

# Preparing the Bride

Vol. I

containing:

The Hebrew Roots of Our Faith

The Way of Life

If I Make it

Where Is Love?

A Wall of Fire

by

Dean & Susan Wheelock

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.

*Rev. 19:7*

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The Scriptures used in this booklet are:

- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*  
Jewish New Testament Publications  
Clarksville, Maryland, 1998
- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*  
Oxford University Press  
London
- The Open Bible*  
New King James Version (NKJV),  
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.

## ~ Introduction ~

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,  
My soul shall be joyful in my God;  
For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,  
He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,  
As a bridegroom decks *himself* with ornaments,  
And as a bride adorns *herself* with her jewels.  
*Isaiah 61:10*

**S**cripture is clear that, collectively, Believers in Messiah *Y'shua* will be a perfect Bride for Him when He returns to take the reigns of government as King of Kings in the *Malchut Shamayim* (Mahl-koot' Shah-mah'-eem = the Kingdom of Heaven). As *Y'shua* said to *Yochanan* (Yoh'-chah-nohn = John):

**"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."** (John 3:29)

This is to be a permanent marriage, one that will last for all eternity:

**"I will betroth you to Me forever;  
Yes, I will betroth you to Me  
In righteousness and justice,  
In lovingkindness and mercy;  
<sup>20</sup> I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,  
And you shall know the LORD [YHVH]."**  
(Hos. 2:19-20)

While God the Father will perfect those whom He is calling to be a part of the Bride for His Son *Y'shua*, those who are being called also have a responsibility to answer that call and do their level best to come into accord with the work the Father is doing in them. Thus, when we get to the book of Revelation it speaks the following concerning the Bride of Messiah:

**"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.'**

**"<sup>8</sup> 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)

As members of the Bride of Messiah each individual will wear a wedding dress of "**fine linen**," which is composed of their "**righteous acts**." The articles found in this booklet are designed to be an aid in preparation for that great wedding day which will take place in heaven before the very throne of God.

There are five updated and expanded articles in this booklet which were originally written over a period of nine years and published in the *Hebrew Roots Journal*. The first one is in the form of an introduction to Hebraic roots and is called *The Hebrew Roots of Our Faith*. It is followed by *The Way of Life* which addresses the principle that members of the Bride of Messiah are not only called to a life of believing in *Y'shua* as Messiah, but also to a faith filled righteous walk:

**"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [Messiah *Y'shua*] for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."** (Eph. 2:10)

Article three addresses a negative point of view that is prevalent in some fundamentalist Christian churches about whether or not those who have been called will really "make it" into the Kingdom of God. It is entitled *If I Make It*.

The fourth article is called *Where Is Love?* This is the trait which is supposed to characterize followers of Messiah *Y'shua*. The final article, *A Wall of Fire*, stresses our need to rely totally on God for our guidance and protection as we live our daily lives waiting for the return of our Husband *Y'shua* to come and take us to the *Chuppah* (Who'-pah = the Wedding Chamber).

At this time the Bride of Messiah is veiled and her identity (as a whole) is unknown to the world. Therefore, we continue to publish articles that we trust will be of benefit as the Bride prepares for her wedding to Messiah. May we all call upon our Father in heaven to direct our minds to loving and helping one another as we meet life's challenges.

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom, 2010

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ The Hebrew Roots ~ ~ Of Our Faith ~

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



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

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

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

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

Quite a bit, we found out.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ~ Who Constitutes the Family of God? ~

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

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

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

**just and on the unjust.** <sup>46</sup> **For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?** <sup>47</sup> **And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?** <sup>48</sup> **Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."** (Matt. 5:44-48)

Let us not be too quick to judge others as to their relationship with God. How can we really know what that relationship is? In truth, we cannot.

**"Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you."** (Matt. 7:1-2)

It is not our place to make the judgment as to who is a member of His royal family. However, it is our understanding that all who profess that *Y'shua* is the Messiah, and remain obedient to His will, are going to be a part of that family:

**"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]."** (Rev. 12:17)

~ Jesus the Jew ~

Just who was the man known to the English speaking world as Jesus of Nazareth? What was He like? What were His parents like? What was the town called Nazareth like? Just what did it mean to be a Jewish boy two thousand years ago living in the Galilee? Was he reared like other children of His time and place? Did He attend synagogue with His parents and later on His own? What might He have been discussing with the learned men of Judea when He stayed behind at the Temple one Passover? Is it possible to guess who He might have been talking with on that occasion?

These (and many more like them) are questions that might be asked if we really want to understand how our Saviour lived His life and what He really taught. Well over one billion people in this present world claim that Jesus is their Saviour and that He is the Christ (Messiah). The Roman Catholic Church alone claims over 900 million people as members. Yet the Jesus they portray in their art and literature is that of a man who looks more like the pagan god Zeus than like a Jew of the first century. Is this important or not?

You might say: "Well, that's not really important, I don't need to know what Jesus looked like or what His habits were to be saved." That may be true. But something within you should desire to know Him as intimately as possible, if He is your Betrothed Husband. What sort of visual image comes to your mind when you think of Jesus? Is it a picture of either the Catholic or Protestant Jesus with long brown hair, blue eyes and the facial features of a European? Most likely. It may be difficult to remove that image from your mind if He has been portrayed that way to you. Yet it is not a proper picture of Messiah *Y'shua* who is the Saviour of all mankind.

Some years ago a book was published that had three men depicted on the cover. One was the Catholic version of Jesus, the second was the Protestant form of Jesus, and the third was a

Jewish rabbi. A question also appeared on the cover, it said: "Will the real Jesus please stand up?" *Y'shua* probably did not dress in the black clothes and black hat of modern day Orthodox Judaism, nor did He look like the Christian depictions. Yet the impact of this book cover drives home a very real and important point: **Jesus was a first century Jew!** He dressed like a Jew of His time, He acted like a Jew of His time, and He was, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from any other Jew from the Galilee. In fact, Judas chose to use a kiss to identify *Y'shua* so that the Roman soldiers would know which of the men present in the garden was the one they sought. Only when *Y'shua* began to teach, heal and cast out demons, were people able to see the profound difference between Him and all other men.

Our Father sent *Y'shua* to this earth in the human form of a first century Jew. If we do not like that fact, then we need to take it up with our Father, in prayer, and not take out our anger on those who are searching for a more complete understanding of *Y'shua* and His time period.

~ We Are Not Teaching Judaism! ~

Let us make one thing perfectly clear. We are not teaching Judaism. We believe there is only 'one way' in which a Believer can be saved, as it is written:

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

We are not Jews by either race or conversion, however, the scriptures found in the book of *Romans* say that we, as Messianic Believers, have been grafted into the commonwealth of Israel and have become a part of Israel, while some of the natural branches (Jews) have been temporarily cut out. (Study *Romans* 9, 10 and 11).

Acts chapter 15 makes it very clear that circumcision of the flesh is not a requirement for Gentiles to be accepted into the fellowship of the Messiah, *Y'shua*. However, there is an even more profound circumcision that must take place, and that is of the heart, and it is performed by God, as explained in the book of *Colossians*.

The whole objective of our study of the *Hebrew Roots of the Faith* is to bring us into a closer relationship with our Saviour by learning as much about Him as we can, through the people and time period in which He lived.

We see the world through twentieth (now 21st) century, western world, eyes. Unfortunately, our view is skewed by our own life experiences, the form of government under which we live, the values of society (or lack thereof), our news media, television, movies, and novels which we watch and read, and by our personal relationships with family, friends, and brethren.

Also important is the fact that our western democracies were based, not on Scripture, but upon the models of the Greek and Roman Republics. All one needs to do is visit Washington DC and see the style of architecture that was chosen for our federal buildings. It is derived from Greece and Rome and was chosen because that was where the founding fathers believed the republican form of government and the principles of democracy sprang. This is not to imply that our form of

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

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

**"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."**

(Rev. 19:16)

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

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

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

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

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

**"Now gather yourself in troops,  
O daughter of troops;  
He has laid siege against us;  
They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod  
on the cheek.  
<sup>2</sup> But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me  
The One to be Ruler in Israel,  
Whose goings forth are from of old,  
From everlasting.'  
<sup>3</sup> Therefore He shall give them up,  
Until the time that she who is in labor has given birth;  
Then the remnant of His brethren  
Shall return to the children of Israel." (Micah 5:1-3)**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them,

**"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. <sup>11</sup> For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ [Messiah] the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.' ...**

**<sup>120</sup> Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them."** (Luke 2:8-12, 20)

The birth of *Y'shua* did not take place in a corner, out of the way, where no one would notice. Members of the Levitical Temple servants (the previously mentioned shepherds) were among the very first to know, and they undoubtedly announced it in Jerusalem so that all who came to worship at the Temple would hear that the Messiah had been born. Thirty years later, when *Y'shua* began His ministry, the facts of His birth had probably been forgotten by all but a handful of people. The reason being that during those intervening years several self proclaimed "messiahs" had come and gone in the land of Judea.

Following are several scriptures confirming that *Y'shua* was a Jew (that is, of the tribe of Judah):

**"For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood."** (Heb. 7:14)

**"But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.'**

**<sup>16</sup> And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, ...**

**<sup>19</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:**

**'You are worthy to take the scroll,**

**And to open its seals;**

**For You were slain,**

**And have redeemed us to God by Your blood**

**Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,..."** (Rev. 5:5-6, 9)

**"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.**

**<sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD [YHVH] shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD [YHVH].**

**<sup>3</sup> His delight is in the fear of the LORD [YHVH], And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;**

**<sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.**

**<sup>5</sup> Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist."** (Isa. 11:1-5)

Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, was the father of King David from whom *Y'shua* was physically descended both through His natural mother *Miriam* (Mary) and His stepfather *Yoseif* (Joseph).

### ~ The New Testament Writers Were Jewish ~

Most scholars agree that all of the New Testament writers were Jewish with the possible exception of Luke, who may have been a Jewish proselyte.

Matthew in Hebrew is *Mattityahu* (Maht'-teet-yah'-hoo). The name means "gift of YHVH" and is believed to have been given by *Y'shua* to Levi. (See Luke 5:27-32). He was a Jewish tax collector, much hated by the general public because most tax collectors added extra, for their own personal use, to the already heavy taxes imposed by the Romans. *Y'shua* was condemned for being **"...a friend of publicans and sinners."** (Matt. 11:19). The publicans were the tax collectors.

Mark's full name was John Mark. *Yochanan* (Yo'-chah-non = John) was a Jewish name but Mark was a Roman name. In all likelihood John Mark was a Hellenistic Jew. They were roundly denounced by the Pharisees, who were the orthodox Jews of their day. The Hellenists could be likened to the reform Jews of today. They were more liberal, and liked the Greek lifestyle. The art, literature, music, etc., of Greece was the cultural apex of the time. We probably first see Mark on the night of *Y'shua's* betrayal:

**"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, <sup>52</sup> and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked."** (Mark 14:51-52)

This account has led some to speculate that the Last Supper was held at the home of the parents of Mark although others believe John Mark's mother was a widow. (We can ask him which is true after the resurrection takes place.)

John's name in Hebrew is *Yochanan* (there is no J sound in Hebrew). He, and his older brother James, were surnamed "Boanerges" which is translated as 'sons of thunder'. We know that *Yochanan* was the youngest of the disciples because he leaned on *Y'shua's* bosom at the last Passover. This indicates that he was sitting to *Y'shua's* right -- the place where the youngest would sit according to Jewish custom.

James does not even carry the correct English name. It should be Jacob in English and is derived from the Hebrew *Ya'akov* (Yah' ah'-kov) which means "supplanter". He was the eldest (we believe) half-brother of *Y'shua*. He is remembered in Judaism as 'The Pious One' and is considered to be one of the sages of first century Judaism. He is mentioned by Josephus (the first century Jewish general who fled to the Romans rather than commit suicide with his troops) who also recounts *Ya'akov's* tragic death at the hands of a wicked High Priest who had him thrown off the highest pinnacle of the Temple Mount and then stoned to death.

The story of how *Ya'akov* came to be known in the English speaking world as James, instead of Jacob, is quite remarkable. It seems that a group of English clergymen wanted a new translation of the scriptures into the English language. They needed money to do it, so they went to the king of England and

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

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

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

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

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

~ Summary ~

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

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

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

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ *The Way of Life* ~

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



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

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

~ Salvation ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



*Ya'acov*\* said that it is not enough to just believe (be persuaded) that God exists:

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

The demons also know that *Y'shua* is the Son of God and the promised Messiah:

**"And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God!' And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ [Messiah]."** (Luke 4:41)

The demons believed correctly, but that belief does not translate into their "salvation."

### ~ Belief, Trust, and Faith ~

One of the first steps in the salvation process is coming to "believe" that God truly exists as the Creator and that the Holy Scriptures are the very Word of God, and that what is written in them is true. The next step is to "believe" that *Y'shua* existed as a historical human being, and that He is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and the One whose shed blood brings forgiveness for sin and the promise of eternal life.

Once these steps are accomplished, the "belief" that has been spawned in the individual must become so internalized that "belief" evolves into absolute trust and confidence. When one reaches this point he is said to have (or possess) "faith:"

**"But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith [*pistis* #4102] in Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] might be given to those who believe [*pisteuo* #4100]."** (Gal. 3:22)

Belief (*pisteuo*) and faith (*pistis*) are basically the same word, one in verb form, the other in noun form. As already pointed out, *pisteuo* (belief) means, "to think to be true," while *pistis* (faith) means, "conviction of the truth of anything." In a technical sense, if someone "believes" (*pisteuo*) something to be true, they may still harbor doubts:

**"Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe [*pisteuo*]; help my unbelief!'"** (Mark 9:24)

However, if someone has complete faith (*pistis*) that something is true, there is no longer any doubt in that person's mind. In this way belief precedes trust, which may become confidence or faith. Put another way, faith is the final form, or natural outcome, of belief. Scripture defines faith:

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

Faith is the action of belief made concrete and substantial in the mind of the "full of faith" person. Faith bears witness that what has already occurred (i.e. *Y'shua's* death and resurrection) applies to us, and that what has not yet occurred (*Y'shua's* return) will come to pass. In other words, even

though we have not seen *Y'shua HaMashiach* with our eyes, nor heard His voice with our ears, nor felt His physical touch on our person, we know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that He exists and that His promises to us are absolutely sure to be fulfilled. This is what Paul and Silas meant when they told the jailor:

**"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], and you will be saved, ..."** (Acts 16:31)

It was this same fullness of "belief" which *Avraham* (Ahv'-rah-ham = Abraham) exhibited, and which caused God to impute righteousness to him:

**"For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'"** (Rom. 4:3)

Like *Avraham*, anyone can also be declared "righteous," even though they have formerly broken the Law (*Torah*), because they have faith (trust or confidence) that the blood of *Y'shua* is a satisfactory and sufficient payment for the death penalty which they contracted by sinning:

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

**"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous."** (Rom. 5:19)

Once a Messianic Believer has reached this level of faith, they too are placed in the same category as *Avraham*:

**"And if you are Christ's [*Messiah's*], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."** (Gal. 3:29)

### ~ What Standard? ~

Since belief (faith) in the blood offering of *Y'shua* is required for any person's sins to be forgiven, does it also hold true (as some claim) that the same belief (faith) negates the *Written Torah* from that point on? If this were true, then by what moral standard should a Messianic Believer measure the conduct of this life?

Some would say that measure should be the New Testament, and the New Testament only. Yet *Y'shua* (in the New Testament) directly connected eternal life with the keeping of the Old Testament commandments:

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

**"<sup>17</sup> 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.'**

**"<sup>18</sup> He said to Him, 'Which ones?'"**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said, "'You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "<sup>19</sup> Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"** (Matt. 19:16-19)

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\* *Ya'acov* (Yah ah'-cove) was *Y'shua's* half-brother and author of the book of *James*.

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

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

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

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

### ~ The Mystery of Lawlessness ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Matt. 13:40-42)

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

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

Hear the Word of the Lord!

### ~ The Power of Love ~

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

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

### ~ Moral Relativism ~

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

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

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

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

whole. It is this type of thinking which contributed to the downfall of Israel's *Theocratic Federation* in favor of a Monarchy. This happened, in part, because:

**"In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes."** (Judges 21:25)

The reason for the downfall of the *Theocratic Federation* government which God had established for the children of Israel, was the tendency of man to fall into *Moral Relativism*, thereby abandoning the pure and absolute teachings found in the Scriptures.

### ~ The Carnal Christian ~

The term *Carnal Christian* arose from the belief that a Christian can be saved without bearing the good fruits which show their conversion (Gal. 5:22-23) simply because they believe that Jesus is their Savior. The term, *Carnal Christian*, comes from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians:

**"... for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"** (I Cor. 3:3)

Alan Knight, in the 2nd edition of his book, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, makes the following observation concerning *Carnal Christians*:

"From the starting point of this single verse, the argument has evolved that Christians can be not only 'human,' but totally depraved as well, indistinguishable from the unsaved. And based on this single verse it is argued that Paul validates the inclusion of such people in the church as Christians who are "in Christ."

"The doctrine of the Carnal Christian is associated with what is called extreme eternal security. This extreme form of eternal security [*once saved always saved*] says that absolutely no positive change in a person's character is required for salvation. It is the type of doctrine now very popular in evangelical circles in America, ...

"... this does not mean they officially encourage evil. They teach it only as a viable option. Keep in mind as well that persons who believe in this doctrine commonly apply it selectively to their own specific failings. In other words, they may pursue good conduct in some areas, but willfully omit it in those aspects of their lives in which they have a particular weakness.

"But, do advocates of the Carnal Christian doctrine really believe one can show absolutely no positive change and still be saved? Here is a brief selection of opinions from leading theologians and ministers:

"Charles Stanley:

'... you can't tell a carnal believer from a lost man.'

"(Charles Robert Stanley {Atlanta, GA: In Touch Ministries, 1982}. *Spiritual Vs. Carnal: Study in 1 Corinthians*, audio tape #8, PQ092, as quoted in Corner [Daniel D.], *The Believer's Conditional Security*, p. 153)

"Chuck Swindoll:

'That explains how a Christian can steal and lie. That explains how a Christian can lack integrity and commit

adultery and turn against the very things he or she once taught.'

"(Chuck Swindoll, *Clearing the Hurdle of Carnality: Selection from 1 Corinthians*, audio tape CHH 5-A, as quoted in Corner [Daniel D.], *The Believer's Conditional Security*, p. 155.)

"Robert Gromacki:

'To an unsaved person or to an untaught, critical Christian, he [*the Carnal Christian*] will look like an unsaved person and may even be called such.'

"(Robert Glenn Gromacki, *Salvation Is Forever* {Chicago: Moody Press, Third Printing, 1976}, p 173-174, as quoted in Corner [Daniel D.], *The Believer's Conditional Security*, p 155.)

"When applied correctly these ideas have some validity. A converted Christian indeed can fall into evil, even gross evil. Where there is an attitude of repentance God will forgive any sin, however evil. ... The problem is that these ideas are applied in the typically extreme antinomian [*against law*] sense that such 'Carnal Christians' are still saved regardless of whether they ever repent or produce a single positive change in their lives."

(Alan Knight, *Primitive Christianity in Crisis*, pp 168-170.)

### ~ A False Doctrine ~

We know that the *Carnal Christian* doctrine is a false doctrine because of what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the man in their congregation who was breaking the explicit *Torah* command not to have sexual relations with his father's wife. Before Paul wrote to them, the Corinthians were exhibiting the exact type of *antinomianism* (against *Torah*) attitude which is characterized by the modern so-called *Carnal Christians*.

Paul's command to the Corinthians was not to let this "Carnal Christian" continue to worship in the Body of Messiah, spreading his lawless cancer to others. Paul was against such behavior and he taught the Messianic Believers how to deal with it. Paul's command was to break fellowship with the individual in the hope that he would see the error of his ways and come to complete repentance:

**"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles -- that a man has his father's wife! <sup>2</sup> And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ... <sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], <sup>5</sup> deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*]. <sup>6</sup> Your glorying is not good."** (I Cor. 5:1-2, 4-6)

After the man had repented and changed his behavior, Paul instructed the Corinthian congregation to accept him back into fellowship:

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

~ Be Changed ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Rebuke the oppressor;  
Defend the fatherless,  
Plead for the widow."**

(Isa. 1:16-17)

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

**"But the LORD [*YHVH*] said to Samuel,**

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

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

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

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

~ Be Immersed ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

This New Covenant baptism propels the Messianic Believer into a new way of life.

~ A New Walk ~

According to Scripture, when a Messianic Believer comes up out of the waters of baptism he is expected to walk a new walk:

**"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ [*Messiah*] was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."** (Rom. 6:4)

If, due to unusual circumstances, one is not able to be immersed in a *mikveh* into the Family of God, in the name (authority or office) of *Y'shua*, symbolizing death to the old way of life and resurrection to the new way of life -- they can still ask God for the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*, which will empower them to live godly lives.

Once a Messianic Believer receives the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit), their very life will be transformed so that they can now dedicate their life in total service to the Messiah:

**"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. <sup>2</sup> 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)

If the new Messianic Believer was formerly a Gentile, they were expected to stop acting like a pagan Gentile:

**"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, <sup>18</sup> having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; <sup>19</sup> who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."** (Eph. 4:17-19)

When a person truly repents and returns to God (does *teshuvah*), they begin a walk which leads them away from their old life of sin into a new life of righteousness:

**"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*] and by the Spirit of our God."** (I Cor. 6:9-11)

The Messianic Believer is to have his mind renewed so that he develops the same kind of attitude and value system which *Y'shua* has:

**"But you have not so learned Christ [*Messiah*], <sup>21</sup> if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus [*Y'shua*]: <sup>22</sup> that you put off,**

**concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, <sup>23</sup> and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, <sup>24</sup> and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."** (Eph. 4:17-24)

The Apostle John put it very succinctly:

**"He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."** (1 John 2:6)

~ Obstacles ~

Every child is the product of his or her biological father and mother. Genetics plays an important role in the physical appearance, talents, and aptitudes of the child. Some believe that genetics also play a role in a person's overall behavior pattern, although that concept is highly disputed by others.

Genetics is only the beginning of the story. A child is also profoundly influenced by their upbringing, culture, and the physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences which beset them throughout their formative years. In many (if not most) cases, these influences are in conflict with the way of life which God set forth in His Instruction Book, the Holy Bible:

**"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ..."** (Rom. 3:23)

A third obstacle which must be overcome are the sins of the parents:

**"... visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."** (Ex. 20:5-6)

Still another major hindrance to righteous development is the *yetzer hara* (yeht-zehr' hah-rah'), the *evil inclination*. According to Jewish teaching, the *yetzer hara* exists within a person from birth and is responsible for the carnal pulls of the flesh. Some common traits of the *yetzer hara* are: vanity, jealousy, lust, greed, anger, envy, and vindictiveness. These traits are common to all men, although individual traits may appear greater or lessor, depending upon the individual.

All of these factors work together to pull the individual down into a "way of life" that is contrary to God's will:

**"... the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. <sup>8</sup> So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."** (Rom. 8:7-8)

~ Learning to Walk ~

Just as a child must learn to walk physically, so a babe in *Y'shua* must learn to walk spiritually. Most infants begin to crawl before they are able to stand up and walk on their own. This allows them to move around, although often with difficulty.

So too, with the new Messianic Believer who has done *teshuvah* (turned to *The Way of Life*). Their first steps may begin with a difficult crawl towards the righteousness which is found in the light of Messiah. It is as though they have been awakened from spiritual slumber:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~ **Stumbling** ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

**"A Psalm of David.  
A Contemplation.  
Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,  
Whose sin is covered.**

**<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the man to whom the LORD [*YHVH*] does not impute iniquity,  
And in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

**<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones grew old  
Through my groaning all the day long.**

**<sup>4</sup> For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.  
Selah.**

**<sup>5</sup> I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I have not hidden.  
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to  
the LORD [*YHVH*],'**

**And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah." (Psalm 32:1-5)**

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

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

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

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

(I John 2:1-2)

~ Getting Started ~

Where does a Spiritual Child who is new to this walk called *The Way of Life*, begin? One might say the first step in *The Way of Life* walk is to "Read the Book." Our first suggestion is to ask God for wisdom to sort it all out:

**"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."** (James 1:5)

**"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. 4:16)

Some may want to begin with the details (the 613 commandments), while others may prefer to grasp the overall concepts of the Law first. No matter where one starts, the important thing is to begin the walk, not letting the remorse of repentance dissipate without taking the initial steps in *The Way of Life*.

Walking requires two legs. This is true both for physical walking as well as spiritual walking. In a word picture, the two legs of our spiritual walk are what *Y'shua* called the two Great Commandments:

**"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"**

**<sup>37</sup> Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, "You shall love the LORD [*YHVH*] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." <sup>38</sup> This is the first and great commandment. <sup>39</sup> And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>40</sup> On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."**

(Matt. 22:36-40)

With each two steps we take, we should be loving God and loving neighbor:

**"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."** (Eph. 2:10)

What could be more simple?

And how is one to express their love for God or for their neighbor? The *Written Torah* gives us yet another summary of the Law. This summary is known as the Ten Commandments, although in Hebrew they are actually called the Ten Words, or even the Ten Things.

~ The Ten Words ~

Each one of the Ten Words can be placed under one of the two Great Commandments. It is commonly stated that the first four commandments teach us how to love God and the last six teach us how to love our neighbors. However, in Jewish teaching, the fifth commandment (honor your father and mother) is considered to be in the category of loving God. This is because we have a Father in heaven, and He is first and foremost worthy of our love.

Also, there are three different versions for numbering the Ten Commandments. The Protestant version begins the same as the Roman Catholic version, with "You shall have no other gods before Me." However, the Roman Catholic version combines the first two commandments of the Protestant version (verses 2-6) into a First Commandment and divides the Tenth Commandment into two parts. The Jewish version is the one listed below, where the First Commandment (or Word) is considered to be the statement, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

~ Love God ~

The first five commandments teach the basics when it comes to loving God.

**"And God spoke all these words, saying:**

◆ <sup>2</sup> **'I am the LORD [*YHVH*] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.**

◆ <sup>3</sup> **'You shall have no other gods before Me. <sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; <sup>5</sup> you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD [*YHVH*] your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, <sup>6</sup> but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

◆ <sup>7</sup> **'You shall not take the name of the LORD [*YHVH*] your God in vain, for the LORD [*YHVH*] will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.**

◆ <sup>8</sup> **'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD [*YHVH*] your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD [*YHVH*] made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD [*YHVH*] blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.**

◆ <sup>12</sup> **'Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD [*YHVH*] your God is giving you.'" (Ex. 20:1-12)**

When it comes to loving God, the two commandments which seem to receive the greatest resistance among those who call themselves Christians are number four, keeping the Sabbath, and number two, using graven images as a part of worship.

~ Loving Neighbor ~

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

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

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

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

(Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28)

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

~ The Details ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

~ A Life Long Walk ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



where we are unable to congregate on the Sabbath for instruction, we can still follow Paul's admonition to study, by doing so in our own homes or in home fellowships:

**"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."**  
(II Tim. 2:15 KJV)

If you would like a copy of the *Weekly Torah Reading Schedule*, please request one. It not only includes the traditional *Torah* reading for each Sabbath, it also includes the traditional portion from the *Prophets*, and appropriate companion readings from the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). We have been using this guide in our own Sabbath studies for many years and are pleased with how much more we learn each year.

By studying the Scriptures, the new Messianic Believer will begin to understand that the entire body of Scripture is a spiritual unity. The New Testament does not replace the Old Testament, it compliments it by adding information about the promised Messiah; how He came not only to provide salvation, but also to show us the proper way to keep the commandments of God. Remember, the purpose of the commandments is not to put a heavy burden around our necks, but to teach us how to lead righteous lives:

**"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**  
(Matt. 11:28-30)

#### ~ Clearing the Decks ~

One problem which many Believers face when learning about the Hebrew roots of the faith, is the doctrinal clutter which occupies their mind from past teaching. This can be a significant problem if some of those doctrines are in direct conflict with what the Scriptures actually teach.

Our suggestion is to try and read the Scriptures with a completely open mind, as though you had never before read the Bible or heard any teaching concerning it. Let God speak to you through the pages of the Holy Scriptures and by the leading of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit).

If possible, do not rely totally on one translation of the Scriptures. All of our English translations are just that, translations. Unless you are fluent in Hebrew and Greek, you are limited to what various scholars have prepared for you in the way of English translations. The problem is that English does not allow for the nuances of the Hebrew and Greek. Neither does English allow for the idiomatic expressions which are found in the original languages, especially the Hebrew. On top of that, according to recent scholarship, many of the books of the New Testament were originally written in Hebrew. They were then translated into Greek and from there into English. That means, when it comes to the New Testament, we have a translation of a translation. No wonder the original meaning sometimes gets lost in the process.

One of our goals at *Hebrew Roots*, is to discern the original meaning of the Scriptures, and offer teachings so that

Messianic Believers can learn the truth and be free from false doctrine:

**"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."**  
(John 8:32)

#### ~ Moving Forward ~

Whatever you do, keep moving forward. Spiritually, a Messianic Believer cannot stand still. We either move forward or move backward. Therefore, do not look with nostalgia at your previous sinful life in the flesh, for that might entice you to fall back into your old sinful ways:

**"But Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.'"**  
(Luke 9:62)

Paul likened our spiritual *Way of Life* walk to a race. We cannot win the race unless we finish it. A runner who trains for any of the world track events must spend enormous amounts of time in training, and must learn how to discipline his body on a daily basis. Paul tells us that we also are in a race and must also discipline our flesh in such a way that we are not tempted to sin:

**"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. <sup>25</sup> And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."**

(I Cor. 9:24-27)

#### ~ Be Patient ~

Because we, as Messianic Believers, are in a race to the finish, it is important for us to run that race at a steady pace and with much patience. When a person first tastes the truths of the Messianic faith, they are often full of questions. Many of those questions can be easily answered, but others may be very complex. Know this, that you will probably never receive all of the answers to all of your questions in this life. Some questions will just have to wait until Messiah comes, and then we can ask Him and He will have the correct answer.

It has been our experience that some difficult questions are answered in this life, but sometimes it takes a very long time. We have had questions which took years before an answer was forthcoming. Of course, once the answer was received it all seemed so very simple. Why were we unable to understand for so long a time? We do not know for sure, but in some cases it may have been because we were not spiritually ready to accept the answer:

**"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. <sup>8</sup> You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."** (James 5:7-8)

~ Summary ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Mark 12:32-34)

May your journey lead you to the Kingdom of God.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ *If I Make It* ~

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



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

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

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

**" He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it."**

(I Thess. 5:24)

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

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

(I Peter 1:1-2)

~ Election ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~ Works, Grace, or Both? ~

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

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

**"But we are all like an unclean thing,  
And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags;  
We all fade as a leaf,  
And our iniquities, like the wind,  
Have taken us away.  
<sup>7</sup> And there is no one who calls on Your name,  
Who stirs himself up to take hold of You;**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We need to be learning how to behave as legitimate members of God's Family, following *Y'shua's* perfect example.

~ God is a Father ~

Now that God has called us into His family, forgiven us of our sins, buried our old nature in the death of *Y'shua*, and raised us up as a new child of God in the resurrection of *Y'shua*, why would He want to cast us away? Is the very life blood of *Y'shua* not worth any more to Him than that? Can you see how the attitude implied in the phrase; "If I make it..." could be an affront to God? He has done all of these things to bring us into a Father/child relationship with Him -- are we now afraid that He is going to kick us out of the family?

Many of you readers are parents. All of us are children, although our parents may be deceased. All of us were imperfect parents and all of us were imperfect children. The same holds true of our parents, they too were imperfect. Yet it is our educated guess that very few of you were ever disowned by your parents or ever disowned any of your children. Even if you did disown your children, they are still your children -- there is no escaping that fact. The same is true with God. We are His children if we have accepted the sacrifice of His perfect Son, *Y'shua*, as our personal Savior and been immersed (baptized) in His name. There is no escaping that fact. But God is the perfect parent. Where we failed, He succeeds, where we chastised in anger, He chastises in love. Where we made profound mistakes, He makes profoundly correct decisions. How then can we imagine that God will allow the good work that He has begun in us to fail? It just cannot happen -- except in one way:

**"For if we sin willfully [and continually] after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. <sup>28</sup>Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>29</sup> Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? <sup>30</sup> For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD [YHVH] will judge His people.' <sup>31</sup> It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."** (Heb. 10:26-31)

If we despise our position in the Family of God so much that we are willing to continue to live a life of sin, not caring about God's desire to see us perfected, then it is possible to abort yourself out of His very family. But if we find ourselves making mistakes and falling into sin, but hating the condition of sin and sincerely desiring to go to the **"the throne of grace"** for forgiveness, then we have not even come close to committing the "unpardonable sin." Only we can take ourselves out of the Family of God. God has placed us in it and He will never forsake us:

**"Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"** (Heb. 13:5)

**"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> 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)

**"Let the wicked forsake his way,  
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;  
Let him return to the LORD [YHVH],  
And He will have mercy on him;  
And to our God,  
For He will abundantly pardon."** (Isa. 55:7)

**"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus [*Y'shua*] the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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)

It is not difficult to understand what our position is in the Family of God. It is really quite simple. We have been begotten (some would say born -- let's not argue about semantics at this point) into the very Family of God. We are already members of that family although we have not been fully completed. That will take place at the resurrection when we are changed from mortal into immortal. God is perfect, so by extension one can conclude that His family must also be perfect. But we are human beings and are not yet perfect. So how can we be a part of a perfect family? It can only be done through the perfect sacrifice of the first of the Firstborn, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Through His blood we are cleansed of all our sins and made perfect in the sight of God. Now we are members of His perfect Family.

~ Sin and Forgiveness ~

Even after being completely purified from sin through repentance and baptism, we still sometimes sin, transgress the law, miss the mark, and not follow our Father's instruction as laid down in the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible). So how can we continue to be a part of the perfect Family of God when we fall again into sin? As we saw in the scriptures quoted above, we need to go to God and ask forgiveness for our transgressions and He will forgive us again. After all, did you kick your child out of the house the first time he disobeyed you? Or the second, or the third? Of course not, and neither does God, the righteous father, do so to us:

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

This process continues all of the days of our physical lives. We miss the mark by sinning so we go to the Father for forgiveness through the blood of Messiah. Hopefully, in the process, we learn some things, and we improve over our early years so that our sins become less frequent and less flagrant. This is called:

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

and:

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ~ Faith ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ~ Overcoming ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ~ The Leading Spirit ~

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

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

**us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."**

(II Cor. 1:21-22)

We can choose to follow the Spirit of God or to follow our own minds and hearts. However, to do the latter puts us in jeopardy, because then we are denying that part of us which has been made holy. Thus, the scriptures tell us:

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

We should not act in a way that brings grief to God through the Spirit that seals us and makes us holy (set apart):

**"Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. <sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ [*Messiah*] forgave you."** (Eph. 4:29-32)

When the urge comes over you to do good -- DO IT! That is the Holy Spirit leading you. On the other hand, when the urge comes over you to do wrong or speak evil of another -- DON'T DO IT! That is either your own carnal nature talking to you or the Adversary himself needling into your mind:

**"Depart from evil, and do good;**

**And dwell forevermore.**

**<sup>28</sup> For the LORD [*YHVH*] loves justice,**

**And does not forsake His saints;**

**They are preserved forever,**

**But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.**

**<sup>29</sup> The righteous shall inherit the land,**

**And dwell in it forever."** (Psalm 37:27-29)

When we are tempted to do wrong, to sin, to miss the mark, immediately we need to ask our Father in heaven for assistance to overcome the temptation and to put the evil urge out of our mind and heart. He will answer our prayer.

To live in the Spirit is to live with God and for God, not being mindful of our present circumstances or conditions. Perhaps we are where we are -- not because of sin, but because God is teaching us something that will be with us throughout all eternity and will prove to be a blessing for us and for others at another time and place. So be open to discipline:

**"For whom the LORD [*YHVH*] loves He chastens,**

**And scourges every son whom He receives."**

(Heb. 12:6)

~ Faith ~

To live in the Spirit is to totally trust God that He:

**"...will never leave us or forsake us."** (Heb. 13:5)

To live in the Spirit is to have total and complete confidence in God that He will complete in us the work that He has begun to do.

This is FAITH!!!

Sometimes Children of God feel worthless and of no value to God or man. That may have been true when they were living in the flesh, according to the ways of the world. It is definitely not true when they live in the power of the Holy Spirit:

**"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. <sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] has made me free from the law of sin and death."** (Rom. 8:1-2)

**"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, [*the death of our old sinful nature*] that just as Christ [*Messiah*] was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"**

(Rom. 6:4)

Our old man has been crucified with Messiah, therefore we should now be walking in "newness of life," living our lives in such a way as to be pleasing to God. He has given us the instruction book on how to live our lives; it is called the Bible:

**"For the *Torah* was given through Moshe; grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah."** (John 1:17 CJB)

We need to obey these instructions in the way that our Saviour *Y'shua* has shown us -- following His example and teaching:

**"For what the *Torah* could not do by itself, because it lacked the power to make the old nature cooperate, God did by sending his own Son as a human being with a nature like our own sinful one. God did this in order to deal with sin, and in so doing he executed the punishment against sin in human nature, so that the just requirement of the *Torah* might be fulfilled in us who do not run our lives according to what our old nature wants but according to what the Spirit wants. For those who identify with their old nature set their minds on the things of the old nature, but those who identify with the Spirit set their minds on the things of the spirit. Having one's mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one's mind controlled by the Spirit is life and *shalom*. For the mind controlled by the old nature is hostile to God, because it does not submit itself to God's *Torah* -- indeed, it cannot. Thus, those who identify with their old nature cannot please God."** (Rom. 8:3-8 - CJB)

*Y'shua* said:

**"... 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.'"** (John 10:10)

Following Him leads to eternal life, as He said:

**"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand."** (John 10:27-28)

~ Attitude ~

The whole question here is one of attitude. How do we look at ourselves? Do we see ourselves as still the fleshly son of Adam? Or do we see ourselves as the begotten child of

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

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

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

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


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

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ Where Is Love? ~

If someone says, "I love God,"  
And hates his brother,  
He is a liar;

For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen,  
How can he love God whom he has not seen?  
*1 John 4:20*

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

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

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

### ~ A Question for the Body of Messiah ~

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

*Where Is Love?*

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

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

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

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

**I command you, that you love one another."**

(John 15:12-14, 17)

Are we "friends of *Y'shua*?" Do we do those things He commands us to do? Do we really LOVE ONE ANOTHER without question? Are we willing to even lay down our very own lives to protect our brothers and sisters in Messiah? Are we willing to DIE for one another even if we disagree on some doctrinal issues?

If the answer is yes, to all of these questions, then we are truly *Y'shua's* disciples. If we are going to take *Y'shua's* words completely to heart, then we must always treat our fellow Believers with so much love and concern that it absolutely astonishes the general public. However, too often what we see in the Body of Messiah is not love, as *Y'shua* described it. Too often what we see are some who appear to be more interested in tearing down their brothers and sisters, rather than building them up in love.

*Ya'akov* (Yah' ah'-cove = Jacob aka James), the half-brother of *Y'shua*, came down hard on those who were trying to tear down other members within the Body of Messiah (the words in brackets are renderings used in other translations):

**"What is causing all the quarrels [wars] and fights [brawlings] among you? Isn't it your desires [lusts or pleasures] battling inside you? You desire [lust for] things and don't have them. You kill [murder or rage], and you are jealous, and you still can't get them. So you fight [dispute] and quarrel [war]. The reason you don't have is that you don't pray [ask]! Or you pray [ask] and don't receive, because you pray [ask] with the wrong motive, that of wanting to indulge your own desires [lusts or pleasures]."**

(James 4:1-3 CJB)

It is important to note that the Greek word translated "kill" (*phoneuo* Strong's #5407) literally means "to murder." It is the very same word used in the New Testament to quote the sixth commandment:

**"... Jesus [*Y'shua*] said, 'You shall not murder (*phoneuo*).'..."** (Matt. 19:18)

Very strong language to be sure. Why would *Ya'akov* use such harsh words with the Believers; with the people who were claiming to follow in the path laid down for them by *Y'shua HaMashiach*? Obviously they were not literally murdering each other. It would seem as though this kind of language should be reserved for the nonbeliever, or the pagan, but it is not; so something else must be happening here that is very important.

The answer is found just a few verses later when *Ya'akov* reveals the one major way in which the Brethren "war" against and 'murder' one another:

**"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. <sup>12</sup> There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"** (James 4:11-12)

Apparently the same thing that is true today was also true in *Ya'akov's* day. Brethren in the Body of Messiah are 'murdering' each other with their tongues. This type of 'murder' usually does not destroy the physical life, but it certainly can destroy the spiritual life, the one that is of greatest importance; for it is the way we treat one another with our words which has the power to break the spirit of our brethren:

**"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life,**

**But perverseness in it breaks the spirit."** (Prov. 15:4)

All of us will one day die physically, but what is paramount is that we not die spiritually, for that would take away from us the most precious hope that we have; eternal life. What *Ya'akov* is talking about, in the opening verses of chapter four, is the sin that is called *Lashon Hara* (Lah-shone' Hah-rah'); the Evil Tongue. *Ya'akov* treats this same subject in even greater detail in chapter three:

**"My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.**

**<sup>3</sup> Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. <sup>4</sup> Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.**

**<sup>5</sup> Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! <sup>6</sup> And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup> For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. <sup>8</sup> But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup> With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. <sup>10</sup> Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.**

**<sup>11</sup> Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening? <sup>12</sup> Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh."** (James 3:1-12)

Today it is not just the words we speak that do immense harm to our brothers and sisters in Messiah; an even greater tool of evil resides on the desks of tens of thousands of Believers. It is called the computer, and it can be an especially evil tool when it is linked to that huge serpent that is coming to control all thought in the world; the Internet.

Are computers inherently evil? No! Is the Internet inherently evil? No, of course not. But what we see happening today is that people are able to hide behind the anonymity of the computer on their desk. Oh yes, we probably know the names of those who post vituperation (*abusive fault finding*) concerning other brethren on the multitude of Internet forums, but we may never see their faces or hear their voices.



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

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

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

#### ~ What About Sin? ~

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

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

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

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

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

#### ~ Caught In Sin ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

Body merely experiences discomfort. However, if left uncorrected, these sins (like leaven) can expand and permeate the entire body, causing a more serious spiritual illness. If a remedy is not found, the Body (fellowship) may eventually die a spiritual death.

On the other hand, an improper remedy for a sin (one that is too severe for the infraction) may actually be more harmful for the Spiritual Body. This is what *Ya'akov* was teaching about back in the fourth chapter of James. What most often kills the Spiritual Body is the allowance of sin -- not the sin of an individual who has repented, but the sin of the Evil Tongue, *Lashon Hara* against that person. Sadly, until they are on the receiving end of someone else's evil tongue, many Believers do not understand how absolutely awful their tongues can be.

The Corinthians, rather than being "puffed up" about how 'liberal' they were in allowing this sinful man to continue in his sin, were told that they should be "mourning." Sin in other people is not something in which we should take pleasure, rather it should be something that sends each one of us to our knees in prayer. Far too often we see Believers who appear to take pleasure in confronting a brother or sister in their sin. Sometimes such confrontation needs to be done, but pleasure is not one of the emotions that should be felt when it is done. Bringing a brother to repentance needs to be addressed with much prayer and an attitude of mourning for their condition. It must not be done in a spirit of: "Now we gotcha!"

Another important point that Paul makes here is that every action that is taken against a brother or sister must be done for the purpose that "... his spirit may be saved ..." The result of such action, when it is properly executed, is twofold: to "cleanse" the Church; and to see that ALL of those who have been called will be saved; including the one who has sinned.

Now the words of *Ya'akov* quoted earlier, become clear:

**"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask."** (James 4:1-2)

How different are the ways of God from the ways of men. We are told to love one another, and not seek to defame or destroy the reputation of our brethren. The writer of the book of Hebrews (probably Paul) exhorts us to always seek the ways of peace if at all possible:

**"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: <sup>15</sup> looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; <sup>16</sup> lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright."** (Heb. 12:14-16)

We need to be very careful when disciplining a brother or sister, for if the punishment is too extreme, or if it goes on too long, or if it is administered in a spirit of anger and hatred instead of love and concern, the person being punished may become bitter and, through his bitterness might become defiled.

Once that root of bitterness enters the heart, where will our embattled brother turn? Let us go back to the story of *Oliver Twist*. Oliver escaped the parish workhouse (run by supposed Christians) and found love with a band of thieves. Instead of coldness, Oliver found companionship. Instead of hunger he found a full belly. Instead of beatings he received praise. However, in order to experience the fulfillment of the emotional and physical needs that he had, Oliver, like Esau, had to give himself over to a profane life. In Oliver's case it was a life of stealing.

The same type of thing has happened to some Believers. Finding coldness in the Church they have sought companionship with the profane. Finding a judgmental spirit in the Church they have sought acceptance with the profane. Finding hypocrisy in the Church they have sought honesty with the profane. Finding condemnation in the Church they have sought honor with the profane.

Oh how careful we must be when the rod of discipline is placed into our hands, that we do not misuse the grave responsibility that has been handed to us.

### ~ Forgiveness ~

Hopefully and prayerfully, the story does not end here -- with an errant brother or sister becoming bitter and, as a result, seeking a life among the profane. For if the proper kind of prayerful, mournful, and loving discipline has been administered, then what must follow is repentance followed by acceptance; repentance by the sinner and acceptance by the brethren.

Paul gave us this example by instructing the Corinthians to forgive the fornicator and accept him back into the congregation after their action against him had been successful:

**"For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you. <sup>5</sup> But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent -- not to be too severe. <sup>6</sup> This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, <sup>7</sup> so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.**

**<sup>8</sup> Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him. <sup>9</sup> For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.**

**<sup>10</sup> Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ [*Messiah*], <sup>11</sup> lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."** (II Cor. 2:4-11)

Again, there are a number of points that need to be addressed in this passage. First of all, whatever punishment they exacted upon the fornicator, Paul determined that it was sufficient, and that the punishment now needed to cease. Secondly, not only were they to cease punishing him, they were now required to forgive and comfort him. The reason given for this complete reversal in behavior towards him was so that he would not be "...swallowed up with too much sorrow." Paul

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

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

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

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

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

While the number seven:

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

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

### ~ True Love ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

out to do otherwise. That is *agape*! That is the Godly form of love; the same kind of love which our Father in heaven exhibits towards us!

There is a well known song performed by a contemporary Christian singer named Don Francisco. The message of the song is contained in the refrain: "*Love is not a feeling, it's an act of your will.*" As Believers who dwell in the love (*agape*) of Messiah, we must learn to show forth His kind of love towards our brethren.

~ Conclusion ~

The Body of Messiah must become a refuge from the wars, violence, hatred, and rudeness that exemplifies the world of the Adversary. Within the Body we must be able to find a safe haven where, when we fall from grace into sin, we will find brethren who will help us to repent and return to the ways of the *Torah* of God. In the Body of Messiah the sinner must not be so heavily condemned that their spirit becomes crushed, thereby causing them to look to the profane for comfort. Within the Body of Messiah there must be the complete willingness to accept a repentant sinner back into full fellowship in a spirit of love, with no cloud of suspicion hanging over their head.

Also, within the Body of Messiah we must learn how to use *Lashon Hara* in an absolutely correct and very limited manner, so that it is used only for constructive purposes. We must guard very carefully against its misuse, for our words carry great weight and have the potential to fatally injure a brother's spirit.

Above all, in the Body of Messiah, there must be an overriding loving concern for the other person, especially the one who has sinned. That concern must take precedence over nearly everything else, for it is God's desire that all might come to repentance and be saved; not turned away to the point of being tempted to seek comfort with the profane.

Each of us must be careful that we not be the one to place a stumbling block in front of a brother or sister who is temporarily blinded by sin. Remember, when we accuse a brother or sister of wrongdoing, we have just placed ourselves in the seat of the Adversary! For he is the "accuser of the brethren:"

**"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.**

**"<sup>10</sup> Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ [*Messiah*] have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down."<sup>(Rev. 12:8-10)</sup>**

We must learn how to truly love one another so that we can all be the kind of disciples *Y'shua HaMashiach* wants:

**"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? <sup>46</sup> Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. <sup>47</sup> Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. <sup>48</sup> But if that**

**evil servant says in his heart, "My master is delaying his coming," <sup>49</sup> and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, <sup>50</sup> 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, <sup>51</sup> 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)

May all men come to know who we are by the way we treat one another:

**"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy -- meditate on these things. ...**

**[And] <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.** (Phil: 4:8, 5)

There is Love!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ A Wall of Fire ~

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

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

### ~ Sufficient Grace ~

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Heb. 4:1-2)

### ~ Sin Be Gone ~

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

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

(Gal. 2:17-19)

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

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

(I John 3:4 KJV)

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

### ~ Works Too ~

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

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

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

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

perform works which are good (i.e. following the precepts of the *Torah*) are promised a reward of glory, honor, and peace:

**"... but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness -- indignation and wrath,<sup>9</sup> tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek;<sup>10</sup> but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.<sup>11</sup> For there is no partiality with God.<sup>12</sup> For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law<sup>13</sup> (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ..."** (Rom. 2:8-13)

### ~ Rewards ~

Paul used an analogy that all Believers are in the process of constructing a building. The foundation of that building is the saving Work of *Y'shua HaMashiach*. However, a Believer's building may or may not survive trial by fire. If our building is made up of good Works, it will stand in the day of judgment. If it is not made up of good Works it will be destroyed:

**"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*].<sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,<sup>13</sup> each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.<sup>14</sup> If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.<sup>15</sup> If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."** (I Cor. 3:11-15)

In other words, the lack of good works may not, of and by itself, deny a Believer entrance into eternal life, but it will result in a diminished reward. *Y'shua* Himself made the same point:

**"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)

The Apostle Paul performed many good works during his ministry and he knew that God would give him a precious crown when he came up in the resurrection of the just:

**"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.<sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness [gold, silver, precious stones?], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."** (II Tim. 4:7-8)

So then, we are not justified because of any good works we might have previously accomplished. We are justified because we have faith that *Y'shua's* sacrifice is more than adequate to take away our sins. Nevertheless, Believers have also been created to perform good works, which should follow directly upon and because of our faith in *Y'shua* and the fact that our sins have been forgiven:

**"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ [*Messiah*] depart from iniquity [*sin*].' "<sup>20</sup> But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.<sup>21</sup> Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."** (II Tim. 2:19-21)

As Believers, we all share a common faith in *Y'shua*. However, when it comes to receiving a reward, each one of us is on our own:

**"But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.<sup>5</sup> For each one shall bear his own load."** (Gal. 6:4-5)

### ~ City Walls ~

One of the chief defenses for an ancient city was to build a wall around the entire city that would be as impregnable as possible. If the city wall was very strong, so as to make its destruction nearly impossible, it would force an attacking army to either try and scale the wall, or make an attack on the only opening in the wall, the city gate. For this reason, the walls around cities were usually several feet thick. So thick, in fact, that oftentimes rooms were created inside the walls where items could be stored or people could even live.

The most famous city wall in Scripture was the one at Jericho. The harlot\* *Rahav* (Rah-hav' = Rahab) was living inside the wall of Jericho when the two Israelite spies came to check out the city:

**"Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, 'Go, view the land, especially Jericho.' So they went, and came to the house of a harlot [*zanah* = prostitute] named Rahab, and lodged there."** (Josh 2:1)

*Rahav* hid the spies on the top of the wall (which was the roof of her house) and she told the soldiers they had already left town. Then, after the soldiers were gone, she let the men down the outside wall of Jericho, through a window in her house:

**"Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall."** (Josh. 2:15)

The building and maintenance of the city wall was so important to the safety of the community it was not left to individuals (such as *Rahav*) who might live in the wall or have storage facilities there. If that were the case, the city wall might be in varying degrees of upkeep (or disrepair) depending upon the person who owned that particular portion of the wall. Building and maintaining the city wall was always under the supervision of the elders (a higher authority) so that all members of the community could be protected.

This was not the case inside the city walls where individual property was under the control of the person who owned it:

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\* Some believe that *Rahav* was an innkeeper and not a harlot. Yet the Hebrew word *zanah* clearly means prostitute.

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

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

### ~ Building a Righteous Wall ~

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

**"In You, O LORD [YHVH], I put my trust;**

**Let me never be ashamed;**

**Deliver me in Your righteousness.**

<sup>2</sup> **Bow down Your ear to me,**

**Deliver me speedily;**

**Be my rock of refuge,**

**A fortress of defense to save me.**

<sup>3</sup> **For You are my rock and my fortress;**

**Therefore, for Your name's sake,**

**Lead me and guide me."**

(Psalm 31:1-3)

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

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

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

(Rom. 6:23)

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

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

(Rom. 3:21-26)

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

### ~ Building a House ~

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

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

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

(I John 5:18)

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

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

(Matt. 7:24-27)

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

### ~ Building the Wrong Structure ~

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

**"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."**

(I Peter 5:8)

When we resist the temptation to fight the Adversary on our own terms and instead submit to God and turn the fight over to Him, the Adversary's attacks against us can be overcome:

**"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."** (James 4:7)

Yes, we are to resist the devil, but our resistance is not to be based solely upon keeping the *Torah* commands. We must hold firm to our trust and faith in God. This is the theme on which Paul focused his epistles. You cannot become free from the sins of which the Adversary accuses you, by vowing to keep even more commandments or keeping them better. Atonement for sins already committed cannot be obtained by keeping the Law. Adding rules to the *Written Torah* (i.e. creating an *Oral Torah* that is more strict) will not bring forgiveness, as worthy as such a venture might be in keeping one from sin in the future. We must turn to God in full faith, and trust that He is able to conquer *HaSatan's* grip on our life, and to forgive us of our sins:

**"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."** (Heb. 2:18)

Many Believers have found themselves in trouble with the Adversary because they fight him on his terms. When this process fails, Believers sometimes blame God, because they feel He should have answered their prayers because of the good Works they were doing. However, our good Works are never sufficient to fight off the Adversary and atone for sin because:

**"... we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; ..."** (Isa. 64:6a)

That is why we must be born again:

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

#### ~ Facing Down the Adversary ~

Nevertheless, good Works are what Believers are supposed to be doing no matter how life is going. What Believers need, in order to face down the Adversary, is the faith to turn the whole situation into God's hands for solution. In spiritual terms, turning things over to God means putting on the whole armor of God so that we are protected from anything the Adversary can bring our way. This requires us to be strong in faith so that the grace of God can be made manifest:

**"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."** (Eph. 6:10)

When the Adversary attacks, our only remedy is to place our trust in the power of God (the armor of God) to deflect him from his evil intent:

**"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that**

**you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; <sup>16</sup> above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. <sup>17</sup> And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; <sup>18</sup> praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints -- ..."** Eph. 6:11-18)

If we say that we are worthy to be protected from his fiery darts because we keep the commands of the *Torah* we will lose every time, for we are not saved from the wiles of the devil by only keeping the commandments of the *Torah*. We are saved by the Grace of God through our Faith in Messiah *Y'shua*:

**"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ... <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ [*Messiah*] (by grace you have been saved), ... <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast."** (Eph. 2:1-2, 4-5, 8-9)

#### ~ The Purpose of Torah ~

The teaching of Grace does not negate the Works of the *Torah*, for they too have a worthy purpose. Problems arise when Believers confuse the respective roles of Grace and Works. The purpose of the *Torah* is to provide instruction for building a Righteous Spiritual Home in which the inhabitant can live a life free from sin. However, even our Righteous House of Works is dependent upon God, for He is the architect who has drawn up the righteous plans for our spiritual house:

**"Unless the LORD [*YHVH*] builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD [*YHVH*] guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain."** (Psalm 127:1)

Without God's design, our house would be like a house of cards which would collapse at the first attack of the Adversary.

The blueprints for our Righteous House of Works is, of course, the *Torah*. Therein is found complete instructions on how we, as physical human beings, can live a righteous life in the sight of God. The *Torah* was not designed to grant eternal life in the *Malchut Shamayim* (Mahl-hoot' Shah-mah-eem' = Kingdom of God) or in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come). It was designed to show us how to live righteously in the sight of both God and man:

**"Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel, <sup>46</sup>and He said to them: 'Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe -- all the words of this law. <sup>47</sup> For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is**



**your life, and by this word you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess.**"

(Deut. 32:45-47)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(Luke 19:13-26)

~ Summary ~

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

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

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

(Rom. 6:23)

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

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

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

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

**"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"**

(II Cor. 9:15)

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

**"Therefore I love Your commandments**

**More than gold, yes, than fine gold!" (Psalm 119:127)**

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