Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."" (Matt. 23:27-28)

Y'shua taught that we are to obey both the letter of the law (so as to be righteous before men) and the spirit of the law (so as to be righteous before God). This means we must not only forgo murder, we must also forgo hatred, for that is the emotion which leads to murder. In addition, we must not only forgo adultery, we must also forgo lust, since that is the emotion which leads to adultery. (Matt. 5:20-30). Good behavior and right attitude of the heart are both required of the disciples of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah).

Now, when some of the Pharisees saw *Y'shua* sitting at a table eating a meal with tax collectors and sinners, they complained to His disciples. But *Y'shua* answered them:

""... go and learn what *this* means: "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*" For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."" (Matt. 9:13)

Please notice, the subject here is not salvation but repentance. *Y'shua* is saying that sinners have a need to repent of their sinfulness.

Everyone (both the righteous and the sinner alike) needs salvation, which comes from Faith Righteousness. But repentance (a complete change of heart and a determination to turn one's life around and walk in the path of Work's Righteousness) must go hand in hand with Faith Righteousness. (More on this in the next chapter.)

The concept of repentance is more fully expressed by the Hebrew word *teshuvah* (teh-shoe-vah'), which means not only feeling sorry for one's sins, but, even more importantly, turning from them and returning to the ways of God.

Each year the Jewish people observe a forty day period called *Teshuvah*, which leads up to the great day of final judgment and forgiveness; *Yom Kippur* (Yohm Key-poor' = Day of Atonement). During this period of time each individual is expected to identify their own sins; both those against God and those against their fellow man. They are expected to go to their fellow man seeking forgiveness and, likewise, to grant forgiveness to those who come to them in the same manner. Only when that exercise has been completed may they go before God and seek His forgiveness as well. This is why *Y'shua* taught His disciples to pray:

**""And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.**

...

""For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."" (Matt. 6:12, 14-15)

Forgiveness is the gate through which we are able to move from Work's Righteousness into Faith Righteousness, for it requires that we have complete trust that God has also forgiven us for our sins. Forgiveness is also the evidence that *teshuvah* has taken place in our lives and is the ultimate way in which we can show our faith through our works.

~ Paul Taught Work's Righteousness ~

It is a fact that Paul emphasized Faith Righteousness far more than he emphasized Work's Righteousness. However, he did teach Work's Righteousness. Consider the following passage where Paul declares the *Torah* (instruction) to be righteous:

""Therefore the law (*Torah*) is holy and just (*righteous*) and good."" (Rom. 7:12)

Paul was emphatic that we must not partake of sin:

""Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.

""What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"" (Rom. 6:12-15)

"Do not be deceived: 'Evil company corrupts good habits.' Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame."
(I Cor. 15:33-34)

What is sin? First and foremost:

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."
(I John 3:4)

Sin is the breaking of the *mitzvot* (commandments) of the *Torah*, as well as the instructions given in other parts of the Scriptures.

However, there are two other definitions of sin found in the *Brit Chadasha*:

"... Whatever is not from faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23b)

And:

"... To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Whatever we do, it must be from a position of total faith that our actions are not contrary to the written word of God. In addition, as Believers we need to be performing *mitzvot* in the form of good deeds.

Paul, in his second letter to Timothy, asserts that all of Scripture (Old Testament) is inspired by God and that we are not to ignore any part of it, for:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Tim. 3:16-17)

The written word, which includes the *Torah* (the first five books of the Old Testament) and its 613 *mitzvot* (commandments), was inspired by God to be instruction in righteousness for the children of Israel. Since all Believers have been grafted into the 'Olive Tree of Israel,' we too have become the 'children of Israel.' Therefore, all of those instructions apply to us as well:

"... and you, (*Gentiles*) being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them (*Israel*), and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, ..."
(Rom. 11:17)

~ Other Teachers ~

In addition to Paul's teaching on Work's Righteousness, Peter also taught that Believers should live their lives for righteousness, and not fall back into the sins that required *Y'shua's* sacrifice in the first place. For *Y'shua*:

"... bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness ... For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (I Pet. 2:24-25)

Ya'acov (Jacob or James) was the most outspoken of the Apostles when it came to teaching the doctrine of Work's Righteousness. His position was that Faith Righteousness would remain hidden within the heart of the individual, and no one else would know it existed unless it was made manifest by Work's Righteousness:

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:21, 24-26)

The Apostle John also considered the 613 *mitzvot* to be in force:

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (I John 2:3-4)

This is very strong language and we all need to read it and believe that it means what it says, for John goes on to say that what he is writing is not a new commandment but an old one:

"Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning." (I John 2:7)

What does the phrase "the word which you heard from the beginning" mean? At that period in time (1st century) and in that place (Judea) it could only mean the commandments found in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). In other words John is speaking about the *Torah* and its correct application as taught by *Y'shua*.

Immediately following this statement John goes on to say he indeed does have a "new commandment" to give to the Believers:

"Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him." (I John 2:8-10)

This new commandment has to do with the heart, for it is possible to inwardly hate a brother and yet treat him in an amicable fashion:

"But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." (I John 2:11)

"Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us." (I John 3:24)

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (I John 5:2-3)

All of these Scriptures show that Believers are bound to keep all of the commandments of God which apply to them:

"For this commandment which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?" But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it.

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess." (Deut. 30:11-16)

However, if we plan on obtaining eternal life as a result of keeping the commandments, then we will fail in our endeavor; for the Scriptures do not promise that obedience to the commandments (even total obedience all of one's life) will bring us eternal life. The Apostle Paul addressed this when he said:

"... you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

(Eph. 2:8-10)

Just what are these "good works" that were "prepared beforehand?" They can only be the righteous *mitzvot* (commandments) of God which are written in the *Torah*, having been given at Mt. Sinai some fifteen hundred years before the time of Paul. So even though we cannot be saved by our own good works, we are still instructed to perform them.

~ The Reasons For Work's Righteousness ~

The purpose of Work's Righteousness is threefold:

1.) To show God that we love Him and His only begotten son, *Y'shua*, and that we are indeed sincere about wanting to be in His Kingdom:

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. ... He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself in him." (John 14:15, 21)

2.) To afford the *Tzadik* (righteous individual) blessings during this life. Below are listed some of the earthly blessings that can accrue to those who are determined to follow the instructions found in the *Torah*:

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God:

"Blessed shall you be in:

"the city ... the country ... the fruit of your body ... the produce of your ground ... your basket ... your kneading bowl ... when you come in and ... when you go out." ...

"So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them." (Deut. 28:1-7, 14)

3.) To provide a basis for rewards in the *Olam Haba* (the world to come):

"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor your rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just (righteous).' (Luke 14:12-14)

"For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works." (Matt. 16:27)

"Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward." (II John 8)

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work." (Rev. 22:12)

Work's Righteous should hold a very important place in the life of each and every Believer. To forgo Work's Righteousness is to turn one's back on the very instructions of *El Shaddai* (God Almighty). As the Apostle Paul said:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2)

To lead a righteous life means to avoid sin at all costs. A person living such a life will no doubt receive a great reward in the *Olam Haba* (The World to Come):

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:8-9)

~ What Work's Righteousness Cannot Accomplish ~

Work's Righteousness cannot grant us eternal life, no matter how good a life we might lead. Even those acts of righteousness which we do accomplish in our life time, when compared to the righteousness of God, are seen to be little more than nothing:

**"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." (Isa. 64:6)**

What this passage actually says is that our righteousness (when compared to God's) is no better than a used menstrual cloth. For this reason, all men are in a very dismal state unless their sin is removed. For as the Apostle Paul said:

"There is none righteous, no, not one; ... (Psalm 114:3)" (Rom. 3:10)

And:

"...by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." (Gal. 2:16b)

In addition, David wrote:

**"Hear my prayer, O LORD,
Give ear to my supplications!
In Your faithfulness answer me,
And in Your righteousness.
Do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
For in Your sight no one living is righteous."** (Psalm 143:1-2)

However, there is a way for sinful man to become justified (made righteous) in the sight of God. That is the topic of the next chapter: *Faith Righteousness*.

~ Chapter Summary ~

The standard for righteousness is established by God. It consists of keeping the *mitzvot* (commandments) which He set forth in the entirety of His word (the Letter of the Law). It also includes keeping the Spirit of the Law, for that addresses how a person should feel in his heart about obeying.

The fact that Work's Righteousness is important can be seen by the way God describes the righteous men and women of old. They were all considered to be *Tzadakim*; righteous people who were loved by God.

The entirety of the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament) teaches us that Work's Righteousness is extremely important. *Y'shua* taught it, Paul taught it and so did Peter, John, and *Ya'acov* (Jacob or James, the brother of *Y'shua*).

In Jewish teaching, commandment keeping and good deeds are interwoven. To observe a commandment is a good deed, and to perform a good deed is to keep a commandment. In Hebrew both are called *mitzvot*.

Work's Righteousness cannot give the one who performs it eternal life, for that is the sole realm of Faith Righteousness. However, Work's Righteousness does accomplish three important things:

- ◆ It shows God that we love Him and His only begotten Son, *Y'shua*, and that we are sincere about wanting to be in His Kingdom.
- ◆ It yields blessings during our mortal life.
- ◆ It provides a basis for rewards in the world to come.

Work's Righteousness is an extremely important element in the life of the Believer. Work's Righteousness is what Paul was talking about when he wrote:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1-2)

Finally, our Savior, *Y'shua*, taught that entrance into the Kingdom of God will be bestowed upon those who are deemed righteous according to the *Torah* (instruction), especially if they are persecuted for practicing righteousness:

**"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."** (Matt. 5:10)

May we all strive to be obedient to God through the vehicle of Work's Righteousness.

~ ~ ~

~ Faith Righteousness ~

And he believed in the LORD,
And He accounted it to him
For righteousness.
Genesis 15:6



Faith is one of the most important themes running throughout the entirety of the Scriptures. It is just as important in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) as it is in the Greek Scriptures (New Testament), for in order to please God we must possess faith:

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6)

This verse contains a wealth of useful information about faith and its essential role in aiding the individual Believer in developing a proper relationship with God. The first ingredient of faith mentioned in this verse is belief; to believe that God exists. But belief by itself is not enough, as it is written:

"You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe -- and tremble!" (James 2:19)

Many people in the world believe there is a single God who is the creator of all things. However, many of those same people lack the second essential ingredient mentioned in Hebrews 11:6, the fullness of faith that God is looking for; an unwavering trust that He not only exists, but that He can and will take a personal interest in the life of each individual who "diligently seeks Him." Thus, true Faith involves not only believing that God exists, but also having an unwavering trust and confidence that God can and will save us from the folly of sin. Faith, even though it is a spiritual entity (rather than a physical reality) is nevertheless totally real.

~A Definition of Faith ~

It is written that:

"... faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
(Heb. 11:1)

For,

"... Hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."
(Rom. 8:24b-25)

Faith, by its very definition, cannot be a physical reality, for once the object of faith is present, it no longer qualifies to be called an object of faith, for it has become a reality.

For example: A young man visiting a foreign country meets a young woman and they come to love one another. They want to marry, but circumstances at the time prevent them from doing so. The young man is forced to return to his native land, but before leaving he promises to return and take the young woman to be his bride. She must now wait for her betrothed husband to return. In her mind, there is absolute trust and confidence that he will keep his promise. This is true Faith. Now, once the young man has returned and married her, she no longer has faith that he will do so, for now she is dwelling in the reality of his presence. In other words, her faith has now become sight and therefore is no longer faith.

Faith is the total embodiment of all confidence and trust, that what is believed will come to pass. No doubts, no uncertainties, and no questions, just total and complete Trust. Because the person of complete Faith is so absolutely positive that what they believe will come to pass, Faith takes on a life of its own and becomes a spiritual substance that dwells within their heart until the day it is fulfilled.

Conversely, to lose Faith is to lose the absolute trust and confidence that something is going to happen as promised, which explains why harboring doubt breeds discouragement.

~ The Faith of the Elders ~

If we look up the word 'faith' in *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, we find that only two entries exist in the Old Testament. This fact has led some to conclude that the religion of the Old Testament was based on works. This is simply not true, as the writer of the book of Hebrews makes clear:

"For by it [faith] the elders obtained a good testimony." (Heb. 11:2)

Nineteen men and women from the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) are specifically mentioned, in the 'Faith Chapter,' as being examples of complete, trusting faith. They range from Abel to David. In addition, the prophets are all lumped into one group and not even mentioned by name.

Even though Work's Righteousness plays an important role in Judaism, it is faith, trust, and confidence in God that sustains the spiritual life of the Jew just as much as it does the Christian, for Judaism has always been a religion of faith.

The list of faithful men and women from ancient times is legion, however there is one figure who stands out so completely from the rest that he has come to be known as "the father of the faithful." That man, of course, is *Avraham*:

"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

(Gen. 15:6)

An important point to observe about this verse is that it says *Avraham* believed "in the LORD" (*YHVH* = The Sacred Name), not just that he 'believed' *YHVH*. If a person is brought before a king and told the king will do some particular thing, the person may well believe it. However, this is not to say that the individual has total and complete trust and confidence in the king's integrity in all matters. *Avraham*, on the other hand, believed 'in' God in addition to trusting His message. Taken together these two elements constitute Faith.

More important to this subject is the fact that *Avraham's* faith had a most remarkable outcome; it was counted to him as 'Righteousness.' This introduces an entirely new element, the fact that righteousness can come not only from the righteous actions of a person, but also through a spiritual element called Faith.

What exactly was it that God told *Avraham*, which he believed with such profound trust? It was that *Avraham*, in his old age, would father a son through whom the multitude of blessings (which had previously been promised) would flow:

"After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'"

"But Abram said, 'Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?' Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'"

"And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"

"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

(Gen. 15:1-6)

The word translated 'shield' in verse 1 is the Hebrew word *magen* (mah-gehn', Strong's # 4043). One of the meanings of this word is *protector*. An essential part of *Avraham's* belief 'in God' was that God would be his protector no matter what might happen. God is looking for this same kind of faith today. It is the single most important ingredient we can have in our relationship with Him, for it is written that:

"... without faith it is impossible to please Him, ..." (Heb. 11:6a)

~ Understanding Faith ~

The reason there are so few occurrences of the English word 'faith' in the Hebrew Scriptures is because the translators often chose to render the Hebrew words that might normally be translated 'faith' into other English words such as: 'believe,' 'believed,' 'trust,' 'faithful,' and even 'truth.' Actually, there are three related Hebrew words which deal with the concept of faith:

- ◆ *Aman* (ah-mahn', Strong's #539) which means: *to build up or support, to render firm, to trust or believe.*
- ◆ *Emun* (ay-moon', Strong's #529) which means: *established, trusty; trustworthiness.*
- ◆ *Emunah* (ee-moo-nah', Strong's #530) which means: *firmness; fidelity; faith.*

All of these words are significant in understanding faith from an Old Testament perspective. A detailed study of the usage of these words also aids greatly in understanding the New Testament usage of the Greek word *pistis* (Strong's #4102) which is almost always translated as 'faith.'

Faith is a perfectly good English term, the problem with it is much the same as that with other 'religious' words, it has taken on extraneous meanings because of its religious usage. For this reason David Stern, in his *Complete Jewish Bible* translation, has chosen to use the words 'trust' or 'confidence' instead of 'faith,' when translating *pistis*. This aids the English reader in developing a better understanding of what the writers of the Greek Scriptures were trying to communicate.

Another problem in understanding the New Testament usage of the word 'faith,' is the fact that it is used in two different ways. First, as we have already seen, it speaks concerning the individual trust or confidence a Believer is to have in God and in the Messiahship of *Y'shua*. The second manner in which 'faith' is used has to do with the body of beliefs that constitute the doctrines of those who follow Messiah *Y'shua*. When used in this manner, the translators usually render it as 'the faith.'

~ Faith and Righteousness ~

As we have already seen, the concept of Faith Righteousness finds its roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. Despite the emphasis placed on obedience to the *Torah* and the commandments of God, it is evident from a number of Scriptures that God intended for the children of Israel to understand that salvation depended upon more than just obedience; it also required Faith:

**"But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD;
He is their strength in the time of trouble.
And the LORD shall deliver them from the wicked,
And save them,
Because they trust in Him."** (Psalm 37:39-40)

Although Work's Righteousness is a prerequisite in this example, please notice that it says salvation comes from 'trusting', having confidence, that God will save. In other words, a combination of Work's Righteousness accompanied by Trusting Faithfulness is what moves God to perform the work of salvation for those He considers righteous.

The next passage hints of a 'universal salvation' for the descendants of Israel:

**"Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I am God, and there is no other,
I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness,
And shall not return,
That to Me every knee shall bow,
Every tongue shall take an oath.
He shall say,
Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength.
To Him men shall come,
And all shall be ashamed
Who are incensed against Him.
In the LORD all the descendants of Israel
Shall be justified, and shall glory."** (Isaiah 45:22-25)

The word 'justified' in verse 25 is *tzadak* (zah-dahk', Strong's #6663) and means to be made righteous. So it is God who will make the children of Israel righteous, it cannot and will not come about through their own efforts.

The Isaiah passage quoted above is listed by Alfred Edersheim (in his classic work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*) as being one which the ancient Rabbi's taught were to be applied to the Messiah. The same is true of the following:

**"Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD,
'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:**

The LORD our Righteousness.''' (Jer. 23:5-6)

Ultimately the righteousness of Israel and Judah must be God Himself. That is the bottom line. Once again, Isaiah confirms this understanding:

**'''Listen to Me, you stubborn-hearted,
Who are far from righteousness:
I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off;
My salvation shall not linger.
And I will place salvation in Zion,
For Israel My glory.'''** (Isaiah 46:12-13)

It is God's own righteousness that will serve to bring salvation to the children of Israel. By doing so, God receives all of the glory, thus none of it can be claimed by man.

~ Faith Righteousness Confirmed ~

It should come as no surprise that the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = ReNewed Covenant or New Testament) does not contradict; rather it confirms everything that is taught in the Hebrew Scriptures concerning faith. Remember, at the time *Shaul* (Paul) was writing his letters to the various congregations scattered abroad, the only 'Scriptures' in existence were the Hebrew Scriptures; the so-called 'Old Testament.' That was the 'Bible' of his day. With correct translation and exegesis (scriptural explanation), the seeming contradictions between the two testaments disappear and the two become a unified whole.²

With that in mind, let us now explore several passages in the *Brit Chadasha* that teach us the meaning behind the concept of Faith Righteousness. In order to express the meaning of these concepts more clearly the following quote is taken from the *Complete Jewish Bible*.

First of all, it is important to understand that God's love of mankind is so great, that He made a way to forgive our unrighteousness (sin):

"But now quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear -- although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well -- and it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Y'shua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise. By God's grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous before him, through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Y'shua. God put Y'shua forward as the *kapparah* [atonement, expiation, propitiation, covering] for sin through his faithfulness in respect to his bloody sacrificial death. This vindicated God's righteousness: because, in his forbearance, he had passed over [with neither punishment nor remission] the sins people had committed in the past; and it vindicates his righteousness in the present age by showing that he is righteous himself and is also the one who makes people righteous on the ground of Y'shua's faithfulness."

(Rom. 3:21-26 CJB)

Clearly, it is only the righteousness of God that grants righteousness to mankind. In God's sight there is only one who is considered fully and completely righteous by His own merit:

'''This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.''' (Matt. 3:17)

The vehicle through which God has chosen to deliver His righteousness is the sacrificial death of His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. That is the message of the ReNewed Covenant, the *Brit Chadasha*.

It is interesting to note that *Shaul* makes the point that by accepting the faithful sacrifice of *Y'shua*, God has also vindicated Himself. Why does God need vindication? Because prior to this event it was possible that people could have argued that God had not sufficiently punished His people for their sins, and therefore His promised punishments for not following the instructions of the *Torah* had not been upheld.

Now God has determined to accept the sacrificial death of a sinless one as sufficient payment for the sins of all mankind. He has done this in order to proclaim all those who are willing to accept that sacrifice as being made righteous. This action is a judgment that God has made. As it is written:

"The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." (Psalm 19:9b)

² Once again we recommend the *Complete Jewish Bible*, translated by David Stern, as being an excellent source to help the Believer sort out the many anti-Semitic undertones that have crept into most English translations of the N.T.

"And I heard another from the altar saying, 'Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.'" (Rev. 16:7)

Whether it be the justifying (making righteous) of faithful men, or the punishment of the wicked, whatever God determines can only be deemed a righteous decision. So, it is through the Faith Righteousness of men that the righteousness of God is revealed:

"For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile. For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust -- as the *Tanakh* puts it, 'But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust' (cited from *Hab. 2:4*)." (Rom. 1:16-17 CJB)

Shaul also makes it abundantly clear that Salvation Righteousness can be obtained only through trusting faith and never by works:

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law [*Jews*], but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham [*Gentiles who, like Avraham, believe*], who is the father of us all ..." (Rom. 4:16)

The following passage tells us that all Believers were expected to learn and live by the *Torah* (God's instructions), for once the minimum requirement for fellowship had been met (Acts 15:20), then every Gentile convert was expected to attend Synagogue each and every *Shabbat*. There they would learn all of the Law (*Torah*) that was to be kept:

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

~ Differing Requirements For Fellowship ~

There were two primary differences between the Synagogues of the Believing Jews and the Synagogues of the non-believing Jews. The most obvious was that the members of the Believing Synagogues accepted *Y'shua* as the promised *Messiah ben Joseph* (the Suffering Servant), and believed that He would appear yet a second time as *Messiah ben David* (the Conquering King).

Even though the leadership of the non-believing Synagogues did not accept *Y'shua* as Messiah, nevertheless, in many cases (especially in Jerusalem) they allowed those Jews who believed in *Y'shua* to continue in Synagogue fellowship with them. A complete break between the Believers and the leadership of the non-believing Synagogues did not take place until the *Bar Kochba* revolt of 132-35 CE. However, in the Diaspora, the break between the two took place much earlier, when many uncircumcised Gentiles came to believe that *Y'shua* gave up his life in order to make atonement for their sins and grant them eternal life.

Part of the problem centered around the requirements which non-believing Jews placed upon those Gentiles who wished to become proselytes. They had to go through a lengthy period of learning both the *Torah* and the customs of the Jews. During this time (a minimum of one year) the prospective proselyte (called a God-fearer, see Acts 10:1-2) was not allowed to have table fellowship (share a meal) with the Jews for fear that he might unknowingly render the observant Jews unclean. As a result of these and other concerns during this training period, the God-fearer was required to sit separately in the Synagogue. In other words, a symbolic 'wall of partition' had been erected so there could be no intermingling of Jew and Gentile, even in the Synagogue. Once the God-fearer had completed his course of study, understood the commandments of the *Torah*, and the customs of that particular Synagogue, he was then eligible for circumcision.

Once the circumcision had healed, the God-fearer would be immersed in a *mikvah* (mEEK'-vah = immersion pool), after which he would be required to bring a sacrifice to the Temple. Upon completion of all these requirements the God-fearer was then accepted into full Synagogue membership and was considered to be Jewish in every respect. From that time on it was forbidden to remind him that he had ever been a Gentile, and his parents were then considered to be Abraham and Sarah.

Due to the revelation which God gave to Peter (when he was staying at the house of Simon the tanner in Joppa), the Believing Synagogues changed their acceptance practice concerning how a Gentile could be brought into both 'The Faith' and full fellowship in the Synagogue. The reason for this change was because of a *Bat Kol* (Baht Coal = a voice from heaven) which gave the following instruction to *Shimon Kepha* (She-moan' Key'-phah = Simon Peter):

"What God has cleansed you must not call common." (Acts 10:15b)

Immediately following this vision experience, *Shimon Kepha* was called on to journey to Caesarea to the home of a Gentile God-fearer named Cornelius. It was during this visit that Peter came to understand what God had communicated to him through the vision:

"Then he [*Peter*] said to them, 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.'" (Acts 10:28)

When Peter saw that the Holy Spirit had come upon the uncircumcised Gentiles, and heard them speak in tongues, he determined that it was God's intent that full fellowship should be given to them at once:

"Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized [*immersed*] who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?"

"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days." (Acts 10:47-48)

It is interesting to note that Cornelius, even though he was an uncircumcised Gentile, was considered to be a *Tzadik* (a righteous or just man) prior to his receiving the Holy Spirit and being immersed. Also, it should not be forgotten that God chose a Gentile who was already performing Work's Righteousness to be the very first Gentile to be brought into the brotherhood of Believers:

"And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.'" (Acts 10:22)

Peter discovered, upon returning to Jerusalem, that word of these events had already preceded him, and many Believing Jews were upset. They were not upset that Gentiles had accepted *Y'shua* as Savior and Messiah, what bothered them was that Peter had gone into the home of uncircumcised Gentiles and had eaten a meal with them:

"Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, 'You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!'"

(Acts 11:1-3)

Thus began the controversy between Work's Righteousness and Faith Righteousness, which has existed up until this very day.

~ Understanding Paul ~

As we begin to understand the interaction between Work's Righteousness and Faith Righteousness, the teachings of *Shaul* (Paul) come into focus. *Shaul* knew that the Believing Jews, especially those from a strict orthodox background, would naturally believe that a Gentile could not receive salvation unless they were first circumcised. However, circumcision was a major stumbling block to many of the Gentiles whom God was calling. *Shaul* knew that it was not required for initial fellowship, because of the *Bat Kol* that *Shimon Kepha* (Simon Peter) had both seen and heard during his midday prayers while staying in Joppa, plus his experience with the household of Cornelius.

Even though *Shimon* explained his entire vision to the Believing Jews in Jerusalem upon his return (see Acts 11:1-18), apparently not all of them accepted it. Sometime later a group of them came to Antioch, where *Shaul* was dwelling, with a troubling message for the Gentiles:

"And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" (Acts 15:1)

This controversy led to the famous Jerusalem Council meeting where a determination was made concerning the minimum requirements for fellowship. *Ya'acov* (Jacob or James), who was probably the most orthodox of all the Believers, was *Nasi* (Nah-see' = president) of the Believer's Sanhedrin and, because of his position, he was called upon to render the verdict of that body. However, before he issued the decree of the court, *Ya'acov* made the following observation:

"... James answered, saying, 'Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

"After this I will return

And will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen down.

*I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will set it up,
So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD,
Even the Gentiles who are called by My name,
Says the LORD who does all these things.*" (Acts 15:13-17)

Those with a vision of what God was doing (like *Ya'acov*), could see that God was bringing together both Jew and Gentile into a single body of Believers. The Gentiles were to come to God through faith and trust in the sacrifice of *Y'shua*, after which they were to learn Work's Righteousness from the Jews, who already knew how to live by the *Torah*; the Instruction Book from God. However, before this newly revealed order of bringing Gentiles into fellowship could begin, some minimum requirements needed to be established so that both Jews and Gentiles could fellowship together without hampering each others faith. For as it is written:

"... whatever is not from faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23b)

So, the following compromise was established to allow the Gentiles full fellowship in the Synagogue, without first being circumcised and learning all the precepts of the *Torah*. This compromise afforded the Jewish Believers assurance that they would not be served common or unclean food if they were to join a Believing Gentile in a meal:

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well." (Acts 15:28-29)

There were four items of Work's Righteousness that the Gentiles were asked to perform in order to join into full fellowship with the Believing Jews. One had to do with sexual immorality, the other three dealt (at least in part) with food. This was because food was the primary issue when it came to fellowship between Jews and Gentiles and the Jews were concerned that (without proper instruction) the Gentiles would serve them food that was not kosher.

Because of this ruling by the Jerusalem Council, *Shaul* wanted to make sure that the congregations, in which he was working, understood that they could not be saved by circumcision or any other 'work' which they might perform, as worthy as those works might be. In order that a true understanding of Faith Righteousness be set forth, *Shaul* made statements such as:

"I do not reject God's gracious gift; for if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then the Messiah's death was pointless." (Gal 2:21 CJB)

According to *Shaul*, the purpose of the law was to show each one of us where we fall short of the righteousness of God:

"Does this mean that the legal part of the *Torah* stands in opposition to God's promises? Heaven forbid! For if the legal part of the *Torah* which God gave had had in itself the power to give life, then righteousness really would have come by legalistically following such a *Torah*. But instead, the *Tanakh* shuts up everything under sin; so that what had been promised might be given, on the ground of *Y'shua* the Messiah's trusting faithfulness, to those who continue trustingly faithful." (Gal 3:21-22 CJB)

The law has two primary purposes: to teach us how to love God and our neighbor (Work's Righteousness) and to lead us into the understanding that we must have Faith (or Trust) in *Y'shua* in order to obtain salvation (Faith Righteousness). Both are extremely worthy goals. However, *Shaul* (because of the resistance he received to his correct teachings concerning Faith Righteousness) seldom emphasized the Work's Righteousness portion of the law. He did not feel it was necessary to teach that which was already known, but rather continued to teach those principles of Faith Righteousness which were more difficult to understand. Today the situation is almost entirely reversed; Faith Righteousness is taught at the expense of Work's Righteousness. We need to put each into its proper perspective.

It was the slavish insistence by some, that only through the legalistic observance of the commandments of the *Torah* could salvation be obtained, which *Shaul* fought to the end. *Shaul* correctly understood that the Scriptures teach that if salvation were to be based upon Work's Righteousness, then everyone on earth would be lost, for no one is able to keep the Law perfectly. That is why he wrote:

"Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the *Torah* into legalism, kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed. Accordingly, the *Torah* functioned as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on

the ground of trusting and being faithful. But now that the time for this trusting faithfulness has come, we are no longer under a custodian." (Gal. 3:23-25 CJB)

Even though the practice of some was to pervert the *Torah* into legalism, that perverted legalistic approach to the *Torah* nevertheless served as a tutor to bring sinners to repentance. However, when an individual has gained an understanding of their own sinfulness, they are then also expected to have learned that the *Torah* is an instruction book which enables them to have life more abundantly, but that it (the *Torah*) is useless for bringing them salvation, which comes only through Faith Righteousness:

"For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness: because as many of you as were immersed into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Y'shua, you are all one. Also, if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29 CJB)

While *Shaul* continually pounds away in his letters about the absolute need for each Believer to be washed in the water of Faith, the end result is that we are expected to walk in Work's Righteousness as the natural expression of the cleansing and renewal that has taken place:

"But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:20-24)

A true spiritual conversion of the mind will create, in the 'new man,' a desire to live according to the instructions of the *Torah*; to live a life of Work's Righteousness. *Shaul* makes this abundantly clear in the next few verses of Ephesians where he points out some of the *Torah* commands which a Believer should be following:

"Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. '*Be angry, and do not sin:*' do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.

"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what *is* good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

"And do not grieve the Holy spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you." (Eph. 4:25-32)

In chapter five of Ephesians *Shaul* goes on to mention other sins that Believer's should not partake of: fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, and coarse jesting. Then *Shaul* makes the following statement which can only be interpreted as full support of a life style that follows after the precepts of the *Torah* without turning it into legalism:

"For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them." (Eph. 5:5-7)

The seeming dichotomy disappears when we understand that it is by Faith Righteousness and only by Faith Righteousness that we can be forgiven for our past sins and set free from their penalty, which is death. However, once we have been set free it is unseemly to say that we no longer have to be obedient to the commandments of the *Torah* whose breaking caused the death penalty in the first place. For when we are truly converted by the Spirit of God, then we want to learn and obey the clear instructions of the Scriptures. *Shaul* summed it up well when he said:

"I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to

holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:19-23)

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

(Gal. 5:16-18 CJB)

'Legalistic observance' is an entire system of works by which one expects to be saved. However, it must be conceded that it is impossible to keep all of these commands (both written and oral) perfectly all of one's life. Therefore, the next step in this mind set is to determine that one's life is like a balance. In this thinking it becomes possible for people to believe that if their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, then everything will work out and they will 'make it into heaven.'

The truth is that our works can never measure up to the righteousness of God. Therefore, God has chosen to accept our complete and total trust in Him, and in the sacrifice of His Son, *Y'shua*, to make up this difference. We call this special blessing Faith Righteousness. Specifically, Faith Righteousness is counted to those who accept *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their personal Savior. However, Work's Righteousness continues to have a place in our lives. For it is written:

"... 'I will judge every one of you according to his own ways.'" (Ezek. 34:20)

Faith Righteousness is not a New Testament concept. It goes back to the time of the Patriarchs. *Avraham* is considered to be the father of the faithful. *Y'shua* confirmed this when He said:

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

(John 8:56)

~ Chapter Summary ~

In the final analysis it must be understood that Faith Righteousness was given to Believer's to make up for what Work's Righteousness is incapable of doing; that is to provide salvation to the sinner, for even those who are considered to be righteous by works still need Faith Righteousness:

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12:22-23)

This verse makes it clear, that just men (Greek = *pistis*, comparable to *tzadik* in Hebrew), even though they are considered righteous, must be made perfect through Faith Righteousness.

~ ~ ~

~ Complete Righteousness ~

For as the body without the spirit is dead,
So faith without works is dead also.
James 2:26

Righteous! That is what every Believer desires to become; to live a life that is completely and totally within the framework of God's will and is pleasing to Him.

How does one become righteous? Do works count for anything? Or, is it enough simply to believe that Jesus is the Christ? Will a practicing sinner still be considered righteous by God solely on the basis of their faith?

This is a very touchy subject for many Believers, primarily because people tend to look at only a handful of Scriptures on the subject instead of studying the entire issue in depth. Some become bound up in the legalistic observance of the law and subsequently become forgetful of the "weightier matters of the law," as did the Scribes and Pharisees:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone. ..." (Matt. 23:23-24)

Y'shua took to task those who were strictly observant of the law but failed to render true justice, to have mercy on others, and to trust God explicitly. However, in this passage *Y'shua* went on to say that the details of the law should still be observed! It appears the problem had more to do with emphasis rather than with one particular aspect of righteousness being negated.

On the other side of the fence, there are those who say that only faith is needed and that it is unnecessary to obey the commandments of the Old Testament. They feel that doing so puts a person 'under the law,' trying to earn their salvation by their own works.

While it certainly is true that salvation is a gift that is given freely by God to those who have Believing Faith (Faith Righteousness), a balanced approach is still needed:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Rom. 6:23)

~ The Faith of Ya'acov ~

Ya'acov (Jacob or James), the brother of *Y'shua*, set forth just such a balanced approach to this subject. He taught that faith in *Y'shua* and His second coming is essential:

"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. ... Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand." (James 5:7, 8)

Ya'acov trusted that the Lord, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, would return and establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. In addition, *Ya'acov* taught that faith is essential in matters of daily living:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; *he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways*." (James 1:2-8)

Once *Ya'acov* had established the fact that faith is an important element for living the life of a Believer, he went on to teach that those who truly have faith must also obey the Word:

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was." (James 1:22-24)

If a person comes to God, repents of his past sins, asks forgiveness for those sins through the shed blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, and then goes out and continues on a sinful path; he is like a person who looks at himself in a mirror, then goes his way and totally forgets whether he has blue eyes or brown eyes, curly hair, straight hair or no hair, because he has spurned God's grace.

"But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

(James 1:25)

The blessed person will be the one who looks in that mirror, sees his sins, repents, and then goes out and eliminates sin from his life. Such action is Work's Righteousness, and it becomes a major theme throughout the rest of this epistle:

"What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? Thus faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:14-17)

Faith Righteousness is absolutely essential for the forgiveness of our sins and the redemption of our souls. Without Faith Righteousness we would still be subject to the death penalty, for that is the price that must be paid for our sins. But to be forgiven for one's past sins, and then to go on with life as though nothing has changed, would be a grievous mistake. Such a person would once again come under the death penalty which is the "curse of the law." This is why *Ya'acov* wrote that the Believer is to remain in a state of spiritual cleanliness:

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world." (James 1:27)

"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ... But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:18, 20)

What *Ya'acov* is teaching here is that what one believes and how one behaves are both very important. Believers need to have faith in God plus good works towards God and their fellow man. *Ya'acov* goes on to relate this principle to the life of the patriarch *Avraham*:

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, '*Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*' And he was called the friend of God.

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.

"Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent *them* out another way?

"For as the body without the spirit *is* dead, so faith without works is dead also."

(James 2:21-26)

The Apostle Paul, when writing on the very same subject, emphasized faith:

"Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, ... who contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he [*Avraham*] became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, '*So shall your descendants be.*'

"And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore '*it was accounted to him for righteousness.*'" (Rom. 4:16, 18-22)

The story of *Avraham* is not a story of Faith to the exclusion of Works. Nor is it the story of Works to the exclusion of Faith. It is the story of Faith and Works intricately intertwined.

~ The Faith and Works of Abraham ~

What if *Avraham* had refused to offer up his son Isaac? Would God have still honored His promise? A superficial reading would seem to indicate that the Scriptures are somewhat contradictory on this subject, when in reality they are not contradictory at all. Let us examine the story of the covenant between God and *Avraham* as recorded in Genesis chapter 12:

**"Now the LORD had said to Abram:
'Get out of your country,
From your kindred
And from your father's house,
To a land that I will show you.
I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'**

"So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, ..." (Gen. 12:1-4)

This passage specifically speaks about works, for *Avram* obeyed by departing just as he was instructed to do. However, faith is still implied, since it is apparent that *Avram* trusted God enough to make the move. The second mention of the promise to *Avram* is in Gen. 13:14-17. There is no comment here about either the faith or works of *Avram*, only about the promises of God.

The third mention of the promise to *Avram* comes in chapter 15 and this is the passage that speaks of his total faith and trust in God:

"Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.' And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:5-6)

At this point *Avram* was considered to be righteous by God. He had total trusting Faith that God would accomplish what He had promised. This can be likened to the person who comes to God, as a repentant sinner, trusting in God's promise to forgive the sins of those who accept *Y'shua* as Savior and Messiah.

The fourth mention of the promise comes in chapter 17. Here it is tied to an act of works; that of keeping the covenant of circumcision:

"And God said to Abraham: 'As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ..." (Gen. 17:9-10)

The fifth mention of the promise is also tied to an act of works. This is the one that *Ya'acov* zeroed in on in his epistle; the sacrifice of *Yitzchak* (Isaac) upon the altar:

"Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said; 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*, in blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."' (Gen. 22:15-18)

A little later on, in Genesis, we again see the promise extended to *Yitzchak* (Isaac) and his descendants because of the Work's Righteousness of his father *Avraham*:

"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."' (Gen. 26:3-5)

In the *Brit Chadasha* we find that *Shaul* stressed the fact that *Avraham* was proclaimed righteous because of his Faith (Rom. 4:9), while *Ya'acov* stressed the fact that *Avraham* was justified (made righteous) because of his works (James 2:21).

The key to understanding the covenant God made with *Avraham* is that He expected *Avraham* to have two different kinds of righteousness. First came Faith Righteousness, which was exemplified by *Avraham's* total trust and belief in God and His promises. But once Faith Righteousness had been accomplished, then God expected *Avraham* to produce Work's Righteousness as well.

~ Faith and Works ~

The Apostle Paul grew up as *Shaul*, a righteous Jew of the sect of the Pharisees. He had a degree of Work's Righteousness that far exceeded that of any pagan Gentile, because *Shaul* knew the *Torah* of God and did his best to follow it, but it was only after his acceptance of *Y'shua* as Messiah that *Shaul* came to be considered righteous in the sight of God. However, having obtained Faith Righteousness, *Shaul* still found it necessary to follow after Work's Righteousness even though, in his carnal flesh, he was still attracted to sin. It was this dichotomy in *Shaul's* spiritual life that led to his anguished outcry in Romans chapter 7:

"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

"Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

"O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God -- (I am delivered) through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:14-25)

These are not the words of a man who disdains the Law (*Torah*) of God. Rather, these are the words of a man who desired, with all his being, to perform works of righteousness, but who had a constant struggle in some unspecified area. It was only by confessing his sins (doing *Teshuvah*) that *Shaul* was able to keep going, as he obtained mercy and found grace in his time of need:

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 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. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb. 4:14-16)

How often should our "time of need" come about? In the beginning of our Faith walk with Messiah it may come fairly frequently. But as we practice Work's Righteousness, it should become increasingly less difficult to follow the path of *Torah* observance; loving both God and neighbor:

"Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous." (I John 3:7)

The Believer is commanded to grow in both grace and knowledge as an aid in protection from wickedness:

"You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. ..."

(II Pet. 3:17-18)

~ Righteousness Completed ~

Faith Righteousness is the ultimate method by which we become righteous in God's sight. But once we have obtained Faith Righteousness it should be our natural desire to want to please the One who has forgiven us of all our sins (thus saving us from the penalty of eternal death), by being obedient to the rules of His house.

We can live lives that are pleasing to God by living in the fullness of the *Torah*, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This means submitting to Him in each and every facet of our life. The standard, by which we can know if what we are doing is pleasing to God, is the Instruction Book that He gave to us at Mt. Sinai. It is nothing less than the *Torah*. The rest of the Scriptures: the Prophets, Writings and the *Brit Chadasha*, all amplify what is laid down for us in the *Torah*. They do not take away from the *Torah*, but rather they enhance our understanding of it.

Complete Righteousness is the perfect blending of Faith Righteousness and Work's Righteousness. The end result of this blending is the putting off of the "old man," and the putting on of "the new man:" Paul wrote about this as follows:

"... put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:22-24)

This 'new man,' having been imbued with spiritual power, is thereby enabled to walk in all the commandments, statutes and judgments of the Lord blameless, while still holding to:

"... the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith." (Matt. 23:23)

~ The Righteous Man ~

The Righteous Man is one who leads an exemplary life. As a result, he is promised great rewards in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm Hah-bah = the World to Come):

**"LORD, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?**

**He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart:
He *who* does not backbite with his tongue,
Nor does evil to his neighbor,
Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend;**

**In whose eyes a vile person is despised,
But he honors those who fear the LORD;
He *who* swears to his own hurt and does not change;
He *who* does not put out his money at usury,
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.**

He who does these *things* shall never be moved." (Psalm 15:1-5)

One of the rewards for the Righteous Man is the land:

**"The righteous shall inherit the land,
And dwell in it forever."** (Psalm 37:29)

The Scriptures are full of passages that list the virtues of the Righteous Man. Following is a sampling:

"Praise the LORD!

**Blessed is the man *who* fears the LORD,
Who delights greatly in His commandments.**

**His descendants will be mighty on earth;
The generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches *will be* in his house,**

And his righteousness endures forever. ...

**He has dispersed abroad,
He has given to the poor;
His righteousness endures forever;
His horn will be exalted with honor."** (Psalm 112:1-3, 9)

The lifestyle of the Righteous Man should serve as a guiding light to others:

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

**"The light of the righteous rejoices,
But the lamp of the wicked will be put out."** (Prov. 18:9)

His desire is always for that which is good:
**"The desire of the righteous is only good,
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath."** (Prov. 11:23)

The acts of the Righteous Man make him as a veritable Tree of Life to others:
**"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he who wins souls is wise."** (Prov. 11:30)

As we begin to achieve a degree of Work's Righteousness in our lives, we must be careful not to become arrogant. This can easily happen when someone attempts to carry out Work's Righteousness without the spiritual backing of Faith Righteousness and can lead to a most obnoxious trait, which is called Self Righteousness. *Y'shua* spoke of this problem:

"Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

"And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified [*made righteous*] rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Faith Righteousness is absolutely essential for the Work's Righteous Man, so that he can avoid the trap of becoming self righteous:

**"Behold the proud,
His soul is not upright in him;
But the just shall live by his faith."** (Habakkuk 2:4)

When all is said and done, the Righteous Man must come to admit that, for all his righteousness, none of it really comes from within himself. It is all accomplished through the power of God:

**"The LORD is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of righteousness
For His name's sake." (Psalm 23:1-3)**

~ Chapter Summary ~

It is only with the help of God, through the power of His Holy Spirit, that we mortal fleshly humans are able to live righteously before God. As might be expected, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures agree completely on what attributes constitute a Righteous Man, their only point of difference is in emphasis. The Hebrew Scriptures tend to emphasize Work's Righteousness, while the Greek Scriptures emphasize Faith Righteousness. Yet passages in each Testament reveal that both Faith and Works are key elements, and without either one of them the Righteous Man only has one leg upon which to stand.

After His resurrection, *Y'shua* became known among His disciples as the Just One:

"Then he said, "The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth."" (Acts 22:14)

No man can ever equal the righteousness of *Y'shua*, who was sinless the entirety of His life. Nevertheless, we should desire to live a righteous life:

"For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ..." (Rom. 2:13)

Y'shua personifies all that is truly righteous. Therefore, it is His lifestyle that we, as Believers, should be emulating. Even though the doers of the law will (from time to time) falter in their righteousness, it will be those who have a deep desire to be righteous (despite their failings) who will find favor in God's sight:

**"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
For they shall be filled." (Matt. 5:6)**

The Righteous ones will one day be made perfect, just as our Father in heaven is perfect. As it is written:

"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

(Matt. 5:48)

We should be living a life that is so different from our old ways that people recognize, even now, that we are indeed 'new men' in the flesh:

"... and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24)

"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ... Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." (Rom. 5:1, 9)

Even our Work's Righteousness, that we work so hard to accomplish, is, in reality, the product of a Faith Righteousness that has been given to us as a free gift by the grace of God:

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works." (Titus 2:11-14)

May we all walk in the ways of the LORD (*YHVH*).

~ ~ ~

~ Oil for Our Lamps ~

But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
Matthew 25:4

The Parable of the Ten Virgins is probably one of the better known of *Y'shua's* teachings. Many commentaries have been written on this parable, yet many differences of opinion still exist, and a number of questions remain. Who are the ten virgins? What relationship do they have with the Messiah? Why do five of them not have enough oil for their lamps? Just what does that missing oil signify? Is there something Believers can do to insure that they will have enough oil to see their way to the wedding ceremony?

~ A Principle for Parable Study ~

When studying a parable it is important to keep in mind that one must not try to interpret each detail before understanding the overall concept. To do so may lead to confusion rather than understanding. Parables, by their very nature, contain analogies. The details of analogies will almost always begin to break down at some point. This fact does not invalidate the analogy or parable in question, nor does it invalidate the study of the details. Rather, it points directly back to the very first question which must be asked; what is the moral teaching of the story? Each parable usually has one overriding principle that is being taught. If one does not understand that principle, then examination of the details will probably not be helpful. With this in mind, let us look at the Parable of the Ten Virgins:

""Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

""Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish. Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

""And at midnight a cry was *heard*: "Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!"

""Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, "Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out."

""But the wise answered, saying, "No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

""Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" But he answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you."

""Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming."" (Matt. 25:1-13)

The overriding principle upon which *Y'shua* built this particular parable, is to warn His disciples that they must be in a constant state of preparedness. This could be likened to a nation's military being on constant alert; maybe not a 'red alert' but at least on alert. The reason *Y'shua* wants His disciples to be on alert is because they do not know the exact time when He will be returning, and He does not want them to be found derelict in their duty. Only the Father holds all the information concerning *Y'shua's* return, and only He can issue the command for *Y'shua* to go and fetch His Bride:

""But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.

""It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

""Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming--in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning--lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.

""And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!"" (Mark 13:32-37)

~ The Watchful Bride ~

The implication here is clear. If the Bride is watching she will not be taken by surprise when her Husband *Y'shua* comes for her. This is not to say that the Bride will know the exact time of His return, but rather that she will be able to discern the signs of the times and thereby know approximately when that promised return will take place. This idea was confirmed by the apostle Paul (Hebrew = *Shaul*):

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

"Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation." (I Thess. 5:1-8)

Believers should not be in total darkness concerning the return of their Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. That day is not to overtake us the way a pickpocket might sneak up unsuspectingly and steal our wallet while we are preoccupied with other things. Rather, *Y'shua's* return is likened to an expectant mother getting ready to birth her child. She does not know the exact day or time when the baby will be born, but she knows when delivery is near.

As Believers, we need to develop the awareness of an expectant mother. We need to discern the times in which we live, comparing them to the prophecies found in Scripture concerning the coming of the Messiah.

It is interesting to note that the phrase 'Day of the Lord,' which identifies the very time when Messiah will come, is also known, in Jewish thought, as 'The Birthpains of the Messiah,' and it is clear from scripture that, **"...you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief."** (I Thess. 5:4). Yet it is also clear from scripture, **"...of that day and hour no one knows..."** (Matt. 24:36). Therefore, the key is to always be ready; to never allow yourself the luxury of letting down your guard, of falling asleep in a spiritual sense, for that may be just the time when the Father chooses to send *Y'shua* for His Bride, and you may find yourself without sufficient spiritual oil. This is the overriding moral teaching of the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

~ Ten Virgins ~

Why are there ten virgins in this parable? Why not seven or twelve? After all, seven is considered to be the number of perfection and completion, and twelve is the number of governmental perfection. Ten, however, is said to be the number that signifies "the perfection of the Divine order."

Anciently, in Jewish practice, it required ten men who knew the *Torah* in order to form a new assembly or synagogue. Such a group of men were called a 'minion.' (Interestingly enough, when an assembly became too large it was expected that at least ten men would break off and form a new synagogue. A far cry from some of the megachurches of today.) This principle was derived from the custom established by *Moshe* (Mow-shay' = Moses) at the suggestion of his father-in-law, Jethro:

"So Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'The thing that you do *is* not good. ... Listen to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: ...

"... you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. ..."

(Ex. 18:17,19,21-22)

Ten was considered the smallest unit that was needed for matters concerning judgment. Also, it was a number that allowed all of the members to be active participants in the congregation or assembly, thus providing leadership training so that when the assembly again became too large, ten qualified men could be found to form another new assembly.

Prophecy seems to indicate that this practice will again be established in the 'last days:'

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard *that* God *is* with you."'" (Zech. 8:23)

Thus it is that the number ten, in the Parable of the Ten Virgins, represents the entirety of the body of Believers, the called out ones, the Bride of Messiah. All are looking for the return of *Y'shua*, the Bridegroom. All have gathered into a certain place in expectation of His return. All have brought lamps to use in case He comes during the night. All have made some degree of preparation in anticipation of this event.

The fact that the ten virgins represent all of the Believers is confirmed within the parable itself:

"And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!'" (Matt. 25:10-11)

The practice, in the ancient Hebrew wedding, was for only the Bridegroom and the Bride to enter the *Chuppah* (Who'-pah = wedding chamber), thus, the five foolish virgins must also represent a portion of the Bride and are not to be considered merely attendants. In the ancient Hebrew wedding practice the guests who were present always stood outside the wedding chamber; they were never allowed to enter and would not have dared knock on the door.

* Detail #1 *

The first detail of this parable tells us that the ten virgins represent the entirety of the Bride, the body of called out ones. All of them were looking for the return of *Y'shua*. All had gathered into a certain place in their lives in expectation of His return. All had brought lamps to use in case He came during the night, and all had made some degree of preparation for this event.

~ Slumber and Sleep ~

~ Two Witnesses ~

In the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* it is apparent the Bridegroom was expected to come at night. In fact, this was the normal custom in the ancient Hebrew wedding. In those days, the Bridegroom was assisted by two attendants who were also witnesses to the marriage. One of the witnesses represented *Moshe*, the other represented Elijah. The witness representing *Moshe* provided assistance to the Bride, while the one representing Elijah provided assistance to the Bridegroom.

This sharing of duties was based on the fact that it was *Moshe* who led the first Bride, the children of Israel, through the wilderness and right up to the wedding chamber at Mount Sinai. Then, after the wedding, he went on to lead the Bride to the door of their new home, the promised land of Canaan.

On the other hand, the original Elijah provided witness for God against the evil of his day, especially that of King Ahab and his wicked queen, Jezebel. The second Elijah was, of course, John the Baptist (*Yochanan* the Immerser) who proclaimed the arrival of the Messiah, and called the people to repentance. He also proclaimed himself to be the friend of the Bridegroom, a Hebrew idiom for the 'Elijah' attendant at a wedding:

"Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!'"

"John answered and said, 'A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, "I am not the Christ," but, "I have been sent before Him."'" (John 3:25-28)

One of the responsibilities of the 'friend of the Bridegroom' was to wait outside the door of the *Chuppah* (Wedding Chamber). Once the marriage had been consummated the Bridegroom would come to the door with the bloody sheets of the marriage bed and hand them to the 'friend of the Bridegroom,' telling him that the marriage was complete. This would bring joy to the heart of the attendant called 'Elijah,' for he truly felt the joy that was in the heart of the Bridegroom:

"He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:29-30)

~ Sending Forth the Bridegroom ~

Once the father of the bridegroom announced to his son that it was time to fetch his bride, the bridegroom would call the *Moshe* and Elijah witnesses and last minute preparations would begin. If the bridegroom and bride lived in the same village, it would be but a short journey for him to fetch her. However, if they lived a long distance

apart, more extensive preparations would need to be made. If the journey were to take several days, provisions would have to be gathered and other people would need to be enlisted to aid in the journey.

Prior to the Father's decision to send his son, the Bride had already been in a state of waiting for quite a long time. Anciently, the period of time between the betrothal and full marriage was about one year. During this time the Bride did all that she believed was necessary to prepare for the wedding. Once the preparations were completed, all she had left to do was wait.

When the Father declared all was ready, one of the witnesses was sent ahead to announce the coming of the Bridegroom. The Bride then gathered her things and put on her wedding gown. The bridesmaids were called and all waited in eager anticipation. This is the situation that existed at the beginning of this parable:

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." (Matt. 25:1)

Here we see that the Bride was warned of the coming of her Husband, and she had gone out to meet Him, but, for some unknown reason, He was delayed in coming:

"But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept." (Matt. 25:5)

Initially, this final waiting period must have been filled with alertness and energy, such as the first love of a new Believer, but as time wore on the Bride's nervous energy turned to weariness, and gradually the Bride began to nod off, reawakening herself again and again, but ultimately she succumbed to deep sleep.

Right now, many Believers are on high alert in the expectation of *Y'shua's* return. But what if the Father's timetable is not what we expect? What if *Y'shua* does not return within the next very few years? Could that cause the Bride (the body of called out ones) to fall asleep?

** Detail #2 **

The second detail of this parable tells us that the entire Bride fell asleep before Messiah returned, even though she had been warned that Messiah's return was very close.

~ Oil Vessels ~

Then came that final, last minute, awakening cry when the Bride was lifted out of her sleep:

"And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!'" (Matt. 25:6)

The Bride of Messiah is composed of many members. Each one of the ten virgins represents a part of the Bride. In addition, in this parable the Bride is divided into two basic parts, the 'wise virgins,' those who made adequate preparations, and the 'foolish virgins' who did not. However, all ten virgins did make some type of preparation. The key to understanding this lesson is to determine what constitutes adequate preparation for the wedding.

All of the virgins did have lamps to aid them in seeing their way to the wedding. These lamps were devices that held olive oil for fuel and were constructed in such a way that, when lit, provided an adequate amount of light for their intended purpose. The lamps used for outdoor lighting had to be somewhat larger than the ones used indoors. According to archeological evidence, outdoor lamps were fairly large and were mounted upon poles so they could be held aloft, thus providing a larger range of light.

Because the outdoor lamps were considerably larger than indoor lamps, they also used a much greater amount of oil. For this reason, it was necessary to carry an extra vessel of oil so that the lamps could be replenished along the way. This is the meaning of verse four which says:

"...but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps." (Matt. 25:4)

It was this extra vessel, full of oil, which the 'wise virgins' carried, that made them wise instead of foolish; since the 'foolish virgins' brought only their lamp with the amount of oil which it contained. The 'foolish virgins' might have thought that such a vessel would just be extra baggage that was not needed. Both groups had oil for the beginning of the journey, but only the wise had enough to complete it. Realizing this, the 'foolish virgins' asked the 'wise virgins' to share some of their oil so that all ten virgins would have light for their lamps. The 'wise' answered saying:

"'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you...'" (Matt. 25:9)

In the interpretation of this detail let us look at this extra vessel, which carried the additional oil. There are two Greek words translated as 'vessel' into English. The one used in this parable is *aggeion* (Strong's #30). It means; "a receptacle." It is used in only one other place.

There is another Greek word translated into the English word 'vessel;' it is *skeuos* (Strong's #4632). It is defined as; "a vessel, implement; equipment or apparatus." It is kin to the Hebrew word *keliy* (kehl-lee; Strong's #3627), which is nearly identical except for the additional definition that it is; "something prepared."

There are many verses in both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures which indicate that people are considered to be vessels or receptacles. *Shaul*, the one who became the apostle Paul, was said to be a chosen vessel:

"But the Lord said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.'" (Acts 9:15-16)

**"But now, O Lord,
You are our Father;
We are the clay, and You our potter;
And all we are the work of Your hand." (Isa. 64:8)**

"What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared before hand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" (Rom. 9:22-24)

Thus it is, that the mind and heart of the Believer is to be the vessel which carries the oil for the lamp. But we are not to be just any old kind of vessel, we are to be vessels of *agape* (love) and mercy. The message is clear; the Bride is to be a 'righteous love vessel,' practicing loving acts of righteousness:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:1-2)

Just prior to the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* is another short parable called the *Parable of the Two Servants*. This parable is highly instructive, as it warns against being dogmatic about when the prophesied event of *Y'shua's* return will take place:

"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?

"Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites.

"There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 24:45-51)

The 'foolish virgins' failed to prepare adequately. Could they have been guilty of not bringing with them an attitude of righteous love? Perhaps they were the ones who were abusing their fellow servants because they did not agree in every detail of doctrine, or those members of the Bride who had little patience for others who did not have the same understanding of scripture as they did.

** Detail #3 **

The third detail of this parable warns us to bring to the wedding a receptacle (our minds and hearts) filled with righteous love for one another. This love is expressed through Work's Righteousness.

~ Lamps ~

The next item to be examined is the lamp itself. As previously mentioned, it must be of proper construction for outdoor use. The small lamps that were used inside the home would not provide nearly enough light for use at night, especially if the wedding were to take place on a new moon, when the sky is dark, such as at *Rosh HaShannah*.

Also, a small indoor lamp would be susceptible to being blown out if a gust of wind should come along. The lamp had to be constructed specifically for outdoor use.

The lamps also had to be constructed so that they would not leak the precious oil and thereby go out. In addition, a leak, dripping oil down the supporting pole, could prove dangerous to the person carrying it if it were to ignite. This could result in the carrier being burned and the lamp being dropped, with the added possibility of a larger fire being started. Such an event could have a disastrous effect on a wedding procession.

Lampas is the Greek word for our English word lamp. (Strong's #2985). It is defined as: "lamp, light or torch." It comes from another Greek word *lampo* (Strong's #2989) which means: "to beam, i.e. radiate brilliancy: give light, shine." So the lamp is an object which 'radiates a brilliant light' when lit.

The Hebrew word for lamp is *nyir* (near, Strong's #5216). It means: "to glisten; a lamp or light:--candle, lamp, light." The most famous lamp in the Hebrew scriptures is the seven branched *menorah* (meh-nor-rah):

"You shall make a lampstand of pure gold; ... And six branches shall come out of its sides: ... You shall make seven lamps for it, and they shall arrange its lamps so that they give light in front of it." (Ex. 25:31-32,37)

In addition to the literal lamp, this word also has a figurative meaning:

**"Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path." (Psalm 119:105)**

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

God's word is to be a lamp to our feet and a light to guide our way as we travel through life. Without the proper lamp, the oil would not give light in a way that would be sufficient for the traveler. There are many philosophies by which people live their lives, however, only one lamp will give the proper light that is needed in order to travel to the wedding with the Messiah and on into eternal life. That is the lamp of God's own holy word, His instruction book.

Nyir (lamp or candle) is also used to identify a personal connection with God. According to scripture, when our lamp is lit, we are connected with Him, and when our light has gone out, that connection has been severed:

**"The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the inner depths of his heart." (Prov. 20:27)**

**"For there will be no prospect for the evil man;
The lamp of the wicked will be put out." (Prov. 24:20)**

While it is our Work's Righteous mind and heart that is to be the righteous love vessel which carries the much needed extra oil, it is our Faith Righteous spirit that is to be the lamp which is capable of showing forth an adequate amount of light for our journey to the sacred wedding of Messiah. A faith righteous spirit lamp is the only lamp which will be sufficient to light the way to the wedding. Therefore our spirits must be clean and ready for lighting:

**"Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a steadfast spirit within me." (Psalm 51:10)**

* Detail #4 *

Detail number four tells us that our own spirit must be clean and right with God so that our lamp can light our way. All of the virgins possessed proper lamps, the problem was, only five had an adequate supply of fuel.

~ Oil ~

Now we come to the commodity which the 'wise virgins' had in adequate supply and, of which, the 'foolish virgins' had too little. Although in the parable, oil is of a spiritual nature, it is also something that can be acquired, since the 'foolish virgins' were told to go and obtain their own supply from those who sold it. This spiritual essence is pictured by olive oil.

Olive oil was a common, though valuable, commodity in ancient Israel and Judea. The finest and most expensive oil was that which came from the first beating of the olives, prior to their being pressed. Beaten olive oil (the finest kind) had many religious uses in Temple worship and ritual. It was used to light the seven branched *menorah*, it was included in the meal offerings, and it was used in most of the sacrifices. Normally it was the final

pressing of the olives, which produced the lowest grade of oil, which was used to light ordinary lamps. (Olive oil was also used in the home for cooking, dressing wounds and massage.)

In addition, oil was used in the ceremony for the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14). However, it was forbidden to use oil in the *Sotah* (Soh-tah) ceremony (*Ceremony of the Jealous Husband* see Numbers 5). A part of this ritual includes the bringing of an offering by the offended husband. However, he is to:

"... put no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy ..." (Num. 5:15)

Neither was oil used in conjunction with a sin offering:

"But if he is not able to bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons, then he who sinned shall bring for his offering one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a sin offering. He shall put no oil on it, nor shall he put frankincense on it, for it is a sin offering." (Lev. 5:11)

Since neither the sin offering nor the jealousy offering could include oil, we conclude that oil is somehow associated with righteousness, as opposed to sin (unrighteousness).

~ Anointing Oil ~

Another primary use of olive oil was for anointing. Aaron and his sons were first anointed with oil, and then sprinkled with a mixture of blood and oil prior to their being allowed to serve as priests in the Tabernacle.

"And you shall take the anointing oil, pour it on his head, and anoint him. ..."

"And you shall take some of the blood that is on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and on his garments, on his sons and on the garments of his sons with him; and he and his garments shall be hallowed, and his sons and his sons' garments with him." (Ex. 29:7,21)

~ The Anointing of Kings ~

Another use of oil in the scriptures is for the purpose of anointing kings. Both Saul (I Sam. 10:1) and David (I Sam. 16:1,13) were anointed, by the righteous judge Samuel, to be king over Israel. Even after David himself had been anointed to succeed Saul as king, he still had the utmost respect for Saul as God's anointed, in spite of the fact that Saul was continually trying to take David's life.

It is interesting to note that once a king had been anointed and had ascended to the throne, he was required to do a very specific thing:

"When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; ..."

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law [Torah] in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law [Torah] and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel." (Deut. 17:14-15,18-20)

The anointed of God was commanded to copy, study, learn and then apply the instruction book of God (the *Torah*). This action enabled the king to become a righteous ruler, one who feared God and ruled with justice and mercy. Obviously, this did not always happen.

Thus it was, that the oil of anointing never excused an 'anointed one' (king) from keeping the 'law' (*Torah*), rather his anointing set him apart to be the leading teacher and practitioner of the *Torah*.

~ The Anointed One ~

Even though every king was considered to be the 'anointed' of God, there was prophesied to come one whom the Israelites called "The Anointed One." This was the Messiah. In fact, the Hebrew word *Mashiach* (Mah-shee'-ach = Messiah) literally means: "The Anointed One." To be anointed in Israel meant having the very finest olive oil poured over one's head. To be anointed with oil implied that the person being anointed would follow a path of righteousness. This was certainly true of the Messiah:

**"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;
A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom."**

**You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." (Psalm 45:7)**

~ Oil of Righteousness ~

To live a righteous life means to live according to the instructions found in the *Torah*, for it is the book that makes one wise:

**"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Prov. 9:10)**

**"He who follows righteousness and mercy
Finds life, righteousness and honor." (Prov. 21:21)**

One of the benefits of living according to the 'anointing oil' of *Torah* is that it permits the brethren to dwell together in peace and unity:

**"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the head,
Running down on the beard,
The beard of Aaron,
Running down on the edge of his garments.
It is like the dew of Hermon,
Descending upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing--
Life forevermore." (Psalm 133)**

The wise gather their oil, their precious oil of *Torah* instruction which tells them how to live their lives in a righteous manner:

**"There is desirable treasure,
And oil in the dwelling of the wise,
But a foolish man squanders it." (Prov. 21:21)**

Meanwhile the foolish are careless and do not acquire *Torah* learning, and thereby have an inadequate supply of oil for that time when it is most needed, when Messiah arrives to take us to the wedding. At that time we will need all of the *Torah* oil we have gathered. That is what the 'foolish virgins' were missing, they did not have an adequate supply of understanding of the *Torah*. Consequently, they were not living a *Torah* centered life, and they had not prepared themselves adequately to be the wife of the Messiah *Y'shua*; the one who was called the 'Living Torah' when He walked this earth some two thousand years ago.

How does one acquire this precious oil? In Jewish thought, oil is a symbol for knowledge, so the primary supply of oil comes from persistent study of the *Torah* itself. Assistance may also be obtained from literature and messages by well grounded *Torah* teachers; however, the place to start is with regular, weekly *Torah* study.

Olive oil is also used to anoint the sick so that they may be made well (James 5:14). Truly, we were all sick, laden down with sin, but it is through the Messiah (the Anointed One) that our spiritual sickness is removed and we are made whole, enabled to walk in newness of life; a life of righteous acts (*Torah* observance).

It is only through Messiah *Y'shua* that we are able to come into the fullness of the oil of *Torah* living.

* Detail #5 *

The fifth detail of *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* shows us that we must begin right now to acquire the *Torah* oil we need in order to have our 'righteous love vessels' (our minds and hearts) full of *Torah* oil (knowledge and obedience) to sustain us until Messiah returns for us.

~ Trimming the Lamps ~

"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." (Matt. 25:7)

The Greek word for 'trimmed' is *kosmeo* (Strong's #2885). It means to put something in its proper order, or to decorate or garnish something.

So each of the 'virgins' put their lamp (spirit) in the best order they could so that it would be ready for lighting. It was at this point that the 'foolish virgins' realized they were low on oil. They had not learned how to live a *Torah* centered lifestyle; they had neglected to gain understanding about the way God wanted them to conduct their lives. Instead, they had chosen to follow the customs of the world. Maybe some had stumbled on the fourth commandment. For others it may have been Leviticus 11. Still others may have ignored the second commandment, or Leviticus 23, or the command to love their neighbors as themselves. Whatever the cause, the 'foolish virgins' did not have enough *Torah* oil to take them all the way to the wedding.

Y'shua spoke of those who would desire to have a part in the Kingdom of Heaven but would be shut out:

"Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

"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?"

"And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matt. 7:21-23)

The way to eternal life is straight and narrow. The path is the one that takes us through all of the Holy Scriptures, not just one portion. It requires lifelong study, but it is also a work of faith. For as we study the scriptures and learn our shortcomings, it becomes readily apparent that it is only through faith (confidence) in the forgiveness of our *Torahlessness* (iniquity or lawlessness) that we can ever achieve entrance to the wedding and the Kingdom (family) of God.

"Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." cried the 'foolish virgins.' Finally they understood that they needed the same *Torah* righteousness which the 'wise virgins' had diligently acquired over the years. The 'wise virgins' had worked hard to gain the understanding of *Torah* which now filled their 'righteous love vessels' (their minds and hearts). They had proven their faith in their Husband (that He would return as promised) by learning how to live an obedient life according to the *Instruction Book of God*:

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

"But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe--and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:14-20)

This is not to say that the 'wise virgins' earned their salvation by their *Torah* works. Rather, as James states, they merely proved their faith by their good works. Meanwhile, the 'foolish virgins' were found wanting in *Torah* works. They thought the oil in their lamp would be adequate for them to enter into the Wedding Chamber. When they realized their shortcoming, they asked the wise virgins to share their oil:

"But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came..." (Matt. 25:9-10)

So, only five made it into the *Chuppah* (the Wedding Chamber). While the number ten is "the perfection of Divine order," it is interesting to note that five is said to be the number of Grace. Surely, no one will make it into the *Chuppah* except by the grace of God. Thus we see that five virgins are able to enter by His Grace.

So, where could the 'foolish virgins' go to buy the needed oil in the middle of the night? Since the virgins did not have enough oil to see their way to the wedding, how could they see their way to the homes of those who had oil to sell? Besides, the *Torah* teachers would undoubtedly be a part of the 'wise virgins,' and therefore would be in the *Chuppah* with the Messiah. It is all a rather bleak and dismal picture for the 'foolish virgins.' For it is prophesied:

**"Behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord God,
That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD,
They shall wander from sea to sea,
And from north to east;**

**They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD,
But shall not find it."** (Amos 8:11-12)

But one must give the 'foolish virgins' some credit; they did persist. Eventually they ended up at the door of the *Chuppah* (wedding chamber). Since the obstacles to purchasing *Torah* oil in the middle of the night were so great, it appears that the 'foolish virgins' waited until morning to head on over to the *Chuppah*, but they were too late:

"Afterward the other virgins came also saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'" (Matt. 25:11-12)

It is apparent that *Y'shua HaMashiach* cannot know someone who does not share His lifestyle. The Bride has had all of her life (up to this point) to learn how to live the lifestyle that is pleasing to her Betrothed. The instructions were given at Mount Sinai over 3500 years ago and those who had an ear to hear learned to follow them. However, through the generations legalistic observances were added and these fences around the law became burdensome. Then *Y'shua*, the Living Word, came, as a *Suffering Servant*, to betroth us and show us how to live a *Torah* observant life in the manner in which it was originally intended. He said:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill." (Matt. 5:17)

Y'shua came and showed us how to live righteous lives as defined by the *Torah*. So, for us to ignore *Torah* instruction is just plain foolish. No wonder they are called the 'foolish virgins.'

Although they were foolish, the five virgins were not totally without hope for it is written:

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:19)

"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." (Matt. 11:11)

* Detail #6 *

Thus, we find the sixth detail of this parable instructing all of us to be much more circumspect concerning the oil of *Torah* knowledge. We must do more than learn it, we must live it.

~ The Igniting Fire ~

It is possible for a person to have the proper vessel to carry the oil, the correct and fully cleaned lamp for outdoor use, and an adequate supply of olive oil; but if an igniting fire is not present, all preparations are useless because no light will be produced.

This parable does not tell us how the lamps of the 'wise virgins' were to be lit, so we must go to other scriptures to find the spiritual source of this igniting fire.

Fire is: "...a rapid, persistent, chemical change that releases heat and light and is accompanied by flame..." It can be either destructive or, if properly contained, put to productive use. The vast majority of passages in Scripture, that pertain to fire, refer to its use in a destructive sense, although many of these have a productive outcome (i.e. destruction of the wicked). But a few verses do show fire in a contained and positive way. One of the most significant of the positive passages dealing with fire is found in the second chapter of the book of Acts:

"Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."(Acts. 2:1-4)

Here we see the Holy Spirit of God first introduced to the Believing community through the symbol of fire. Likewise, it was through fire (the burning bush) that God first revealed Himself to *Moshe* (Moses):

"And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. ..." (Ex. 3:2)

Also, God's throne is encased in a whirlwind of fire (Ezek. 1:4) and His eyes are like flames or lamps of fire. (Dan. 10:6; Rev. 1:14; 2:18 and 19:12):

"And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunderings, and voices. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God."
(Rev. 4:5)

The Holy Spirit of God is the igniting fire. When a Believer accepts *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their Lord, Saviour, and Husband, an earnest payment of the Holy Spirit is given so that the *Torah* oil contained in the lamp can be lit:

"Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (II Cor. 1:21-22 KJV)

The Greek word for 'earnest' is *arhabon* (are-hah-bone', Strong's #728). The Greeks actually took the word from Hebrew (Strong's #6162). It could also be translated as a 'pledge;' that which is given in advance so that the recipient knows for sure that the promise which has been made will be honored. The Hebrew form is used in only one scripture passage in the Old Testament, the story of Judah and Tamar:

"When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face.

"Then he turned to her by the way, and said, 'Please let me come in to you;' for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. So she said, 'What will you give me, that you may come in to me?'

"And he said, 'I will send you a young goat from the flock.' And she said, 'Will you give me a pledge [*arhabon*] till you send it?' Then he said, 'What pledge shall I give you?' So she said, 'Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand.' Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him." (Gen. 38:15-18)

It is absolutely profound to note that in the modern Greek language this same word, *arhabon*, is the very word for the engagement ring. This 'earnest' (engagement ring) is the gift by which the Father has shown His approval and by which our betrothal is sealed to *Y'shua*. It is nothing less than His very own Holy Spirit, which He sent to us so that we might have comfort (The Comforter) during His absence, knowing with full assurance that He will return for us.

One more much needed element, which is also symbolized by the Holy Spirit, is oxygen. A fire cannot remain lit if there is no oxygen available to feed the flame. The very word 'Spirit' in both Hebrew (*Ruach* = Ru'-ach; Strong's #7307) and Greek (*Pneuma* = New-mah; Strong's #4151) means 'wind' or 'breath.' The manifestation of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost included not only fire, but:

"... a sound from heaven, as a rushing mighty wind..." (Acts 2:2)

In order for there to be light there must be fire. In order for fire to exist three things must be present; fuel, heat and oxygen. If any one of these is taken away, the fire will die and the light will go out. So it is, that the Holy Spirit brings two of the three essential ingredients to produce light:

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom. 8:16-17)

If we are filled with *Torah* oil as a source of fuel, then when the air and fire of God's Holy Spirit joins with our human spirit (the lamp which holds the oil) the result is light! All the ingredients are now in place: lamp, oil, fire and oxygen, plus the additional vessel of *Torah* oil (dwelling in our minds and hearts) from which our lamps (spirit) can be refilled should they begin to run low. In fact, if we study the weekly *Torah* portions every Sabbath, our fuel supply will be constantly replenished.

But now we must come back again to the source of all things. That is God Himself. He is the Creator who created in us a new heart and commanded us to renew our minds:

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
(Rom. 12:2)

He has created us, in His own image, to be vessels of love and righteousness, for God is love and God is righteous. He is the one who gave each of us life and it is He who set our spirit (lamp) within us. He is the one who provides the Holy Spirit which lights our lamp and provides the oxygen to keep it burning. He is also the One who

gives us the *Torah* oil for fuel. In fact, He is the Creator of light, for it did not even exist until He spoke it into being:

"Then God Said, 'Let there be light;' and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day."

(Gen. 1:3-5)

Then sin entered the world and it fell into darkness. So, God the Father sent the One who became the source of true light for the world:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it." (John 1:1-5)

It is only through the true light of Messiah *Y'shua*, that we can receive this light:

"... the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world." (John 1:9)

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but (shall) have the light of life.'" (John 8:12)

Because *Y'shua* is the Light of the world, and because we are betrothed to Him through the engagement ring of the Holy Spirit, we also become lights, for *Y'shua* said:

"You are the light of the world. ..." (Matt. 5:14)

Once the light of Messiah is lit within us as individuals, it is imperative that we allow it to be seen by others:

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light." (Luke 11:33-36)

Our eye must be good (sincere) in our devotion to our Father in heaven, our Husband *Y'shua*, and to the instruction book of God (the *Torah*) which He has so graciously given us. If we are full of the righteous oil of the *Torah*, then our light will shine brightly on its lampstand.

* Detail #7 *

Detail number seven teaches us that we need an igniting fire (the *Ruach HaKodesh* or Holy Spirit) in order to produce light.

~ Flickering Light ~

If our *Torah* fuel should run low, then our light will begin to flicker. When this happens it is urgent for us to return immediately to our source of oil for replenishment:

"Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way." (Psalm 119:104)

As a result of industrious *Torah* study and diligent application of *Torah* in our lives, we can be assured that:
"He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday." (Psalm 37:6)

"For the goal at which the *Torah* aims is the Messiah, who offers righteousness to everyone who trusts." (Rom. 10:4 CJB)

If our lamp (our own human spirit) becomes damaged to the extent that the oxygen of the Holy Spirit cannot reach the flame, or it is broken so that it can no longer hold *Torah* oil, then once again the light of Messiah will be extinguished. This is why we are told:

"Quench not the Spirit." (I Thess. 5:19)

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Eph. 4:30)

We quench the Spirit when we refuse to follow his lead. We grieve the Spirit when we commit sin. Both have a dampening effect (water is one way to prevent oxygen from reaching the flame) upon our light.

However, even if we have abundant *Torah* oil it is still possible that our light might be extinguished, for in order for there to be light there must be fire. If we blaspheme the Holy Spirit and God removes it from us, then we will lose our source of fire and all we will be left with is empty knowledge of *Torah* with no possible way to put it into proper effect:

"And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven." (Luke 12:10)

~ Chapter Summary ~

The lessons of the *Parable of the Ten Virgins* are most profound, teaching that we must always be ready for Messiah's return. Even if He does not come back during our lifetime; He will, in effect, come for each of us, individually, when we die.

- ◆ Now is the time to cleanse our own spirit (lamp) of all iniquity, bitterness, hatred, jealousy, lust, vanity and greed; so that it can burn brightly. This can be accomplished by confessing our sins to God (I John 1:9) and thanking Him for His forgiveness through the precious blood of our Savior *Y'shua*.
- ◆ Now is the time to fill our 'righteous love vessel' to the brim with *Torah* oil. We can do this by studying *Torah* and pursuing a *Torah* lifestyle, living in newness of life; making preparations for our wedding to *Y'shua*, while it is still day. **"I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work."** (John 9:4).
- ◆ Now is the time to accept wholeheartedly the igniting fire of God's Holy Spirit. We need to recognize and accept all of the spiritual gifts found in I Cor. 12 and Romans 12, and make a commitment to not quench the Spirit through inactivity or grieve the Spirit through sin.
- ◆ Now is the time to let our light shine before all men, putting into action those things which we learn from the *Torah*. We must not be ashamed of our calling but be willing to confess openly that *Y'shua* is our Messiah, lest He not confess us before the Father when He returns.

With all of these pieces in place: the lamp of our Faith Righteous spirit, the oil of *Torah* knowledge and obedience filling our righteous love vessels, and the fire and wind of the Holy Spirit of God igniting the flame of our lamp, then we will be able to clearly see our way to the great wedding that is to take place in heaven.

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

"Then he said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"'" (Rev. 19:7-9)

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~ Epilogue ~



In this booklet we have explored the two types of human righteousness:

- ◆ Work's Righteousness consists of the righteous acts that people perform in the course of their everyday lives. Righteous acts are defined by the commandments, statutes and judgments of God as found in the Holy Scriptures; codified for us in the *Torah*. However, no matter how hard we might try, it is impossible to achieve Complete Righteousness solely through Work's Righteousness, because, as fleshly descendants of *Adam* and *Chava* (Eve), we have inherited a sin nature which precludes our ever being able to be justified or saved by the works that we do.
- ◆ Faith Righteousness is the righteousness that God chooses to attribute to us as a result of our trust and confidence that His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, has completely paid the penalty for our sins. In addition to our unwavering Faith in His atoning sacrifice, it is also necessary that we do *teshuvah*, repent of our sins, and return to God; subjecting ourselves to Him in every aspect of our life.

Righteousness is Completed when we have received the blessing of Faith Righteousness and then go on to live a life of Work's Righteousness. These are the two legs on which a righteous person must stand. If either one is crippled or removed, we may stand for awhile, but as soon as we try to move forward we will fall.

Usually the leg which falters is that of Work's Righteousness. In other words, we sin and must go in faith to God and ask Him to forgive us one more time. However, if we lose the Trust and Confidence that God is going to accomplish that which He has promised, our leg of Faith Righteousness becomes crippled. Then if the leg of Work's Righteousness falters, as it inevitably will sooner or later, we would not have even one righteous leg upon which to stand, much less to be able to walk in Complete Righteousness.

This intricate relationship, between Work's Righteousness and Faith Righteousness, is woven like a thread running throughout the entirety of the Scriptures from Genesis (in the story of *Avraham*) clear through the book of Revelation, as it is written:

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Rev. 14:12)

Faith Righteousness comes as a free gift from the Father to those whom He has chosen to be a part of His Son's Bride:

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

Work's Righteousness, on the other hand, comes as a result of our desire to please our Father in heaven. It is achieved when we learn what it is that is pleasing to Him and when we put our efforts into proper actions. His instructions for Work's Righteousness are found within the pages of the Holy Scriptures. It is this instruction which constitutes the precious *oil* which each of us needs to fill our vessels (our minds and hearts) so that the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) is able to ignite the flame of our human spirit and produce light for the world.

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are in the house*. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:14-16)

We can only obtain the Oil of Torah Truth through the study of the Scriptures. Therefore, it is our fervent hope that each one of you reading this booklet will set your heart to learn God's instructions (to buy His precious oil) and learn to walk in His ways.

While the 'foolish' virgins were told to go and 'buy' oil for their lamps, the reality is that it requires no money to make the purchase, it only requires time and effort:

**"Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,**

**Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
Why do you spend money for *what is not bread*,
And your wages for *what does not satisfy*?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is good*,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.
Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you --
The sure mercies of David."** (Isaiah 55:1-3)

May your life be overflowing with faith in the Father and His Son *Y'shua*, as you walk in His commandments, statutes and judgments, making your Righteousness complete.

**"The LORD shall judge the peoples;
Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,
And according to my integrity within me."** (Psalm 7:8)

To assist you in your pursuit of Complete Righteousness, *Hebrew Roots* is pleased to offer a study guide of *Weekly Torah Readings*. By following this guide, you can study the entire *Torah* in one year's time. In addition to the *Torah* readings, companion readings are included from the *Prophets* and from the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). Write today for your free copy.

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~ Shalom ~

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