

Preparing the Bride

Vol. II

containing:

Sin and Leprosy
Our Dress of Fine Linen
Hold Fast
Separation or Divorce?

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.
Revelation 19:7

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The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)
Oxford University Press
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The Holy Bible: New International Version (NIV)
International Bible Society
Colorado Springs, 1984

~ 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



Scripture 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* מְלֻכּוּת שָׁמַיִם (Mahl-koot' Shah-mah'-eem = the Kingdom of Heaven). As *Y'shua* said to *Yochanan* יוֹחָנָן (Yoh'-chah-nahn = John) the *Immerser* (Baptist):

"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;
20 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 personal 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."

"8 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 four updated articles in this booklet which were originally written over a period of years and published in the *Hebrew Roots Journal*. The opening article is entitled *Sin and Leprosy*. It was first published in Issue 97-5 and addresses the ancient belief that Biblical leprosy was not a physical communicable disease but rather the result of sin.

The second article, *Our Dress of Fine Linen* (Issue 97-3) explores how the Bride of Messiah must be in the process of making/sewing her wedding dress through the performance of righteous acts.

Article three (from Issue 03-3) exhorts all Believers to *Hold Fast* their faith and not be swayed by the *antinomian* (against law) doctrines of modern Christianity, nor by the idea that one can be saved by merely keeping *Torah* -- as Judaism teaches.

The final article, *Separation or Divorce?* (Issue 04-2), briefly examines a mistranslation of Matthew 5:31-32 which has caused untold misery to the Bride of Messiah by claiming that a person who is divorced can never remarry. A simple examination of the words used in the original Greek text make it clear this is simply not so.

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 with the hope they 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, 2013

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Sin and Leprosy ~

And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle,
Suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow.
Then Aaron turned toward Miriam,
And there she was, a leper.
Numbers 12:10



The following is a Midrash, a story written to teach a truth.

* * *

Suppose that you are a member of an ancient Hebrew society. You are betrothed to a beautiful virgin girl, who lives in a faraway town, and have gone back to your father's house to prepare the *Chuppah* חֻפּוּהָ (Hoo'-pah = wedding chamber) for her. Much time has already passed but your father has given you no indication that he is anywhere near ready to send you back to get your bride. Legally you and your bride are fully married, but according to custom you are not allowed to consummate the marriage until your father tells you; "Go and fetch your bride, it is time to bring her to the *Chuppah*."

You puzzle over the fact that it has been such a long period of time since the betrothal took place. What could be the problem? The *Chuppah* is all prepared and stocked with provisions for the seven day wedding consummation. It has been quite some time since your father has made any suggestions about further changes that should be made to it. In addition, you have been studying *Torah*, praying three times a day, working diligently at a job, saving your money, and not running around with the boys. In addition, your father has given you no indication that you need to make changes in your personal habits. What could possibly be the problem? You are longing so much to bring your beautiful bride home to the *Chuppah* and to dwell with her in the fullness of marriage.

Finally, out of desperation, you go to your father and ask; "Why haven't you sent me to fetch my bride? Is there something else that I need to do in preparation for marriage? Please tell me, what is the problem?"

Your father looks at you and with very sad eyes says; "Your bride has contracted a serious, even life threatening illness. She has leprosy. You cannot go for her until she is healed of this terrible disease."

What a shattering blow to learn about the one with whom you hope to spend the rest of your life. What utter devastation. Even more devastating to you is the realization that leprosy is understood to be a punishment for a serious sin of which the leper has not repented. This means your beloved bride is harboring some sin which she either refuses to recognize or refuses to give up. You wonder what awful sin it is that she has not only committed, but of which she is either unwilling or unable to repent.

* * *

The element of truth in this Midrash is that some members of the Bride of Messiah have a terrible disease, one that affects the whole body, and that disease is spiritual leprosy. However, this is a condition from which the Bride can be healed and cleansed; so the situation, while very serious, is not hopeless. The Bride is afflicted with this disease for a number of reasons. This chapter will touch on some possible causes.

~ Biblical Leprosy ~

Most scholars and medical people agree that the modern disease called leprosy (Hansen's disease) is not the same one that carries that name in the English translations of our Bibles. In Hebrew the word for leprosy is *tzara'at* תְּצַרְעַת (tzah-rah-ah't'). In Greek the word is *lepra* (lep'-rah) and it means; "scaliness or leprosy." It is interesting to note that James Hastings, in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, says that *tzara'at* comes from the word *tza-rah'* תְּצַרַע (tzah-rah'), and both words are general terms "for any prostrating experience or disabling disease." (p. 575). In other words, the leprosy of the Bible was a disease that caused you to prostrate yourself. This could be interpreted to mean that it would confine a person to bed. However, the scriptures do not substantiate that view, as lepers were often seen in public. In actual fact, the disease of leprosy did cause people to prostrate themselves in order to be cured. However, it was a prostration born of repentance, not from the physical symptoms of the illness itself.

Biblical leprosy could affect more than an individual's body. It could also afflict one's clothing, vessels or house. Leprosy of this nature appeared as greenish or reddish spots, which some feel were a type of mildew or mold. On a person's body it manifested itself as flaky or scaly skin, or ulcerous eruptions. The Jewish Encyclopedia summarizes the characteristic features of leprosy, found in Leviticus 13, as follows: "(1) bright white spots or patches on the skin, the hair on which also was white; (2) the depression of the patches below the level of the surrounding skin; (3) the existence of 'quick raw flesh;' (4) the spreading of the scab or scall." (Vol. VIII, p. 9).

What is described in the Scriptures as 'leprosy' is definitely not the modern disease of the same name. More likely it covered a variety of skin diseases. What is significant about Biblical leprosy is that all of the lepers mentioned in the *Tanakh* (Tah-nahk' = Old Testament) received their affliction as a result of a serious sin, either their own, or that of a relative.

The best known of the Old Testament lepers was *Miriam* מִרְיָם (Meer-yahm'), the sister of *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Moh-shay' = Moses). She was stricken with the disease as a result of speaking against the marriage of her brother *Moshe* to the:

"Ethiopian woman whom he had married..."

(Num. 12:1)

According to Jewish tradition, both *Miriam* and *Aharon* אַהֲרֹן (Ah hah-rone' = Aaron) were immediately plagued with leprosy, but *Aharon's* leprosy was quickly removed because he had not actually spoken against *Moshe*, but had committed a lesser sin by listening to *Miriam's* complaint and not rebuking

her. In Jewish teaching, the words *Miriam* spoke against *Moshe* constituted *lashon hara* לְשׁוֹן הָרַע (lah-shone' hah-rah' = evil tongue) which is considered to be one of the greatest of sins.

God immediately took action against Miriam's evil words:
"Then He said, 'Hear now My words:
If there is a prophet among you,
I, the LORD [YHVH], make Myself known to him
in a vision,
And I speak to him in a dream.
Not so with My servant Moses;
He is faithful in all My house.
I speak with him face to face,
Even plainly, and not in dark sayings;
And he sees the form of the LORD [YHVH].
Why then were you not afraid
To speak against My servant Moses?'" (Num. 12:6-8)

In *Miriam's* case it required an intercessory prayer on the part of *Moshe* in order for *Miriam* to be healed:

"So Aaron said to Moses, 'Oh, my lord! Please do not lay this sin on us, in which we have done foolishly and in which we have sinned. Please do not let her be as one dead, whose flesh is half consumed when he comes out of his mother's womb!'

"So Moses cried out to the LORD [YHVH], saying, 'Please heal her, O God, I pray!'" (Num. 12:11-13)

God answered *Moshe's* brief, but heartfelt, prayer and healed *Miriam* of her leprosy, but He required her to remain outside the camp, cut off from her people, for seven days:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said unto Moses, 'If her father had spit in her face, would she not be shamed seven days? Let her be shut out of the camp seven days, and after that she [can] be received again. So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey on till Miriam was brought in again.'" (Num. 12:14-15)

~ The Laws of Leprosy ~

The thirteenth chapter of Leviticus details the laws concerning leprosy; whether it be on a person's body, clothing, vessel, or house. It is not the purpose of this article to go into great detail concerning these laws, but rather to look at leprosy as a type of punishment for sin. However, some knowledge of these laws is necessary in order to understand that all forms of leprosy found in the Bible, no matter what the severity, made the bearer of the disease unclean:

"Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'

"He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean, and he shall dwell alone; his habitation shall be outside the camp.'" (Lev. 13:45-46)

When the disease disappeared, the leper was required to be examined by a priest. This examination was done every seven days, outside the camp, until the priest was convinced the

disease had vanished. At that point the leper was required to go through a period of ritual cleansing:

"And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall look; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field."

(Lev. 14:3-7)

It is interesting to note that the items used in the cleansing ceremony of the leper; which were cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop (Lev. 14:4), are the very same ones used in the sacrifice of the red heifer (Num. 19:6). In addition, there is a similarity between this ceremony and the offering of the two goats on *Yom Kippur* יוֹם כִּפּוּר (Yohm Kee-pure' = Day of Atonement). One is slaughtered and the other is let go. All of these things have significance or they would not be mentioned as part of the rituals.

Meanwhile, the leper who has been found rid of his disease still had a time consuming and expensive ritual to go through before he could reenter society:

"He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.

"But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows -- all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean."

(Lev. 14:8-9)

The phrases "wash his clothes" and "wash his body in water," are both understood, in Jewish teaching, to be an immersion in a *mikvah* (meek'-vah = immersion pool); what Believers today call a baptismal pool. This was done, not to cleanse the body of dirt, but to signify a change of status in the person being immersed:

"There is also an antitype which now saves us-- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], ..."

(I Pet. 3:21)

One was always expected to have bathed before going into the *mikvah*.

On the eighth day the cleansed leper was required to bring a sacrifice to the Temple. This sacrifice included two male lambs, one ewe lamb, flour and oil. One animal was for a sin offering, another for a burnt offering, and the third for a trespass offering. If the man could not afford the full offering of animals, he was allowed to substitute one male lamb, as a trespass offering, and two turtledoves or young pigeons, as a sin offering and a burnt offering, along with a grain offering.

What was the reason for all of this ritual? To teach the people the difference between being clean and being unclean:

"This is the law for any leprous sore and scall, for the leprosy of a garment and of a house, for a swelling and a scab and a bright spot, to teach when it is unclean and when it is clean. This is the law of leprosy."

(Lev. 14:54-57)

Let it be understood that when the Scriptures speak of people becoming "unclean," they are speaking of ritual uncleanness, not a dirty physical body. When a person became ritually unclean, he or she was prohibited from worshipping at the Temple. Also, a ritually unclean person could transmit their uncleanness to another person through physical contact. Therefore, it was especially important for the priests and Levites to refrain from situations that would cause them to come into physical contact with other people. To do so would put them in jeopardy of becoming unclean themselves. If they were to become unclean they could not perform their duties at the Temple. Since service at the Temple was considered not only a great honor, but an absolute obligation before God, the priests and Levites took great pains to make sure that they would not come in contact with anyone or anything that might make them ritually unclean.

~ The Causes of Uncleanness ~

There were a number of things, in addition to leprosy, that could cause ritual uncleanness. One of the most obvious was contact with a dead body:

"He who touches the dead body of anyone shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean."

"Whoever touches the body of anyone who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of the LORD [YHVH]. That person shall be cut off from Israel. He shall be unclean, because the water of purification was not sprinkled on him; his uncleanness is still on him."

"This is the law when a man dies in a tent: All who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be unclean seven days; and every open vessel, which has no cover fastened on it, is unclean."

"Whoever in the open field touches one who is slain by a sword or who has died, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days." (Num. 19:11-16)

Not only was contact with a dead body a cause of uncleanness, even going into the tent of a dead person rendered one unclean. Also, graves were a source of ritual uncleanness, as was the touching of a dead man's bone. In fact, not only did contact with a grave render a person ritually unclean, if one's shadow were to cross a grave that person was also considered to be ritually unclean.

Uncleanness also came by other means. Each month a woman goes through an unclean period during her menstrual cycle. During this time a married woman would have to refrain from having intimacy with her husband, plus, she could not go

to the Temple to worship. Anyone touching her also became unclean. For this reason she was required to wear clothing that identified her as being unclean so that others could avoid physical contact with her. In fact, another person was not even allowed to sit upon the bed on which she lay during her unclean time. (See Leviticus 15:19-30.) She was required to go through a purification ritual at the end of each monthly period.

Likewise, a man who had a discharge from his body became unclean and also had to go through a purification ritual in order to be declared clean. Whatever object the unclean person sat upon also became unclean, and anyone that sat upon that item of furniture also became unclean. (See Leviticus 15:1-18).

It is difficult for us today to understand why it was so terrible for religious Israelites to be in a state of ritual uncleanness. In modern society it is common for women to use sanitary items that allow them to maintain a regular lifestyle and no one is the wiser. It would be unthinkable, in Western society, for a woman to actually dress in a manner that told the entire world that she was having a menstrual period. But in God's society, things are very different. All of these laws were given as instruction about very important concepts. From the laws of ritual cleanliness we learn that one did not dare to approach the God of the Universe, the Creator of all things, in a state of ritual uncleanness, for no unclean person can come before God and live:

"Thus you shall separate the children of Israel from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness when they defile My tabernacle that is among them."

"This is the law for one who has a discharge, and for him who emits semen and is unclean thereby, and for her who is indisposed because of her customary impurity, and for one who has a discharge, either man or woman, and for him who lies with her who is unclean." (Lev. 15:31-33)

~ Cleansing the Unclean ~

While it was very easy to become ritually unclean, the methods of ridding one's self of that uncleanness varied from the simple and inexpensive to the expensive and complex. We have already seen what was required for the cleansing of leprosy. Other forms of uncleanness did not demand quite as much ritual or expense.

Cleansing from contact with a dead body required seven days and two sprinklings with "the waters of purification." These were the waters which contained the ashes of the Red Heifer.

The man with a discharge and the woman coming out of her menses had to wash their clothes and immerse in water. Then on the eighth day they had to bring to the priest two turtledoves or two young pigeons as an offering.

In all cases of uncleanness, part of the ritual purification process included "immersing in water." The Jewish people understand this terminology to be immersion in a *mikvah* or immersion pool. In addition, a prerequisite is to be physically clean before entering the *mikvah*. A witness, beside the pool, would testify that the person immersing themselves went completely under water. It was this immersion in the *mikveh* of "living water" that completed the cleansing ritual and signified

that the person had a change in their status from "unclean" to "clean." There is much that we, as Believers, can learn about our relationship with God from the laws of clean and unclean .

~ Sins That Cause Leprosy ~

According to Jewish tradition, there were ten sins that caused a person to be afflicted by the plague of *tzara'at* (leprosy). However, not everyone who committed one of these sins was afflicted by the disease. Only those who found it very difficult to do *teshuvah* תשובה (teh-shoe'-vah = repentance) were afflicted with leprosy. It was thought that only the "dreadful suffering of *tzara'at*" would bring such a person to the place where they were willing to fully repent of their sin.

These ten sins were:

- ◆ Serving Idols
- ◆ Immorality
- ◆ Murder
- ◆ Desecrating or Blaspheming the Name of God
- ◆ Robbing the Public
- ◆ Acting In a Capacity Not Permitted
- ◆ Conceit
- ◆ Lashon Hara (evil speech)
- ◆ An Evil Eye (acting miserly)
- ◆ Taking a Vain Oath

Because of the severe nature of these sins, any manifestation of them within the Body of Messiah could cause the Bride to become afflicted with a spiritual form of leprosy, unless complete confession and repentance takes place in a speedy manner. For this reason, the remainder of this article will be taken up with the examination of these ten sins.

~ Sin #1: Serving Idols ~

"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any 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; 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, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Ex. 20:3-6)

Idol worship can take many forms. Anciently, it took the form of people bowing down in front of a statue, painting or amulet to pray. Unfortunately, many people today are still caught up in this form of idolatry.

But idolatry can take other forms as well. Whatever a person puts between themselves and God is an idol. This can include one's career, money, power, family, or spouse, or a philosophy or religion that does not focus on *Y'shua*, the *Torah*, and the Scriptures. One thing the Bride of Messiah must learn,

and learn well, is that serving her Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, must be first and foremost in her life.

One of the punishments for idolatry was *tzara'at* (leprosy). This is born out in Scripture by one of the punishments which was inflicted upon the children of Israel for their Sin with the Golden Calf:

"So the LORD [YHVH] plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made."

(Ex. 32:35)

Tradition holds that the plague mentioned in this verse is that of leprosy.

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah who today stand guilty of the sin of idolatry? If so, their complete repentance and change of lifestyle is urgently needed:

"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)

~ Sin #2: Immorality ~

"You shall not commit adultery." (Ex. 20:14)

Y'shua extended the definition of the sin of adultery to include even the thought of sexual immorality:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say unto you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matt. 5:27-28)

Sexual immorality is especially evil because of the effect that it can have on other people. Many times adultery can cause the complete disruption of two families; the four adults, plus numerous children, not to mention the grandparents, brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, etc., who sometimes feel they must break off relationships with divorced "in-laws" (who were formerly held in high esteem) in order to remain loyal to their blood relatives.

Jewish tradition tells us that when the Pharaoh of Egypt took Abraham's wife Sarah into his palace with the intent of having sexual relations with her, God brought swift punishment (even before he could go through with his plan) by striking his entire household with *tzara'at* (leprosy):

"But the LORD [YHVH] plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife."

(Gen. 12:17)

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of the sin of immorality? If so, their complete repentance and change of lifestyle is urgently needed.

~ Sin #3: Murder ~

"You shall not murder." (Ex. 20:13)

Y'shua extended the definition of murder to include being angry without a cause:

"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. 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] shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, "You fool!" shall be in danger of hell fire."
(Matt. 5:21-22)

God can, and does, forgive all sins including the sin of murder, but only if the one who has committed the sin asks for forgiveness and fully repents (I John 1:9). The story of Joab, King David's general, is very interesting, for Joab committed a murder during a time of war. He was not given the death penalty, nor was he personally afflicted with leprosy. Instead, King David placed a curse upon this man's family, which included *tzara'at* (leprosy).

After King Saul's death, David דָּוִד (Dah-veed') found himself at war with Saul's descendants. Saul's son, Ishbosheth אִישׁ-בִּשֶׁת (Iesh Boh-shet'), was officially recognized as king by all the tribes except Judah. Ishbosheth's general, Abner, went to David and made a pact. But David's general, Joab יוֹאָב (Yoh-ahv'), became angry when he heard that Abner אַבְנֵר (Ahv-nayr') had met with David. Joab hated Abner because he had been responsible for the death of Joab's brother in a recent battle, and so he had Abner killed. David was furious, and showed the nation that he had nothing to do with the murder by marching in Abner's funeral procession. David then placed a curse upon Joab and his descendants:

"And afterward, when David heard it, he said, 'My kingdom and I are guiltless before the LORD [YHVH] forever of the blood of Abner the son of Ner. Let it rest on the head of Joab and on all his father's house; and let there never fail to be in the house of Joab one who has a discharge or is a leper, who leans on a staff or falls by the sword, or who lacks bread.'"
(II Sam. 3:28-29)

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of hatred without a cause, or murder? If so, their complete repentance and change of heart is urgently needed.

~ Sin #4: Desecrating the Name of God ~

"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."
(Ex. 20:7)

It is perhaps our greatest purpose in life to glorify the name of God. We can do this in both word and deed:

**"Praise the LORD [YHVH]!
Praise the name of the LORD [YHVH];
Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD [YHVH]!
You who stand in the house of the LORD [YHVH],
In the courts of the house of our God,
Praise the LORD [YHVH], for the LORD [YHVH]
is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant."**

(Psalm 135:1-3)

However, there are grave consequences for blaspheming the name of God:

"Now the son of an Israelite woman, whose father was an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel; and this Israelite woman's son and a man of Israel fought each other in the camp. And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the name of the LORD and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan.)

"Then they put him in custody, that the mind of the LORD [YHVH] might be shown to them.

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Take outside the camp him who has cursed; then let all who heard him lay their hands on his head, and let all the congregation stone him. Then you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying: "Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD [YHVH] shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the LORD, he shall be put to death.'"

(Lev. 24:10-16)

The reason the Jewish people refuse to speak the name of God (YHVH) is because they do not wish to risk taking God's name in vain. Instead, they substitute the Hebrew words *Adonai* אֲדֹנָי (Ah-doh-nai' = Lord) or *HaShem* הַשֵּׁם (Hah Shehm' = the Name) whenever they speak or encounter, in reading or writing, the name of God. When writing these substitute words for the Name, some will eliminate the vowels. This is done as a sign of respect for the ineffable name of God. Thus, God becomes G-d, and Lord becomes L-rd.

In the Jewish world the actual name of God (YHVH) can only be spoken in synagogue on *Yom Kippur*. When the name is spoken all of the worshippers fall to the floor on their faces. It is apparent from these practices that the Jewish people hold the Name of God in great awe and reverence.

Several people have written to *Hebrew Roots*® urging us to use the "Scared Names" exclusively in our publication. We appreciate their stand on this issue. However, we are convinced that very few people currently know the correct pronunciation for God's Name (YHVH). While we use *Y'shua* as the given Hebrew name of our Saviour, we also recognize that it was by the name of Jesus Christ that many were/are brought to repentance and baptized into His body of believers. Therefore, we also continue to use the anglicized form of the Hebrew name and title, *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah), which is "Jesus Christ."

What then constitutes taking the LORD's name in vain? The Jewish people say it is the indiscriminate use of the tetragrammaton (YHVH). The Believers who use the Sacred Names say they feel use of substitutes -- such as *Adonai*, LORD, God, and the name Jesus, desecrate the name of God.

However, consider this: one does not need to address our Father in heaven by His actual name. I never called my physical father Emory; it was always Dad, or Daddy or Pa. Neither do I call my spiritual Father by His name, but rather by the closer and more familiar terms 'Father,' or the Hebrew form 'Abba.' In our opinion, a more virulent form of taking the

LORD's name in vain is to commit open and unrepentant sin before others while claiming to be serving the one true God.

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of desecrating God's name? If so, their complete repentance and change of behavior is required.

~ Sin #5: Robbing the Public ~

"You shall not steal." (Ex. 20:15)

While any kind of stealing is abhorrent to those who abide by the laws of God, there is one particular kind of stealing which, in Jewish tradition, was punishable by *tzara'at* (leprosy). This was the merchant or businessman who made a practice of robbing the public by overcharging for his merchandise or service.

Sometimes a person will steal because he is poor and needs food for himself or his family. Such a situation may occur because the society in which the person lives is unwilling to provide the assistance needed to help him through times of difficulty and back into productive work. The *Torah* makes it clear that it is every man's obligation to help his brother or sister who is in actual need. This does not excuse able bodied men from working, if work is available.

However, for a merchant (who is already making a living by charging fair prices for his commodities) to overcharge, so that he can gain more money from his customers, is abhorrent to the Jewish community:

**"A false balance is an abomination to the LORD [YHVH],
But a just weight is His delight."** (Prov. 11:1)

"You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin: I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them: I am the LORD [YHVH]." (Lev. 19:36-37)

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of robbing the public? If so, their complete repentance and change of business habits is required.

~ Sin #6: Acting in a Capacity Not Permitted to Him ~

"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's." (Ex. 20:17)

Of all the commandments listed in the "ten words," the one on coveting is the most difficult to understand from a strictly human standpoint. The apostle Paul said:

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" (Rom. 7:7)

One of the ways in which a person covets is to desire the position or prestige that another person enjoys. This affliction

of the heart can take thousands of forms. It might be the desire of a person to be of the opposite sex. It might be the desire of a person to be a leader, when they possess no natural leadership skills. It might also be the desire of a person to be rich and influential in their community, when they have not earned that position. Look at the example of King Uzziah **עֲזִיָּהוּ** (Oo-zee-ah'-hoo):

"And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD [YHVH], according to all that his father Amaziah had done. He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD [YHVH], God made him prosper." (II Chron. 26:4-5)

Now, one would think that a king would not covet, since he would probably have all the physical items his heart desired. However, we have an example in King Uzziah. Once King Uzziah's mentor, the prophet Zechariah, died, Uzziah began to drift away from his study of the *Torah* and took up farming. In fact, farming became his passion:

"Also he built towers in the desert. He dug many wells, for he had much livestock, both in the lowlands and in the plains; he also had farmers and vinedressers in the mountains and in Carmel, for he loved the soil." (II Chron. 26:10)

Now there is nothing wrong with loving the soil, if you are called to work the soil. However, Uzziah was called to be the king of Judah. One of the requirements to be king was to study *Torah* on a daily basis, so that righteous rulership would exist in the nation. As a result of his drifting from *Torah* study, Uzziah became proud in his heart and desired yet another position that was not his; that of being a priest in the Temple:

"But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD [YHVH] his God by entering the temple of the LORD [YHVH] to burn incense on the altar of incense.

"So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD [YHVH], who were valiant men. And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, 'It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD [YHVH], but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor for the LORD [YHVH] God.'

"Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD [YHVH], beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD [YHVH] had struck him.

"King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD [YHVH]. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land." (II Chron. 26:16-21)

The apostle Paul made it very clear that the Bride of Messiah is a body, fitly framed together by God Himself.

"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ [Messiah]. ...

"If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,' is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ...

"Now you are the body of Christ [Messiah], and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."

(I Cor. 12:12, 15-18, 27-31)

That more 'excellent way' is not positions of power and prestige within the Church, but a humble attitude of love and respect for all the members of the Bride of Messiah.

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of coveting by acting in a capacity not permitted to them? If so, their complete repentance and change of attitude is required.

~ Sin #7: Conceit ~

"You shall have no other gods before Me." (Ex. 20:3)

In effect, all of the sins that caused the biblical form of leprosy came from an attitude of conceit. Anytime a person puts himself above others, he is setting himself up for a fall into sin. Conceit is the exact opposite of humbleness. Like leaven (a type of sin), it puffs one up. But the Bride of Messiah must learn to walk in:

"...the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."
(I Cor. 5:8)

"For whoever exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:11)

Conceit is never far from the heart of any human being. It was in the hearts of the disciples when they came to *Y'shua* and asked:

"... 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'

"And Jesus [*Y'shua*] called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.'" (Matt. 18:1-5)

It is the natural instinct of the carnal mind to want to put one's self above other people, for this is the attitude from where the world's form of self esteem comes. But it is a false form of self respect, and one into which the members of the Bride must not fall.

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of conceit? If so, their complete repentance and humbleness of heart is required.

~ Sin #8: Lashon Hara ~

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex. 20:16)

The most extreme forms of *tzara'at* (leprosy) were said to have come forth upon those individuals who committed the sin of *lashon hara*. It is said that one who speaks *lashon hara* denies the basic concepts of the *Torah*. If this is true, then the Bride of Messiah is in deep, deep trouble, for the evil tongue; the slanderous tongue; the tongue that has little good to say about anyone (be they Believer or non-believer), is rampant within the Believing community. It is important to note that *lashon hara* is more than just speaking lies about other people. Telling the truth about someone can also fall into the category of *lashon hara* if the results of one's statement inflicts injury upon another individual. The injuries one might suffer from the sin of *lashon hara* can be one or more of the following: physical, monetary, mental, spiritual, or emotional.

Let us again examine the case of *Miriam*, the sister of *Moshe*, in this regard:

"Then Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman." (Num. 12:1)

There are a couple of different ways of looking at this verse. The most frequent understanding is that *Miriam* and *Aharon* criticized *Moshe* because he had married outside of his racial group. Ethiopians were understood to be descendants of Noah's son Ham. They were not of Semitic (descendants of Shem) origin.

Another way of looking at this, is that they may have been critical of the troubles that *Moshe* and *Zipporah* זִפְרָה (*Tzee-poh'-rah*) had during their trek from Midian to Egypt, and the fact that *Zipporah* seems to have spoken disrespectfully to *Moshe* over the issue of circumcision:

"And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the LORD [YHVH] met him and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses' feet, and said, 'Surely you are a husband of blood to me!'

"So He let him go. Then she said, 'You are a husband of blood!' -- because of the circumcision." (Ex. 4:24-26)

After the Exodus we find that *Moshe* and *Zipporah* were separated, for it is written that *Zipporah's* father, *Jethro* יִתְרוֹ (*Yeet'-roh*), brought her back to *Moshe*:

"So Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took Zipporah, Moses' wife, after he had sent her back, with her two sons,

... and Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God." (Ex. 18:2-3, 5)

This passage has led some to speculate that *Moshe* and Zipporah were divorced, and that the Ethiopian woman mentioned in Numbers 12 was a different woman altogether. This theory also seems plausible when one considers the fact that it is difficult to draw a connection between the people called Midianites and the Ethiopians.

Jewish tradition has a different view. In that view *Moshe* had stopped cohabiting with Zipporah. The reason given for this decision is that of the command which God had given to the children Israel, prior to His revelation on Mt. Sinai. At that time God had said:

"Then Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. And he said to the people, 'Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives.'" (Ex. 19:14-15)

Since *Moshe* was in constant communication with God, he apparently felt it was necessary to remain apart from his wife so that he would never be in an unclean state due to having sexual relations with her. Since God had not rebuked him on this point, *Moshe* felt he was doing the correct thing by staying separated from his wife.

Whatever the reason for the criticism, the simple fact remains that *Miriam* spoke against *Moshe* concerning his marriage, and *Aharon* listened to her without rebuking her testimony. This sin would have been great in itself, but it was compounded by the next statement:

"And they said, 'Has the LORD [YHVH] indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?' And the LORD [YHVH] heard it." (Num. 12:2)

In this case, it was already bad enough that *Miriam* and *Aharon* expressed their displeasure over *Moses* marital relationship (whatever the problem might have been), but they compounded their sin by putting themselves on an equal status with *Moshe*. This made them also guilty of the sin of coveting: "Acting in a Capacity Not Permitted Them."

In the above example we can see that once *lashon hara* had been expressed, it led the speaker (or those who heard it) to commit other sins that would not have occurred had the evil words never been spoken in the first place.

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who stand guilty of *lashon hara*? If so, their complete repentance and change of speech habits is required.

~ Sin #9: An Evil Eye ~

"You shall not steal." (Ex. 20:15)

In Jewish teaching, the term "evil eye" characterizes someone who is miserly, who is not willing to share his things with those in need, or is not willing to give generously to the poor. It is said that the punishment for this type of sin is to have one's house stricken with leprosy. Thus, if an individual refused to loan a needy neighbor some food by saying that he

did not have what was requested (when in actual fact he did have it), all of the belongings of his house would be put out in the street when the house was vacated because of its leprosy condition. That way, everyone would see that the man not only had an "evil eye," he also was a liar.

A miserly attitude is indicative of a greater problem that exists within the personality of the individual so afflicted. It is the outward manifestation of an inward tendency to disrespect or to even hate others:

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, (KJV = 'evil'), your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness." (Matt. 6:22-23)

Y'shua equated the "evil eye" with the laborer who was angry because he received the same amount of pay for working a full day as did the laborers who only worked for one hour, even though the full-day laborer had agreed to the given wage ahead of time. In other words, he wanted more than he had bargained for:

"Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?"

"So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (Matt. 20:14-16)

The early laborer should have been pleased that the man who was unable to find work all day long was blessed by the landowner in such a generous way. Certainly this late laborer would have been happy to work all day long had he been able to find work the first thing in the morning. To condemn the landowner's generosity to this needy laborer is to have the inherent spirit of an "evil eye."

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who have an 'evil eye'? If so, their complete repentance and change of these miserly habits is required.

~ Sin #10: Taking a Vain Oath ~

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." (Ex. 20:16)

To stand up in court and take an oath to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," and then perjure one's self, is indeed the "taking of a vain oath." But it is also a "vain oath" to tell someone (whether in a court of law or not) that something is true, when you know for a fact that it is false.

As Believers we are cautioned by our Savior and Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, that we are not to swear at all:

"Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes'

be "Yes," and your "No," "No." For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.'" (Matt. 5:33-37)

There is a classic example in Scripture where a man took a "vain oath" (one he knew was not true) and was plagued with leprosy as a result. It is the story of *Gehazi*, גֵּחָזִי (Geh-kah'-zee) the servant of the prophet of God, Elisha אֵלִישָׁה (Eh-lee-shah').

Naaman נָעֲמָן (Nah ah-mahn') was the commander of the army of the nation of Syria and he was afflicted with leprosy. A captured servant girl (from Israel) suggested to Naaman's wife that he contact a prophet of God in Samaria for possible healing of his affliction.

So the king of Syria composed a letter to the king of Israel asking him to heal Naaman of his leprosy. The king of Israel was extremely upset because he had no power to heal leprosy or any other disease. The king of Israel was afraid that when the king of Syria learned that he was powerless to perform the required healing that war would ensue.

However, Elisha the prophet heard about the problem and asked that Naaman be sent to him. Naaman came to Elisha, but Elisha did not even go out to see him. He merely told Gehazi, his servant, to tell Naaman to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan river and his leprosy would disappear.

Naaman was angry that Elisha did not come out to see him, but was finally persuaded by his attendants to try out the cure anyway. Sure enough, the leprosy disappeared immediately and completely. Naaman returned to Elisha to thank him and to offer him valuable gifts. But Elisha declined the gifts:

"But he said, 'As the LORD [YHVH] lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.' And he urged him to take it but he refused." (II Kings 5:16)

Naaman left with his entourage to return to Syria. However, Gehazi, Elisha's servant, had overheard the conversation and became greedy. He followed after Naaman and intercepted him on the road:

"So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, 'Is all well?'"

"And he said, 'All is well. My master has sent me, saying, 'Indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments.'"

"So Naaman said, 'Please, take two talents.' And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and handed *them* to two of his servants; and they carried *them* on ahead of him. When he came to the citadel, he took *them* from their hand, and stored *them* away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed.

"Now he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, 'Where *did you go* Gehazi?' and he said, 'Your servant did not go anywhere.'"

"Then he said to him, 'Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive

groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants? Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever.'

"And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow." (II Kings 5:21-27)

Are there any members of the Bride of Messiah today who have taken a 'vain oath?' If so, complete repentance and a determination never to do so again is required.

~ The Leprosy of the Bride ~

What do all these stories about the punishment of sin through leprosy have to do with the twenty-first century Bride of Messiah? After all, the biblical form of leprosy no longer exists, and sin is no longer punished in this manner.

Well, there is a reason for all of this instruction, for a great deal of Scripture is taken up teaching us about how leprosy was used as an immediate punishment for very grave sin. It was all recorded so that those upon whom the end of the age has come might read, understand and come to a righteous fear of our Creator God. For:

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

But, you may be wondering, how does all of this apply to us today?

A simple explanation is that sin still exists in the Body of Messiah, the Bride of Christ). Why? Because the Church (the *ecclesia*) still lives in the house of her evil earthly father, *HaSatan*; the adversary. Like a leprous cancer, sin in all of its forms has invaded the Body of the Bride of Messiah. It appears in various forms of spiritual sickness that we see taking hold of the Believing community. Yes, false doctrines are a part of it, but the real leprosy is one of the spirit -- not of the mind. It includes the inability to truly love one another, the willingness of so many to believe the worst about other Believers, the lack of concern for those who are in need or suffering from physical ailments, and the list goes on and on:

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men shall be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"

(II Tim. 3:1-5)

~ What Must We Do? ~

Today, the Orthodox Jewish people believe that the entirety of the world is in a state of ritual uncleanness. Since there are no ashes of the Red Heifer, a person may not, at this time, be ritually cleansed physically. Certainly, in relationship

to Old Testament or Biblical Temple worship, that was a requirement.

Regardless, there is a way for an individual, who is now being called by God, to be spiritually cleansed of these terrible sins and of the spiritual leprosy that grips the world. That way is through complete trust and confidence in our Redeemer, Savior, and Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. *Y'shua*, who became our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek מֶלֶכִּי־צֶדֶק (Mehl kee-zeh'-dehk), is the one who is able to cleanse us from our spiritual uncleanness. He is the one through whom forgiveness of these sins (which cause our spiritual uncleanness) comes:

"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)

But it requires more than just asking Him to forgive us of our sins. We must be prepared to do the obedient work of the Spirit that is required to shut the door to future sins. As *Y'shua* said to the woman caught in adultery, we are to:

"...go and sin no more." (John 8:11)

In the Old Testament examples we have just studied, what good would it have done to be cleansed of one's leprosy only to turn around and commit the same sin and fall again into a leprous state? Surely, *Miriam* and *Ahron* must have learned a very great lesson from their experience with the immediate effects of the sin of *lashon hara* (the evil tongue).

One of the problems we face, as Believers (living in these last days), is that God does not usually take immediate action with us in punishing us for our sins:

"Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecc. 8:11)

Does this mean that punishment for sin will not come? Of course not. Judgment will come, as the Apostle Paul wrote:

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

The Apostle Peter addressed the issue of sin and repentance when he wrote:

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

"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (I Peter 4:17-18)

Likewise, the Apostle John addressed the same issue when he wrote:

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us

from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

(I John 1:7-10)

Sin is a spiritual disease, and the punishment for unrepented sin is spiritual leprosy.

~ The Unrepentant Bride ~

So why is the Bride unrepentant? In large part, it is because most of the members of the Bride of Messiah are at least partially ignorant of what constitutes sin. The Apostle John wrote:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." (I John 3:4 KJV)

Because, the Bride has forsaken the instruction of God (the *Torah*), for the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible -- Gen. through Deuteronomy) defines sin. That is how the Bride comes to know when she has done something that does not please her Husband, *Y'shua*. Now, when she discovers these errors, it is necessary for her to go before the throne of grace and ask forgiveness. But it is also necessary that she determine in her heart to not make that mistake again. As this process continues, the Bride will eventually come to the place where she begins to look at the law (*Torah*) as her friend; not her enemy. For the Scriptures are the source of the law which shows the Bride how not to sin; the source from which she learns the kind of behavior that will please her Husband and make for a happy marriage. It is written:

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

It is possible for the Bride of Messiah to be cleansed of her leprosy so that the wedding can proceed as the Father has planned. Each of us, as members (or cells) of the Bride (or Body), must take the initiative to cleanse ourselves of sin through the agency of the blood of Messiah, and determine to live according to the *Torah* of Truth by the power of the Holy Spirit:

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

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~ Our Dress of Fine Linen ~

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

The modern wedding is usually quite an event. It requires large amounts of planning, time, energy and money. A date is set, a church or hall is rented, a person is contracted to officiate, invitations are printed, reception plans made, a guest list is prepared, flowers and decorations are selected, tuxedos and dresses are ordered for the attendants, and a wedding gown is chosen. It can be an extremely busy, and sometimes frustrating, experience to say the least. Then there are the various roles played by the parents of the couple. The chief duties fall to the mother of the Bride. She is responsible for assisting the Bride in all of the many plans and preparations. The father of the Bride is also quite involved for he gives the Bride away at the ceremony. Also, he is usually the one who provides the funds needed for the wedding celebration. Meanwhile, the mother of the Bridegroom may assist to some degree with the wedding plans, while the father of the Bridegroom is expected to provide funds for a rehearsal dinner, show up for the wedding, and not cause any trouble.

~ The Ancient Wedding ~

Ancient Hebrew weddings were quite different. First the couple was matched. The parents of both the Bridegroom and Bride were intimately involved in this process, which could take place long before the couple were of marriageable age. Then, when the prospective couple came of age, the Bridegroom would go to the father of the prospective Bride to make the necessary arrangements. However, these were not the kinds of arrangements common to a modern wedding. Rather, they worked out a marriage contract, or covenant, called a *Ketuvah* כְּתוּבָה (Keh-two'-vah). Once the details were agreed upon, the father of the prospective Bride called his daughter into the room. A cup of wine was poured and the Bridegroom offered it to her. If she accepted the cup, and drank from it, they were officially betrothed. In the eyes of Hebrew law they were then considered married and only a legal divorce could separate them.

However, they could not yet live together as husband and wife. Instead, the Bridegroom went back to his father's house to prepare a wedding chamber for his Bride. This chamber was called a *Chuppah* חֻפָּה (Whoo'-pah). It was located on the property of the father of the Bridegroom, usually within the father's house. It was the responsibility of the Bridegroom to prepare the *Chuppah* in a way that would be pleasing to his

Bride, and it was the responsibility of his father to examine it at regular intervals and make suggestions on how it could be improved. Also, it had to be well stocked with provisions, for once the couple entered the *Chuppah* they remained in it for seven days.

The wedding was not announced ahead of time. In fact, only the father of the Bridegroom knew the day or the hour in which the wedding would take place, because it was his responsibility to determine when the *Chuppah*, his son, and the bride were ready. When the father felt all was in order, he would say to his son; "The hour has come, go and get your Bride."

The time span between the Betrothal and the final wedding ceremony was usually about one year. It could be longer if circumstances demanded, but it was usually not shorter unless the Bride was a widow. During the betrothal time, the couple (although officially married) normally did not see one another. One can only imagine the anticipation that must have existed in the hearts of both the Bride and her Husband, as they awaited the final approval of his father. When that day and hour finally came, the couple would enter the *Chuppah* to consummate their marriage. Then they would truly be able to say:

**"I am my beloved's,
And my beloved is mine."** (Song of Songs 6:3)

~ The Bride's Preparation ~

During the time while the Bridegroom was preparing the *Chuppah*, the Bride also had some important things to accomplish. She needed to begin collecting those items she would need to run the household once they were fully married and living together. This would be the trousseau which she would bring to their permanent home once the seven days in the *Chuppah* had been accomplished. The Bride also had to prepare her wedding dress and other appropriate articles of clothing. In addition it was an ancient custom for the Bride to learn how to make herself physically beautiful for her husband through the application of cosmetics and perfumes. So, it was during this year of preparation that she learned these arts as well. This practice is mentioned in the book of Esther, the beautiful young Jewess who became the Queen of Persia:

"Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women. Thus prepared, each young woman went to the king, and she was given whatever she desired to take with her from the women's quarters to the king's palace. In the evening she went, and in the morning she returned to the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's eunuch who kept the concubines. She would not go in to the king again unless the king delighted in her and called for her by name." (Est. 2:12-14)

It must be remembered that each of these women, who came to King Ahasuerus' chamber, became his legal wife. They were called concubines and were considered to be of lower

status than a full wife. Esther was not relegated to the status of concubine, rather, she became his highest ranking wife, the Queen of Persia.

~ The Betrothed Bride of Messiah ~

At this very moment in time, the Bride of Messiah (the Church of called out ones) finds herself in the same situation as the ancient betrothed Bride. She is in a state of full betrothal to *Y'shua*, her legal Husband. However, instead of the normal one year wait, the Bride of Messiah has now been waiting almost two thousand physical years for her husband to return and take her to the *Chuppah* for the consummation of their marriage. We can be assured that *Y'shua* will come for us, for He promised to do so at the Last Supper when He made His typically Jewish betrothal speech:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." (John 14:1-4)

Right now *Y'shua* is at His Father's house in heaven, awaiting word from His Father as to when He can come back to this earth for his beloved Bride, the Church. Meanwhile the Bride is on earth, waiting for Her Betrothed to return and take her to the *Chuppah*. (For more complete information on the ancient Hebrew wedding write for the recorded series; *The Wedding of the Messiah*.)

~ Our Wedding Preparations ~

What should we (the Bride) be doing while we wait? We should be preparing ourselves for our wedding, of course. Since the wedding ceremony itself requires no preparation on our part (i.e. we need not worry about securing a minister, reserving a hall, ordering flowers, etc.). We need only concern ourselves with becoming a beautiful and acceptable vessel for our Husband, *Y'shua*.

All analogies begin to break down, to some degree, at some point. The ancient wedding is no exception, for the Bride of Messiah consists of a multitude of "called out ones." Many members of the Bride have already lived their lives and died in the unwavering faith that their Savior/Husband *Y'shua* will resurrect them from their graves when He returns. Also, the Bride of Messiah will not require a physical wedding gown, or a trousseau of household items for setting up housekeeping. Rather, the preparation for our wedding must be of a spiritual nature. As it is written:

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

Three important points, concerning the Bride, leap out from these verses:

1.) **"... His wife has made herself ready."** 2.) She is; **"... arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright..."** and 3.) **"... the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."**

The Bride of Messiah is to be doing a work while she awaits *Y'shua's* return. That work is; 1.) to learn what constitutes righteousness, and 2.) to perform righteous acts. In other words, we must learn to live righteously, for it will be the righteous acts of the Saints which will form the Bride's proper wedding gown. Surely, none of us wishes to attend the greatest wedding of all time without a suitable wedding garment. To do so could be dangerous, as we can see from the following parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come.

"Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, 'See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'"

"But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them.

"But when the king heard about it, he was furious, and he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.'"

"So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests. But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless.

"Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. 22:2-14)

How we are dressed is very important, since we will not be allowed to participate in the wedding if we do not come wearing the gown of righteousness that He has prepared for us.

~ What Is Righteousness? ~

Before going any further we must come to an understanding of what constitutes righteousness. We can determine the nature of righteousness by looking at a number of verses that tell us about it:

"And the LORD [YHVH] commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD [YHVH] our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD [YHVH] our God, as He has commanded us."

(Deut. 6:24-25)

It is clear from this passage that, in order to be righteous, it is necessary for one to be "... careful to observe all these commandments ..." that have been given in the *Torah*. This concept is confirmed by the Psalmist in the following verse:

**"My lips shall utter praise,
For you teach me your statutes.
My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness."**
(Psalm 119:171-172)

All of God's commandments are considered to be righteousness. Not just the big Ten. Not just those which have to do with how we should relate to each other, but also those which teach us how we should relate to God in all facets of our life. All of God's commandments are righteousness.

The Hebrew word translated as commandment is *mitzvah* מִצְוָה (meets'-vah, Strong's #4687). It is; "a command whether human or divine." The word can also mean a "good deed." In other words, to help someone in need is not only a command, it is also a good deed and to perform any of God's *mitzvaot* (meets'-vah-oat' = plural form) is also to perform good deeds.

The Hebrew word for statutes is *chok* חֹק (hohk, Strong's #2706). It means; "an enactment; hence an appointment (of time, space, quantity, labor or usage)." Thus, it can also be a reference to the 'appointed times' or festivals set forth in Leviticus 23.

The two previously mentioned verses (Psalm 119:171,172) are a prime example of what is known as 'Hebrew parallelism.' The first line of each verse refers to the willingness of the Psalmist to speak about the glory of God:

**"My lips shall utter praise,"
"My tongue shall speak of Your word,"**

These two introductory lines are then followed by phrases in which the Psalmist tells us why he is so willing to praise God and teach His word:

**"For You teach me Your statutes."
"For all Your commandments are righteousness."**

Hebrew parallelism is used to add emphasis to a thought or concept. In this case the thought being emphasized is the greatness and righteousness of God's statutes and commandments, in other words, the greatness of His instructions (*Torah*) on how to live a righteous life. The Psalmist proclaims his desire to praise God publicly because God's commandments and statutes are so completely righteous.

Not only are God's commandments and statutes righteous, His judgments are as well. As the Psalmist says:

**"I will praise You with uprightness of heart,
When I learn Your righteous judgments."**
(Psalm 119:7)

**"I have sworn and confirmed
That I will keep Your righteous judgments."**
(Psalm 119:106)

The apostle *Shaul* שְׂאוּל (Shaw-ool' = Paul) taught us that the *Torah* is righteous when he said:

"Therefore the law [*Torah*] is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." (Rom. 7:12)

That which the Psalmist called righteous in Psalm 119 (God's commandments) is now called "holy and just and good" by *Shaul*. In fact, *Shaul* went so far as to equate obedience with righteousness when he said:

"What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! 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 to death, or of obedience to righteousness?" (Rom. 6:15-16)

According to *Shaul*, not only must we, as Believers, be obedient to God's commandments, we must become actual slaves to righteousness:

"And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness." (Rom. 6:18)

In other words, we must continually practice righteousness, for a slave must always do what his master bids.

What then is righteousness? Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 119 tell us that the commandments, statutes and judgments are all righteous. Therefore, when we perform them in the manner in which they were intended, we become righteous because we are living righteously through them.

Now, in order to learn what the commandments, statutes and judgments are, we must turn to the *Torah*. Therein are contained the 613 *mitzvaot* (commandments), the *chokim* (statutes), and the many judgments. The Writings, * and the Prophets ** also instruct us in the ways and desires of our righteous God, as they contain many applications and amplifications on the instructions of God given to *Moshe*.

But let us not forget the *Brit Chadasha* (Renewed Covenant or New Testament) which is said to contain over one thousand commandments, most of them reiterations or amplifications of those found in the *Torah*. Combined together (codified), we have a complete body of instruction (the Bible) which teaches us the righteousness of God.

~ Who Is Righteous? ~

**"As it is written:
'There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."**
(Rom. 3:10-12)

* The Writings include: Psalms, Proverbs, Job, The Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and I & II Chronicles.

**The Prophets include: Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets.

Taken together, the *Torah*, the Writings and the Prophets make up the 'Old Testament,' which the Jews call the *Tanakh*.

We must understand that what mankind considers righteousness does not hold a whole lot of weight with God:

**"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.
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."**
(Isa. 64:6-7)

The expression "filthy rags" literally means "menstrual cloths." (See Strong's #5708). The righteousness of men, apart from God, and as contrasted to God's righteousness, is like the difference between the menstrual cloth and the wedding gown.

While man is inherently unrighteous, God, on the other hand, is completely righteous. The scriptures abound with verses which speak about the righteousness of *YHVH*. For example:

**"The LORD [YHVH] is righteous in all His ways,
Gracious in all His works."** (Psalm 145:17)

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

The Scriptures also teach about the righteousness of the Messiah:

**"Behold, the days are coming,' says
the LORD [YHVH],
That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"**
(Jer. 23:5-6)

**"And I heard the angel of the waters saying:
'You are righteous, O Lord,
The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.'" (Rev. 16:5)**

~ Unequally Yoked ~

This presents us with a dilemma. If God the Father is righteous, and His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah) is righteous, but the Bride is unrighteous (because she is made up of sinful people); how can *Y'shua* ever even begin to think that He can marry her? Can righteousness be yoked to unrighteousness?

This was the very same problem that occurred when God married the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai. The Bridegroom was perfect and righteous, while the Bride was imperfect and unrighteous. She proved that very quickly while they were still in the *Chuppah* at Mt. Sinai, when she went whoring after the

golden calf. The results were disastrous. Centuries later, after the bride (Israel) divided into two warring parts (the house of Israel, and the house of Judah), God divorced the house of Israel because of her unrighteousness, and consequent unfaithfulness, through her acts of spiritual adultery which is idolatry. The only reason He remained married to the house of Judah was so that the prophesied Messiah could be born of that lineage and into their culture; which was primarily derived from God through *Torah*, Temple *Avodah* עֲבֹדָה (ah voh-dah' = service), and the Synagogue system established by Ezra.

Idolatry was not a major problem during the period of the second Temple. Neither was the breaking of the Sabbath, for the vast majority of the foundational values of Jewish culture were based on Scriptural values, although the Pharisees tended to teach traditions with an over zealous strictness. The primary sins of the house of Judah, during the second Temple period, had to do with uncharitable attitudes toward the poor and downtrodden of their society. Thus, the rules of tradition became more important, to many of the religious leaders, than did expressions of love and charity for those in need.

Y'shua addressed this problem when He said:

"... they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." (Matt. 23:4)

~ Can Men Become Righteous? ~

We have already shown, from the scriptures, how man's righteousness is nothing more to God than 'filthy rags.' Yet the scriptures also abound with passages that extol the virtues of the 'righteous' man, such as:

**"Rejoice in the LORD [YHVH], O you righteous!
For praise from the upright is beautiful."** (Psalm 33:1)

**"The eyes of the LORD [YHVH] are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their cry."** (Psalm 34:15)

**"The wicked borrows and does not repay,
But the righteous shows mercy and gives."**
(Psalm 37:21)

"... The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16b)

It is obvious from these verses that man can be considered righteous if he performs righteous acts. However, this can only be accomplished by correctly understanding and practicing the righteous commandments, statutes and judgments of God as found in the Scriptures. Man's righteousness, on the other hand, can never make a man righteous in the sight of God.

~ Man's Righteousness vs. God's Righteousness ~

Man's righteousness is a mixture of good and evil. It can be found in the laws and traditions of all races, nationalities and cultures. Sometimes it is more good, sometimes it is more evil. It is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that our first parents partook of in the Garden of Eden, and which

each of us has partaken of in our own individual lives. This is not the righteousness God is referring to in the passages above.

The righteousness of God, on the other hand, is defined in the pages of the *Torah*. However, even if a person was able to keep all of these instructions (laws) of God perfectly, he still would not attain a righteousness that would make him eligible for eternal life by his own merits, for that is impossible:

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

God's instructions were set forth to give great blessings and an abundant life to those who would observe them. Even so, it was an impossible goal for anyone to expect to be able to keep all of the instructions perfectly for an entire lifetime.

It was because of this impossibility, that the instructions took on another, even more important function. They now became a 'schoolmaster' or 'tutor' to lead men into the realization of their deep need for a Redeemer; one who could save them from their inability to live totally righteous lives before God:

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law (*Torah*), kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law (*Torah*) was our tutor to bring us to Christ [*Messiah*], that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*]."
(Gal. 3:23-26)

One of the many benefits of the *Torah* is to bring us to an understanding that we need to have our Husband's help in order to keep all the instructions of the *Torah*. Once we have that understanding, we no longer need to keep learning that fact. This is not to say that, as the Betrothed Bride of Messiah, we are to throw out the *Torah*, for that document is also our *Ketuvah* or marriage covenant, now written on our hearts.

The instructions of the *Torah* teach us how live. To follow them is to "choose life:"

"For this commandment which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you nor is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'"

"But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the LORD [*YHVH*] your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD [*YHVH*] your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess."

"But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess."

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD [*YHVH*] your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD [*YHVH*] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give them."
(Deut. 30:11-20)

While it is possible for a man to be considered righteous according to the standards of man's righteousness, no one can ever be considered fully righteous according to God's standard of righteousness through their own merits. For to do so would require the attainment of the lofty goal of keeping all of God's commandments, statutes, and judgments perfectly throughout one's entire life, never slipping up even once. It is just plain impossible, for sinful, fleshly man to accomplish, for as it is written:

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

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."
(I John 1:10)

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

To be "lawless" is to be without law, or outside of the law; in other words, an "outlaw." When one is following faithfully the "law" or instruction of God, he is within the law and is "law abiding." So people can and should do their very best to abide by the law (*Torah* or instruction) of God:

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked."
(I John 2:3-6)

Y'shua HaMashiach, our Beloved Husband, walked faithfully and completely perfect in all the commandments, statutes and judgments of the *Torah*. He was fully righteous in God's sight. Thus, every time we succeed in 'keeping the law' we too are righteous in God's sight and are walking just as He walked. Once again, this is not the same as performing man's righteousness, since what we are speaking of here is the very instruction of God, or God's righteousness as practiced by His people.

In our own flesh we cannot maintain that level of righteousness day in and day out for an entire lifetime. However, this fact should not deter us from making every effort to live righteous lives, for as we practice righteousness we become more proficient and therefore more righteous. Thus, righteous acts build upon righteous acts to become a way of life; a "righteous lifestyle."

Shaul's epistle to Titus expressly instructs the Believers to live good, honorable, and righteous lives. In other words, to live according to the instruction book of God:

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age ..." (Titus 2:11-12)

The Bride must be clothed in:

"... the righteous acts of the saints." (Rev. 19:8b)

~ What Happens When We Sin? ~

But what happens when the Bride (or a member of the Bride) sins? According to Scripture, a lifetime of righteousness can be wiped out in a single act of unrighteousness.

A rather extensive passage in the book of Ezekiel clearly lays out the grave problem which each human being faces when he or she acts in an unrighteous manner. This passage follows, quoted in its entirety:

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: 'Thus you say, 'If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live.'"

"Say to them: 'As I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'"

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: 'The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins.'"

"When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die."

"Again, when I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

"Yet the children of your people say, 'The way of the LORD [YHVH] is not fair.' But it is their way which is not fair! When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die because of it. But when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live because of it."

"Yet you say, 'The way of the LORD [YHVH] is not fair.' O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you according to his own ways." (Ezek. 33:10-20)

According to this passage one act of sin, one act of rebelliousness, one wrong motive, can blow an entire lifetime

of righteousness. On the other hand, a lifetime of sinfulness and wretchedness can be obliterated by true, heartfelt repentance and by turning from that life of sin to a life of living according to the instruction book of God; in other words, turning to a life of righteousness. Obviously, those who are already practicing righteousness do not need to repent for their righteous acts:

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Matt. 9:12b-13)

This does not mean that *Y'shua* does not call, into the Bride, people who are already practicing righteousness. What it does mean is that He also has a way in which sinners can become righteous.

~ A Crucial Question ~

Is it really possible that a lifetime of sin can be wiped away and forgotten completely by God?

Certainly if it were left to the "righteousness" of men (the "filthy rags"), it could never be so. For rarely do men forgive, and certainly most do not forget. If it were left to men, the sinner (by their definition) would be made to pay every last penny he ever earned and then still have to give up his life in additional payment. Even after all of this had been done, people might still remember his sins, and some might even relish talking of them after he was gone.

But the ways of God are far greater than the ways of man, and we can rejoice in that God has a plan that He has revealed to His disciples. In fact, He has called, and is yet calling, a body of people to be a righteous Bride for His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. At the right time, God will reunite and restore the divided Kingdom of Israel (Ezek. 37).

~ God's Plan for Righteousness ~

What a marvelous plan! God the Father sent His only begotten Son to earth to negotiate a *Ketuvah* (wedding covenant or contract) for His Bride. The Bride price that was named in the *Ketuvah of Messiah* was that He would take upon Himself all the unrighteousness (sins) of the Bride and die because of them, thereby removing those sins from her, thus making her righteous before God (the Father) and a fitting mate for Himself. All of those sins, which had previously cut the Bride off from being worthy to be *Y'shua's* wife, are removed:

**"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:
'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
²⁷ For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.'"** (Rom. 11:26-27)

Now there is really only one thing that the Bride has to do in order to be brought into the betrothal state with *Y'shua*. That is to display the most important character trait exhibited by her great forefather *Avraham* אַבְרָהָם (Ahv'-rah-hahm = Abraham), the joint traits of FAITH and WORKS!

"Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness,' Therefore know that only those

who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham." (Gal. 3:6-9)

Once we transgress one of the instructions (laws) of God, that instruction remains broken. It cannot be repaired by any act we do, no matter how good or righteous that act may be. Once we have committed idolatry it is a done deal. No amount of true, spiritual worship can undo the idolatrous act which has been committed. Only the sacrificial blood of Messiah, *Y'shua* can remove that stain from our record through the forgiveness of sins:

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39)

The law of Moses (*Torah*) did provide a method for the covering of sins. This was accomplished through the blood of bulls and goats. However, those sacrificial elements, while efficacious when performed as proscribed with a contrite heart, had to be continually repeated. Neither could one gain eternal life in spiritual form through the animal sacrifices, for those who practiced them are all dead (asleep) in their graves. These sacrifices were merely a type and shadow of the perfect sacrifice that was yet to come, that of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, the author and finisher of our Faith:

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek.'" (Heb. 5:9-10)

No longer must we look to a temporary salvation, now we have a permanent one.

~ Faith and Good Works: The Perfect Man ~

So, dear brethren, we are saved from our transgressions (sins) by one method and one method only:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. 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. 2:8-10)

This same scripture, that so profoundly teaches that we are saved by grace and grace only, also teaches that we are to be performing good works as well, and even gives us the definition of those good works: **"... good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."**

What good works were "prepared beforehand?" Why none other than those written in the *Torah*, the Instruction Book of God, for it is within the *Torah* that we learn what the "good works of God" truly are. So, once again we are brought back to the *Torah* as being the foundation upon which we are to conduct our lives, not as a method of salvation but as a guidebook on how the Bride is to conduct her life while she

waits for her Husband. Yes indeed, *Y'shua HaMashiach* is the true foundation stone, the Rock on which we are to base our Faith, and it is only by His shed blood that we are saved. But He expects us to go on and perform good works. And in order to fully understand what those "good works" are, we must study, learn and apply the instructions found in the *Torah*.

Yes Brethren, we must strive to become perfect men and women. Doing so does not earn us one nickel's worth of salvation, but it is a commission that each of us has been given as a member in the Bride of Messiah, the Body of Christ. Each time we perform one of the instructions of God, as found in the *Torah*, we are adding one more stitch to the beautiful gown that is being prepared for the Bride's wedding. Each time we transgress against the instructions of God, we are removing a righteous stitch from that gown. Therefore, we are to strive to become perfect, speaking the truth in love:

"And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ [*Messiah*], till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ [*Messiah*]; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ [*Messiah*] -- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

(Eph. 4:11-16)

We are to be "Perfect and Complete Men and Women" through the practice of perfection:

"Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a servant of Christ [*Messiah*], greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God." (Col. 4:12)

We are to strive to make our faith perfect by doing good works:

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?"

"And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God."

"You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:20-24, 26)

~ Summary ~

Let us review the "problem" which the *Tanakh* presents for those who would look to it as a source for salvation:

- ◆ Keeping the instructions of God grants blessings in this life but does not gain a person eternal life.

- ◆ The blood of bulls and goats covers sins, but only until the next time one sins.
- ◆ Committing even one sin, for which repentance has not been made and/or is not covered by sacrifice, requires the death penalty.

As you can see, there is no permanent redemption possible in this order of things, only temporary relief from sin. However, Messiah *Y'shua* has taken care of the problem by shedding His blood and dying in our place:

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28)

Therefore:

"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)

The Bride of Messiah (the Church of the Living God, the Body of Christ) is right now betrothed to this same *Y'shua HaMashiach* who shed His blood so that our sins could be taken away. The Bride is His legal wife in every sense of the word. However, we (the Bride) do not yet dwell where *Y'shua* dwells, for we have not yet come to the fullness of the wedding process. The culmination or consummation lies yet before us.

While we wait for *Y'shua* to return for us, we need to be preparing our wedding gown of righteousness so that we can be properly clothed for the great wedding that is to take place in heaven. We make those preparations by learning righteousness and (even more importantly) living righteous lives. The wedding dress will never be completed through the arguing of doctrine or striving over scripture, but only through righteous acts of loving concern for our Brethren and our neighbors:

"Remind them of these things, charging them before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a Worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness, and their message will spread like cancer." (II Tim. 2:14-17a)

"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

We desperately need to be fervently working on our wedding dress, adding righteous stitches to it each and every day, as long as we still have the breath of life within us. Let us resolve, through the power of the Holy Spirit of God which indwells us, to do our very best to follow His Spirit into all righteousness so that each of us can add beautiful stitches to our beautiful gown of righteousness:

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*] from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21)

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~ Hold Fast ~

Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering,
For He who promised *is* faithful.
Hebrews 10:23



It is always a joy when subscribers write telling how they are growing in grace and knowledge in the Faith. Because they take the time to write, we like to believe that at least some of their understanding has come to them as a result of reading *Hebrew Roots*®:

"For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." (III John 1:3-4)

Realistically, however, we know that our part is but a minor one, for the understanding which subscribers are gaining is not from us, but is a result of the Father teaching them through the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* רִיחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ (Rue-ahkh' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit):

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." (John 14:26)

The primary role of *Hebrew Roots*® is to supply information to the Believing reader. However, it is not just the information itself that is important, rather it is what the Believer allows the *Ruach* to do in their lives with that information.

~ Study as Worship ~

There is a Jewish understanding that one of the highest forms of worship is to study the Scriptures in order to gain true understanding. *Shaul* שָׁאוּל (Shah-ool' = Saul or Paul) confirmed this when he wrote Timothy:

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

Each one of us needs to learn for ourselves what the Scriptures teach. Our beliefs must not be based solely upon what someone else believes or teaches, even if they are teaching correct doctrine. Teachers can be a great help in learning the true Faith, but the bottom line is that Scripture is the bedrock upon which our beliefs and doctrines are to be based. Therefore, we must learn what the Scriptures are really saying so that we can be confident that we know the truth:

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for

salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*]." (II Tim. 3:14-15)

Scripture is the foundation upon which our understanding must be based. It is important to understand that when *Shaul* wrote these words to Timothy, the only Scripture which existed were the books that are commonly called the "Old Testament." The "New Testament" had not yet been written. The same is true of the statement which follows:

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

While this passage specifically identifies the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) as being given by inspiration of God, it is our firm belief that the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) were also inspired by God. This does not mean the Greek Scriptures replace the Hebrew Scriptures, rather they function as clarifying commentary, bringing to light *Y'shua's* ministry and saving sacrifice, which were prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures.

~ Beware of Bondage ~

While we can and do learn much from our teachers, we must always remember, there are far too many teachers of religion who would love to bring us into bondage to their particular interpretation of the Scriptures, or their particular religious denomination:

"... so they can boast of having gained your adherence." (Gal. 6:13b)

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ [*Messiah*] has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1)

The true Faith is a religion of freedom. Not freedom from the *Torah* instructions (law) as some would have us believe, but freedom from being religiously dominated by other people.

Historically, religion has often been a tool by which religious and political leaders have controlled their people. This is why Karl Marx, the father of communism, said: "Religion is the opium of the people." He saw how the churches and synagogues of the world controlled their people by telling them they were in the "one true church" and if they left they would burn in hell. (Of course, later on, Marx's communistic philosophy also put millions of people into even worse bondage, as was experienced by the millions of people who lived in the Soviet Union.) As Believers, we must never allow ourselves to be pulled into the cultic religious beliefs which make religion a mindless, brainless, non-thinking, opiate.

Y'shua warned His disciples against becoming the kind of leaders who would lord it over the people:

"But Jesus [*Y'shua*] called them to *Himself* and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to

become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave -- ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.'" (Matt. 20:25-28)

Those who would place us in bondage to their teachings are people who seek power and authority when none has been given to them. Although often not intending to do so, such false teachers can devour those who are not well grounded in the faith, by expounding a perverted gospel:

"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ [*Messiah*], to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ [*Messiah*]." (Gal. 1:6-7)

In his second letter to Timothy, *Shaul* identified how conditions will be in the last days and how many teachers will draw Believers away from the truth:

"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ² For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴ traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶ For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷ always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (II Tim. 3:1-7)

While, in this instance, *Shaul* seems to be referring to those who would attempt to drag Believers back into the world through religious philosophy or man's teachings, there are also men who would drag Believers off into pseudo-Biblical doctrines which are of their own making and not from God.

~ False Doctrine ~

There is sound doctrine and there is unsound doctrine. Sound doctrine comes from the Scriptures, (II Tim. 3:16) both Hebrew and Greek (i.e. Old and New Testaments, as previously stated). Unsound doctrine comes either from the misunderstanding of Scripture, or from the machinations and trickery of the hearts of men:

"... we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ..." (Eph. 4:14)

Sound doctrine, on the other hand comes from:

"... speaking the truth in love, ..."

thereby we:

"... may grow up in all things into Him who is the head -- Christ [*Messiah*] -- ..."

so that all can contribute to the body, not just the leadership:

"... from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

(Eph. 4:16)

In other words, it is the entire body working together which brings about proper edification. Do not be deceived. Your understanding of a Scripture passage is just as important as any one else's. It may not be correct, but it is important, for by expressing your view, you (and those you are with) may gain valuable input from others. Of course, the desired end result of all such discussion should be that the real truth may be brought forth (and agreed upon) from the various views expressed.

Shimon Kepha (She-moan' Key'-phah = Simon Peter) spoke about the men of his day who tried to exploit the brethren through false doctrine:

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, ... ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed." (II Peter 2:1-2)

As we look out upon the Believing community, we are saddened (but not surprised) to see the same things happening today that happened in *Kepha's* (Peter's) day.

~ Prove All Things ~

We all need to become like the Bereans of old, who did not just believe something because someone came into their Synagogue and taught it. Instead, they searched the Scriptures to see if what was being taught was in accordance with what was written:

"Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:10-11)

Brethren, do not believe something just because you read it in *Hebrew Roots*s, or in any other journal or book, or hear it preached by someone who sounds authoritative. Search it out for yourself. We try very hard to present the truth as we understand it. However, our faith, just like yours, is in the process of maturing. Perhaps we do not see things in quite the same light as you do because one (or both) of us has an incomplete understanding at this particular time. Such differences in understanding should not present a problem between brethren as long as all involved are willing to admit that they may still have things to learn.

Shaul clearly stated that it is through differences of opinion that the truth will be made known:

"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. ¹⁹ For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you."

(I Cor. 11:18-19 KJV)

Shaul says there must be heresies (differences of opinion) so that the truth can be discovered. However, the Churches of this world have used this word to condemn anyone who disagrees with their official doctrines.

Now there are heresies which are damnable, and *Shimon Kepha* spoke about those:

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." (II Pet. 2:1 KJV)

The "damnable heresy" mentioned above is specifically the one which denies that *Y'shua* is the Messiah, the Son of God in the flesh; thus denying that He is our Lord and Savior.

Thankfully, Messiah *Y'shua* will return one day and give all of us a true and complete understanding. Then we will agree completely on all points of doctrine.

~ Two Ditches ~

The road of religion is just like any other road, it has two ditches on either side plus potholes in the middle. One ditch is the *antinomian* (against the *Torah* or anti-Law) ditch. This ditch beckons people because it allows them to do whatever they wish to do and still claim they are in a right relationship with God. This is apparently where most Americans are today, for a recent poll shows that two-thirds of all Americans believe they will go to heaven when they die, while only 0.5% think they will go to hell. Apparently the other one-third either have no opinion or they believe they will die and be resurrected or reincarnated.

A prime example of *antinomianism* is the homosexual Priest who was ordained a Bishop in the Episcopal Church despite the clear teaching of Scripture (both Old and New Testaments) that such a lifestyle is sinful. Thankfully, there appears to be many in that Church who still believe the Scriptures teach against such behavior.

It is this *antinomian* (anti-law) ditch, out of which many (if not most) of our readers have come. It is the very ditch which *Hebrew Roots*s has been addressing through many articles concerning the acceptance of *Torah* as the Believer's Standard of Behavior.

Another ditch is one that has caused us much sadness. Some, who have given up their old *antinomian* ways, become pursuant of the *Torah*, and accepted the Hebrew roots of the Faith, have now gone all the way over into the other ditch and converted to Judaism. In the process, most (if not all) of these folks have also given up their long held faith in Messiah *Y'shua* as the Son of God. *Shimon Kepha* addressed this phenomenon in the previously quoted passage:

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ² And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed."

(II Peter 2:1-2)

Brethren, we beseech you to hold fast to the Faith in which you were called. It is true that the Jesus portrayed in many Churches is often represented as more pagan than Jewish. It is true that most Churches teach that "the law has been done away" -- that it has been "nailed to the cross." Nevertheless, the core teaching of the Christian Churches is true; that 'Christ' (the anointed One or the Messiah) has died for our sins:

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you -- unless you believed in vain. ³ For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ [Messiah] died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ..."

(I Cor. 15:1-4)

The various doctrinal pulls which Believers experience have not changed over the centuries. In the first century there were those who wanted to draw the Gentile Believers into Judaism. They said that Gentiles could only be saved if they were circumcised and became Jewish Proselytes. However, *Shaul* countered their claims by stating:

"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters."

(I Cor. 7:19)

At the same time there were others who wanted to take all Believers off into *antinomianism*:

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and [*thereby*] deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach]."

(Jude 1:3-4)

Both ditches are a form of bondage.

The Jewish tradition ditch leads to the added yoke of the rules and regulations of the *Oral Torah*:

"For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

(Matt. 23:4)

As *Shimon Kepha* stated at the Jerusalem Council:

"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

(Acts 15:10)

The *antinomian* ditch gives Believers a license to sin, the result of which will be destruction:

"Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² 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?" ²³ And then I will declare to them, "I never knew

you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!"

(Matt. 7:21-23)

~ The Appeal of Judaism ~

There is much that we, as Believers, can learn from our Jewish brothers. Many of them know the *Torah* inside and out because they have studied it for millennia. There is much in the *Oral Torah* (traditions of the fathers) which is holy, just, and good. However, the *Oral Torah* is not Scripture (despite what the Orthodox Jews claim). As Believers, we must understand that if the *Oral Torah* contradicts the *Written Torah*, we are to follow the *Written Torah* and reject that portion of the *Oral Torah* which is in disagreement. *Y'shua* confirmed this understanding of the relationship between *Written* and *Oral Torah*:

"Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus [*Y'shua*], saying, ² 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' ³ He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?' ⁴ For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and your mother;" and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." ⁵ But you say, "Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God' -- ⁶ then he need not honor his father or mother." Thus you have made the commandment of God [Written Torah] of no effect by your tradition [Oral Torah].

⁷Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying:

⁸ "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

⁹ And in vain they worship Me,

Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."

[Isa. 23:13]

(Matt. 15:1-9)

Our observance of *Written Torah*, and portions of *Oral Torah* which do not contradict the *Written Torah*, is not for the purpose of trying to earn our salvation:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. ¹⁰ 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. 2:8-10)

It is clear that our doctrines must come only from the written Word of God. They are not to be derived from anything contrary to Scripture, of which *Y'shua* spoke, as quoted in Matthew 15:3 above.

What exactly is the appeal of Judaism to a Believer? That question can be best answered by those who have left their faith in *Y'shua* and converted to Judaism. However, it can be said that some people become severely disillusioned when they learn they have been misled by their Christian teachers regarding some of the basic doctrines. For example, they have been taught that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. They

have also been taught that the Festivals of *YHVH* are not to be kept, and in their place they have been taught to keep holidays which stem from paganism but have now been Christianized. And they have been taught that God now approves of their eating any kind of meat they want, despite what Leviticus 11 says. In other words, they have been taught that it is permissible to disobey God's commands.

As a result of these false *antinomian* (against the law) teachings, some have become so disillusioned that they decide to throw out the baby with the bath water and reject the Church's teaching about "Jesus" (*Y'shua*) as well. What they do not realize is that down through the centuries there has always been a remnant of Believers who have accepted the Scriptures in their entirety. These same people have also rejected the false teachings of the Churches. Many of these people were persecuted by the Roman Church along with the Jews. The Church leaders called such Messianic Believers in *Y'shua* "Judaizers," because they followed the "Jewish" ways.

~ Needing to Belong ~

Another draw to Judaism, for the Messianic Believer, is the need to belong. Having found themselves out of the mainstream Christian community, some are desperately looking for a Spiritual home and believe they have found it in Judaism.

Not only is there a deep sense of tradition within Judaism, these traditions are rich with meaning and they cover every aspect of life. In addition, the Synagogue service is both beautiful and sublime, with a great number of the prayers taken straight out of the Hebrew Scriptures.

When one becomes a Messianic Believer (i.e. comes to accept the Jewishness of *Y'shua*), they often have a difficult time finding fellowship. Those who keep the Sabbath and the Festivals, and wish to explore the Hebrew roots of the Faith, are often few and far between in any given area. Many have to meet in Home Fellowships because there are not enough people to form a congregation.

Home Fellowships can provide a wonderful opportunity to fully explore the Scriptures, and this can be a very positive step in the spiritual growth for Believers. However, if not run well, Home Fellowships can also become the 'soapbox' for someone who wants to be a preacher.

There are some very successful Messianic congregations which have been formed as a result of good leadership and dedicated members. However, others have been torn apart when an outsider has come in and attempted to take over; often bringing in false doctrines that drive the original people away.

In addition, a new Messianic Believer can experience estrangement from family and friends who feel condemned because Messianic Believers will no longer share in their Christianized pagan holidays.

These are just a few of the problems which face all of us who wish to hold onto our faith in *Y'shua* while pursuing a *Torah* lifestyle. Unfortunately, some Believers find it difficult to survive spiritually under these conditions. They are the people who, at times, become candidates for conversion to Judaism.

Equally troubling are the people who are more than ready to assist the Believer in *Y'shua* to give up his faith and become

a Rejecter of *Y'shua*. Those who lead Believers in this direction are often people who have already made the switch themselves. Of course, there are also plenty of Christians who are more than happy to lead Jews into faith in a paganized Jesus coupled with an anti-Torah (*antinomian*) belief. We believe both such camps (Judaism and *antinomian*) are in danger of hearing the words "**I never knew you.**" (Matt. 7:23).

More insidious are those who claim they are neutral in their approach to both Jews and Christians, but who regularly assist Christians in becoming Jewish. However, these same people tend to scream bloody murder about anyone who might want to help someone switch from Rabbinic Judaism to a Messianic Jewish faith in *Y'shua*, even though such people are able to retain their Jewish understandings, traditions, and culture. This last phenomena is probably based upon the mistaken belief that all those who accept *Y'shua* as the Messiah are stepping into the pagan customs of traditional Christianity.

Perhaps it would be well to recall what *Kepha* said about the Believing community:

"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; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (I Pet. 2:9-10)

The King James Version, in this passage, calls us a "peculiar people," and indeed we are, for the leadership of mainstream Christianity does not like us because we preach *Torah* observance and the Jews are suspicious of us because we accept *Y'shua* as the Messiah. It is important to remember some more of *Kepha's* words:

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³ but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's [Messiah's] sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴ If you are reproached for the name of Christ [Messiah], blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian [Believer in *Y'shua*], let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷ For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ Now

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

[Prov. 11:31]

¹⁹ 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. 4:12-19)

Do not be dismayed if your new found understanding of the Scriptures brings you a certain amount of persecution. Rather, take it as a sign that God loves you:

"And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

**'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD [YHVH],
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
6 For whom the LORD [YHVH] loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives.'** [Prov. 3:11-12]

"7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?"
8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.
9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?
10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. **11 Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."** (Heb. 12:5-11)

~ Hebrew Roots or Jewish Roots ~

It may seem strange to see a publication that has been devoted (over many years) to teaching the Hebrew roots of the Faith, telling its readers to beware of becoming converts to Judaism. However, we believe there is a difference between *Hebrew Roots* and *Jewish Roots*. The difference is that we are not teaching people to convert to Rabbinic Judaism or even to take on a lot of Rabbinic Jewish customs and traditions, unless such traditions provide a meaningful form of worship for the individual.

Hebrew Roots is a movement that is teaching Christians about their need to return to a *Written Torah* pursuant lifestyle; a lifestyle that was given to both houses of Israel, not just to Judah. It is a movement which teaches people to cast off the pagan trappings of modern Christianity while retaining their core belief in *Y'shua* as Messiah, Savior, and Lord of our lives. This does not mean that we replace the Father with *Y'shua*. Instead, we are now able to approach the Father with confidence through our High Priest, who just happens to be *Y'shua*:

"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus [Y'shua],²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (Heb. 10:19-22)

Y'shua does not replace the Father, rather, He is the mediator between man and God:

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua],⁶ who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, ..."
(I Tim. 2:5-6)

~ Summary ~

We live in the most interesting of times. Many Jews are becoming Believers in *Y'shua*. While, on the other hand, some Believers are now becoming converts to Rabbinic Judaism, and denying their Lord and Savior, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Of course, both groups applaud when someone comes their way and despairs when one of their own goes the other way.

As Messianic Believers, we must be vigilant against the various deceptions which are waiting and ready to snare us, and if possible, devour us:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." (I Pet. 5:8-9)

Beware of those who attempt to establish themselves as heads of the Body of Messiah when they have obviously not received such a calling. As one of our subscribers put it, "Everyone wants to be a head, nobody wants to be any of the other body parts." Yet the Body of Messiah needs all of its parts if it is to function properly.

Beware of false doctrine, prove all things, and hold on to that which is true and good.

Beware of the ditches which lie waiting to grab us and roll us over in a fatal spiritual accident. Avoid those who come preaching *antinomianism* (against *Torah*) as well as those who want you to deny *Y'shua*.

Finally, as Believer's, we need to remember Who it is that has brought about the remission of our sins, and confess Him before the world:

"Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua] with eternal glory. 11 This is a faithful saying:

**For if we died with Him,
We shall also live with Him.
12 If we endure,
We shall also reign with Him.
If we deny Him,
He also will deny us.
13 If we are faithless,
He remains faithful;
He cannot deny Himself."**

(II Tim. 2:10-13)

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful." (Heb. 10:23)

Hold fast and keep the Faith!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Separation or Divorce? ~

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



Do we correctly understand Y'shua's teaching on Separation and Divorce? *Y'shua* said:

"It hath been said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:"³² But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery." (Matt. 5:31-32 KJV)

As we examine the above passage, we see that *Y'shua* has used the phraseology "It has been said" to refer to a Rabbinical teaching (*Oral Torah*) on the Torah Command (*Written Torah*) pertaining to divorce:

"When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.² And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.³ And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; ⁴ Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD [YHVH]: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD [YHVH] thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

(Deut. 24:1-4 KJV)

Understanding that *Y'shua* came to correctly interpret the law (*Torah*), and seeing that He has addressed the problem of adultery, which was not addressed in the *Torah* command on divorce, we can interpret His response to be directed at the extant Rabbinical teaching on divorce. Furthermore, from this translation of Matt. 5:31-32, it appears that *Y'shua* has taught that a divorced person who remarries commits adultery. However, we do not find this teaching in the *Torah*. For this reason, we need to search further to understand what *Y'shua* really taught.

We will have to use the Strong's Concordance to find the original word used for the text in question. For this reason, the same passage is listed below with the corresponding Strong's codes:

Matthew 5:31-32 ³¹ It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away <630> his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement <647>: ³² But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away <630> his wife saving for the cause of

fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced <630> committeth adultery."

The parallel passages of Matthew 19:3-9, Mark 10:2-12, and Luke 16:18 were also examined and the Strong's Number (S.N.) 630 was found to be translated as "put away" each and every time it was used in those passages. However, in the Matthew 5:31-32 passage, we find two different translations used for the same word, S.N. 630 (apoluo = ap-ol-oo'-o):

- 1.) Put away, and
- 2.) divorced.

It is important to understand the correct definition of this word (S.N. 630) and its implications.

In the first century, if a man gave his wife a writing of divorcement (S.N. 647), she was sent out of his house and allowed to legally remarry. But, if a man merely put away his wife, she was sent out of his house and was not allowed to legally remarry. However, from the beginning it was not so, for:

"...Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." (Mark 10:4 NIV)

"And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife." (Deut 24:2)

In those days the primary means of support for a woman was through marriage. That is why *Y'shua* said: "whoever puts away his wife for any reason **except sexual immorality** causes her to commit adultery." Logically, if she were already guilty of committing adultery, the act of putting her away would not be the cause of her adultery.

A woman who was only separated from her husband would not be free to remarry. Although she could have been supported by family members (as long as that was an option), if she were to remarry without having received a writing of divorcement (S.N. 647), she would thereby be guilty of both committing adultery and causing the man she married to commit adultery. This is why *Y'shua* said: **"Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement."**

To **"write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house"** was a *Torah* command which allowed for the divorced person to remarry.

Now, with this understanding, let us look at the passage again with the words translated correctly:

"Furthermore it has been said, "Whoever puts away his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce."³² But I say to you that whoever puts away his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is put away commits adultery." (Matt. 5:31-32 KJV)

For those interested, the Strong's codes referenced above are listed on the following page.

~ Conclusion ~

The word (S.N. 630) which was translated as 'divorced' in Matthew 5:32, should have been translated as "put away."

May you be blessed as you bless others with the correct teaching of this passage.

~ Strong's Codes ~

630 avpolu,w apoluo {ap-ol-oo'-o}

Meaning: 1) to set free 2) to let go, dismiss, (to detain no longer) 2a) a petitioner to whom liberty to depart is given by a decisive answer 2b) to bid depart, send away 3) to let go free, release 3a) a captive i.e. to loose his bonds and bid him depart, to give him liberty to depart 3b) to acquit one accused of a crime and set him at liberty 3c) indulgently to grant a prisoner leave to depart 3d) to release a debtor, i.e. not to press one's claim against him, to remit his debt 4) used of divorce, to dismiss from the house, to repudiate. The wife of a Greek or Roman may divorce her husband. 5) to send one's self away, to depart

Origin: from 575 and 3089;; v

Usage: AV - release 17, put away 14, send away 13, let go 13, set at liberty 2, let depart 2, dismiss 2, misc 6; 69

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647 avposta,sion apostasion {ap-os-tas'-ee-on}

Meaning: 1) divorce, repudiation 2) a bill of divorce

Origin: neuter of a (presumed) adj. from a derivative of 868;; n n

Usage: AV - divorcement 2, writing of divorcement 1; 3

575 avpo, apo {apo'}

Meaning: 1) of separation 1a) of local separation, after verbs of motion from a place i.e. of departing, of fleeing, ... 1b) of separation of a part from the whole 1b1) where of a whole some part is taken 1c) of any kind of separation of one thing

from another by which the union or fellowship of the two is destroyed 1d) of a state of separation, that is of distance 1d1) physical, of distance of place 1d2) temporal, of distance of time 2) of origin 2a) of the place whence anything is, comes, befalls, is taken 2b) of origin of a cause

Origin: a primary particle;; preposition

Usage: AV - from 392, of 129, out of 48, for 10, off 10, by 9, at 9, in 6, since + 3739 5, on 5, not tr. 15, misc. 31; 669

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3089 lu,w luo {loo'-o}

Meaning: 1) to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened 1a) bandages of the feet, the shoes, 1b) of a husband and wife joined together by the bond of matrimony 1c) of a single man, whether he has already had a wife or has not yet married 2) to loose one bound, i.e. to unbind, release from bonds, set free 2a) of one bound up (swathed in bandages) 2b) bound with chains (a prisoner), discharge from prison, let go 3) to loosen, undo, dissolve, anything bound, tied, or compacted together 3a) an assembly, i.e. to dismiss, break up 3b) laws, as having a binding force, are likened to bonds 3c) to annul, subvert 3d) to do away with, to deprive of authority, whether by precept or act 3e) to declare unlawful 3f) to loose what is compacted or built together, to break up, demolish, destroy 3g) to dissolve something coherent into parts, to destroy 3h) metaph., to overthrow, to do away with

Origin: a root word; TDNT - 2:60 & 4:328,543; v

Usage: AV - loose 27, break 5, unloose 3, destroy 2, dissolve 2, put off 1, melt 1, break up 1, break down 1; 43

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