



The Quiet Revival

by: Dean and Susan Wheelock

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The Scriptures used in this article are:

- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB),*
translated by David H. Stern,
Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc.,
Clarksville, MD/Jerusalem, 1998.
- The Open Bible (New King James Version [NKJV]),*
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
- Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures, (TNK),*
The Jewish Publication Society,
Phildelphia/New York, 1988.

~ Forward ~

Shalom Aleichem (Peace be unto you),

Approximately ten years ago, we began our humble effort to reconstruct a picture of Jewish life and thought in the first century so that we could better understand what our Savior *Y'shua* and the writers of the New Testament Scriptures wished to convey.

As we looked into the connection between our understandings as Believers in *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah) and those commonly found within the Jewish faith, we discovered numerous parallels. As time progressed, we found that seeing Scripture from the Jewish perspective actually enhanced our faith and confirmed our belief that *Y'shua* is indeed the promised Messiah. In addition, our studies increased our understanding of the life and times of *Y'shua* and His disciples.

Nevertheless, we wondered how the Jewish people could have retained such a great understanding of the Scriptures, and of the coming of the Messiah, and yet missed the fact that *Y'shua* had actually fulfilled their expectations for a 'Suffering Servant Messiah,' whom they refer to in their writings as 'Messiah Ben Joseph.' Our answer came from the Scriptures themselves:

"Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

"He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,

Lest they should see with *their* eyes,

Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them."

These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him." (John 12:39-41)

The Apostle Paul confirmed this closing of some minds in his epistle to the Romans:

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ 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;

For this is My covenant with them,

When I take away their sins." (Rom. 11:25-27)

However, it is not only the Jewish people who have had a veil placed over their eyes of understanding. The Christians have a veil as well, for although they accept the coming of Messiah *Y'shua* as the 'Suffering Servant,' their veil has kept them from understanding the usefulness of learning about things Jewish as an aid to deeper understanding, and the relevance of the *Torah* to their daily lives.

Today, *Abba* (our heavenly Father) is lifting the veil from the eyes of both Jews and Christians. This booklet explains, at least in part, the unveiling that is currently taking place and causing a revival among many of God's people, whether they be Jewish or Christian.

We pray that you will read this booklet with an open mind and a loving heart and that God will reveal to you His great plan of salvation:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

(John 3:16-17)

"And so all Israel will be saved, ..." (Rom. 11:26a)

May God bless you as you seek
to worship Him in Spirit and in Truth,

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom
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~ The Quiet Revival ~

There is a religious revival sweeping across North America and around the world. It is a Quiet Revival, one that is reaching into the minds and hearts of both Jew and Gentile and it is composed of Believers who are coming to understand that it was never God's intent for the 'Church' to replace Israel as His Chosen People, but instead that all Believers are to be grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel, giving each one of them all the rights, privileges and responsibilities derived from obtaining that citizenship.

"And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you." (Rom. 11:17-18)

Not only are all Believers now citizens in the Commonwealth of Israel, but because of our relationship with our Husband, Savior, and Messiah, *Y'shua* (Jesus); we also have citizenship in heaven:

"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." (Phil. 3:20-21)

This Quiet Revival is part of the preparation of God's people for the coming of His Son, *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-shee'-ahk = Jesus the Messiah) to return to this earth as:

"King of kings, and Lord of Lords." (Rev. 19:16b)

God in heaven is calling His own to:

"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)

~ Learning the Old Ways ~

In order to **"rightly divide the word of truth,"** we must turn back to God's Instruction Book: *The Torah* (Toh-rah' = the first five books of the 'Old Testament:' Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). However, simply reading our Bibles will not give us correct understanding, for in order to properly interpret the *Torah*, as well as *Y'shua's* and *Shaul's* (Paul's) teachings about the *Torah*, we also need to learn how the Hebrews thought and as a result, how they understood the Scriptures. For this reason it helps to study the Jewish culture of the first century and learn about their customs and traditions. This is where various books and publications (such as *Hebrew Roots* and others) can be of assistance.

~ A Previous Revival ~

There have been other revivals which have taken place over the centuries since *Y'shua* walked the earth. For example, in the nineteenth century a spirit of Christian revival swept across English speaking North America. Itinerant preachers spread out over the land reviving the faith of the people through tent meetings and 'hellfire and brimstone' sermons. Tens of thousands of Americans responded to the call and began establishing various Protestant Churches with a new zeal and purpose. This spirit of revival continued on into the twentieth century with the advent of a number of famous evangelists. The culmination of this movement can be traced to the doorstep of Billy Graham, America's best known preacher.

Now, as we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century there is a new wave of spiritual revival sweeping across the land of America and around the world. This wave is the growing heartfelt desire of thousands of Believers to return to the origins of their faith as declared by our Savior, *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah-Mah-shee'-ach = Jesus the Messiah):

"You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24)

~ Seeking After Truth ~

These modern seekers of truth are coming from all walks of life and from all denominations of Christianity. They are learning about how the 'Church' long ago forsook the instructions found in the *Torah* and turned their backs on the 'Jewish' understandings, customs, and Festivals as practiced by the early Believers.

It was primarily their rejection of *Torah* (instruction) that caused the early 'Church' to begin falling away from sound doctrine and righteous practices as indicated by the following warning:

"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. 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 licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]."
(Jude 3-4)

These words were penned by Jude, who, along with *Ya'acov* (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob or James), was a half-brother to our Savior, *Y'shua*. They are words which all of us need to ponder and come to understand as we seek after truth.

~ Replacement Theology ~

In place of the **"faith which was once for all delivered to the saints,"** those men who had **"crept in unnoticed"** developed what amounted to a new religion, by mixing the truth of the Gospel with pagan practices and beliefs. They rejected God's instructions, teaching that the *Torah* belonged only to the Jews. At the same time, they also claimed that the Jews had been cast aside by God because they had displeased Him by failing to keep the commands of the *Torah*. So, on one hand they said the *Torah* was 'done away,' and on the other they said the Jews were rejected because they failed to keep it.

In addition, they taught that the 'Church' had replaced Israel as the Chosen People of God and that Christians did not need to observe the *Torah* commands, but needed only to follow the teachings of the New Testament.

This new religion usurped the name 'Christianity' and eventually spread around the world. In time, this adulterated form of Christianity came to be dominated by two factions, the Roman Catholic Church in the west, and the Orthodox Church in the east. Today, these two major divisions still exist, with the Roman camp being the larger and more powerful of the two.

~ Reformation ~

On October 31, 1517, a Roman Catholic priest named Martin Luther tried to begin a reform of the Roman Church by nailing a list of *95 Theses* (objections to Vatican practices and church policy, plus topics for discussion) on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Saxony. For his efforts Luther was excommunicated by the Roman Church, so he started a new division which came to be known as the Lutheran Church. This 'protest' against certain Roman Church practices and beliefs was a key element in the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

A number of other Protestant leaders also arose during this tumultuous time. The better known of them included men such as Wycliffe, Calvin, and Zwingli, and religious movements such as the Lollards, Anabaptists, Waldensians, and Mennonites. These men and movements were instrumental in forming a number of new denominations, some of which still exist to this day.

~ The Puritans ~

Among those who dissented against both the Roman Church and the newly established Church of England (sixteenth century), were a group of more extreme nonconformists known as the Puritans. It was a small number from this hardy lot who decided to make a pilgrimage to North America and start a new colony of Puritan

Believers, far from the clutches of the established European Christian religions of the day. The first group arrived, at what came to be known as the Plymouth Colony, in 1620. During the succeeding years many more Puritans seeking religious freedom followed, as well as people of other Christian sects.

However, North America soon came to be viewed as the land of opportunity not only by those wishing to escape religious persecution from their fellow Christians, but also by the down trodden, those in trouble with the law, and a number of entrepreneurs wishing to make their fortunes across the ocean in the 'New World.'

By the eighteenth century, much of the religious fervor of the seventeenth century had cooled. This time period became known as the *Age of Reason*, and many of the better educated people no longer held to the literal teachings of the Bible as promulgated by the Puritans and other fundamentalist sects. This was the century in which the classic literary and philosophical works of Greece and Rome became the preferred reading of educated people, firmly reestablishing a link between those ancient civilizations and the New World. It was also the age of politics and war, as men of means began to desire the establishment of a country of their own rather than be tied to the ways of the Old Country. Thus was born the American Revolution, and while the majority of the common people still held to the faith of the Bible, the general tone of the new nation was one of declining religious values. This paved the way for the religious revivals of the nineteenth century.

However, once again the 'revived' Church began to decline. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Church attendance is down, especially in the mainline denominations. Many contemporary men and women now view religion to be little more than a social club where their children can learn some degree of moral values. On the other hand, the last fifty years has also seen an upsurge in attendance among small groups which tend to hold doctrines that are, to varying degrees, contrary to those taught by the large denominations.

~ *The Little Flocks* ~

Despite the ups and downs of the mainstream Churches, the last two thousand years of 'Church' history has also been witness to a small remnant of Believers who have more or less held to the **"faith once for all delivered."** This faith always included respect for the instructions found in the *Torah* and many of the ancient 'Jewish' beliefs and practices that existed among Believers at the beginning. In the first century, many of these people were known as *Netzerim*, (Net-zer-eem' = followers of the Nazarene) while others were called *Ebionites* (Ee'-bee-ohn-nights = Poor Ones). Both of these sects clung to the seventh day Sabbath, the Festivals, and the food laws of Leviticus 11; the *Ebionites* being more closely allied to the strict Jewish interpretation of the *Torah* than were the *Netzerim*. Many Believers were simply known as followers of "The Way" and carried no particular denominational name. However, all of these groups are spoken of in the New Testament as the *eklesia* or Congregations of God.

The early sects and assemblies may have been small in number but they were large in faith, trusting *Abba* (Ah'-bah = Father God) to meet their needs while looking forward to the Messianic Kingdom:

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

(Luke 12:32)

These various sects were roundly condemned by the official Church authorities in Rome, especially after the Council of Nicaea which was held in 325 CE. It was at this council, dominated by the pagan emperor Constantine, when all things Jewish were declared to be heretical and a program to exterminate 'Jewishness' from the Church was officially begun.

As a result of this decree, these little sects of 'Jewish' Believers were forced to go underground. At times they literally had to hide in caves and deep in the forests in order to avoid capture and torture by Roman Catholic Inquisitors. Though it is believed that they held to the validity of all of the scriptures, *Tanakh* (Tah-nahk' = Old Testament) and *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = ReNewed Covenant or New Testament), there remains virtually no historical documents from these early sects of Believers, for their writings (laboriously written by hand) were systematically destroyed by the Church.

Today, the easiest way to trace these sects is to search the history books of the Roman Catholic Church for mention of those whom the Church called heretics. Mixed in among them are the stories of men and women whose main 'heretical' belief was that the *Torah* should be obeyed and that certain Jewish traditions should be maintained.

~ *God's Timing* ~

For centuries those who taught the beliefs and practices of the early Believers and held to the *Torah* and the customs of the Jews, were erroneously discounted as 'Judaizing.'¹ It never meant the practicing of Jewish

¹ The proper definition of 'Judaizing' is the teaching that one must be circumcised and convert to Judaism in order to be saved (Acts 15:1).

customs, for all the early congregations, both Jew and Gentile, practiced 'Jewish' customs.) Even among the seventh day Sabbath observing groups, the *Torah*, in its entirety, has often received a lack of respect. However, in the last decade all of this has begun to change. Many thousands of Believers, from all backgrounds and denominations, have come to see the *Torah* and things 'Jewish' as worthy of respect and purposeful study. Indeed, interest in the Jewish (or Hebrew) roots of the faith has all the earmarks of becoming a grass roots movement of large proportions.

If someone wanted to attribute a human reason for this phenomena, they might point to the Messianic Jewish Movement, which provides a 'Jewish' religious and cultural setting for the thousands of Jews who have come to a personal conviction that *Y'shua* is both their Jewish Messiah and their personal Savior. But this would not account for the other Sabbath observant groups or the thousands of so-called 'Gentiles' who have also turned to the Messianic movement to find Scriptural understanding and meaningful worship.

We believe the reason this Quiet Revival is sweeping the land at this time, is because our great Creator God in heaven has begun an endtime work to bring His people a more complete knowledge about **"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."** In other words, it is Our Heavenly Father's Time for such understanding to be brought forth.

~ *The Scriptures Are of Hebrew Origin* ~

The Holy Bible is a Hebrew book, written by Hebrews for Hebrews.² It was written, under the inspiration of God, entirely by the descendants of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov* (Avh-rah-hahm', Yeet'-zahk, and Yah'ah'cove = Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). The one possible exception is Luke, who was in all probability a Jewish proselyte.

The first five books of the Bible (the *Torah*) were written by *Moshe* (Mow-shay' = Moses) under the direct influence of God, whom he spoke with face to face:

"But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ..." (Deut. 34:10)

Moshe was from the Israelite tribe of *Levi*, the tribe which was selected by God to take care of the Tabernacle (and later on the Temple) and to participate in its worship.

Other books of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) were also written by various Israelite men. For example:

- ◆ *The Book of Joshua* was written by Joshua who was from the tribe of Ephraim
- ◆ *Ruth*, *Judges*, and *I & II Samuel* were written by the Ephraimite Samuel or one of his students.
- ◆ *I & II Kings* were written by Jeremiah the Prophet who was a Levitical Priest.
- ◆ *Ezra* and *I & II Chronicles* were written by Ezra, the Levitical Priest and Scribe.
- ◆ The Prophetic books were written by the various prophets from various tribes.
- ◆ The *Psalms* were written by King David of Judah and others.
- ◆ The *Proverbs* were compiled by King Solomon of Judah.
- ◆ *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Solomon* were written by King Solomon of Judah.

So we see that the *Tanakh* is strictly a product of Israelites or Hebrews (some from the tribe of Judah and some not) writing under the inspiration of the God of their forefathers; *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov*.³

~ *The New Testament Is a Hebrew Book* ~

Just as the *Tanakh* is strictly a Hebrew book, so too is the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament), where all of the authors except one are identified within each book individually. That one exception is the book of *Hebrews*, which many scholars believe was written by the Apostle Paul. Others prefer Barnabas, Luke, or Clement (an early Church leader). Still others claim it was written by a Believer who came from the sect of the *Essenes* (those who wrote the *Dead Sea Scrolls*). Whatever the case, *Hebrews* had to have been written by someone who was

² All Israelites come under the general title of Hebrews. Thus, the term *Hebrew* is also a legitimate designation for Jews, since they are a part of the Israelite people.

³ In the New Testament, the terms 'Jew' and 'Judah' refer to those people who were descended from the three original tribes (Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) who maintained their allegiance to the Temple in Jerusalem. They primarily lived in Judea in the south and in the Galilee region in the north. The other ten tribes, known as the House of Israel, were given a bill of divorcement (Jer. 3:8) and sent into captivity in 722 BCE where they lost their identity. To this date they have not yet returned to their homeland, the land of Israel.

knowledgeable about the sacrifices and rituals of the *Wilderness Tabernacle*. It is highly unlikely that a Gentile convert to the Believing community would have had this detailed a knowledge about such matters.

The bulk of the Epistles were written by *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul, the given name of the Apostle Paul), who clearly stated that he was Jewish:

"...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews: concerning the law, a Pharisee; ..." (Phil. 3:5)

Of the other New Testament authors, we know that Matthew and John were Jewish because they were among the twelve most intimate of the disciples, all of whom were Hebrews. Mark was also Jewish, for according to Acts 12:12, his mother (named Miriam or Mary) had a large house in Jerusalem which the disciples used for gatherings. Col. 4:10 also states that Mark and Barnabas were cousins.

The General Epistles were also written by Jews. James (*Ya'acov* or Jacob in the original), and Jude (*Y'hudah*) were both half brothers of none other than *Y'shua* Himself. Peter and John were two of the 'chief apostles.' John also was the one who recorded the visions he saw in the *Apokalypsis* or *Book of Revelation*, the final prophetic unveiling.

It was God's choice to use the children of Israel (all Hebrews) to communicate the Scriptures to the world.

~ Understanding The Hebrew Mindset ~

Because the Bible is a Hebrew book, it is important to understand some things about the Hebrew mind and how it works in order to properly understand the Holy Books which it contains. This is not always an easy task for people brought up in the modern culture of Western Civilization.

The first key to understanding the Hebrew mind is to learn how Western (or Greek) and Hebrew thought differ. Armed with this knowledge one can begin to discern where errors of understanding, as well as translation, have been made and thus begin the process of correcting one's thinking. This is not to say that Greek thought is wrong and Hebrew thought is right, rather, that in order to understand the Scriptures, one must approach them with the mindset of those who wrote them, i.e. the Hebrews. This is true anytime one wants to understand the writings of another culture. For this reason, it is most important for Believers to enter the world of Hebrew thought and civilization and see the Scriptures through the eyes of those to whom they were first given.

~ Language Differences ~

One of the primary differences between Hebrew and Greek language (and therefore their thought as well) is that the Greek language lends itself more readily to contemplative thinking, while the Hebrew language is one of action. For this reason, the Greeks became the premier people and language of philosophy, (defined as: the *"...pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means..."* and *"Inquiry into the nature of things based on logical reasoning rather than empirical methods."*).

In contrast, the Hebrew people and their language were dynamic; always moving, never static. This could be seen in their initial relationship with God, where they worshipped Him in a portable Tabernacle, moving it from place to place as He directed them.

Marvin R. Wilson, in his book *Our Father Abraham*, writes:

"The action-centered lifestyle of the Hebrews is often reflected in Hebrew sentence structure. ... the Hebrews were mainly a doing and feeling people. Thus their language has few abstract terms." (pp. 136-137)

In order to express abstract thoughts, the Hebrews used terminology that was material or physical. Wilson states:

"We shall give a number of examples to illustrate this point: 'look' is 'lift up the eyes' (Gen. 22:4); 'be angry' is 'burn in one's nostrils' (Exod. 4:14); 'disclose something to another' or 'reveal' is 'unstop someone's ears' (Ruth 4:4); 'have no compassion' is 'hard-heartedness' (I Sam. 6:6); 'stubborn' is 'stiff-necked' (II Chr. 30:8 cf. Acts 7:51); 'get ready' or 'brace oneself' is 'gird up the loins' (Jer. 1:17); and 'to be determined to go' is 'set one's face to go' (Jer. 42:15, 17; cf. Luke 9:51)." (p. 137)

Wilson also points out that the Hebrews did not express their understanding of God in abstract terms, such as the 'first source,' but in anthropomorphic terms. That is, the Hebrews expressed their understanding of God as having human attributes: arm, face, right hand, etc. Thus, it is written that the ten commandments were inscribed by the 'finger' of God.

~ Relationship Vs. Doctrine ~

It has been said that in Christianity people are more concerned about what one thinks, while in Judaism they are more concerned about how one behaves. This observation directly reflects the difference between Greek and Hebrew concepts, for Christianity has been influenced greatly by the Greek model and is far more concerned about doctrine than is Judaism. Once again Wilson writes:

"Jewish anthropologist Raphael Patai has observed that because the Hebrews liked the concrete and tended to avoid the abstract, the idea of doctrinal formulation was alien to their mind. In Hebrew thought the essence of true godliness is tied primarily to a relationship, not to a creed." (P. 138)

In other words, what is important in the Hebrew way of thinking is one's relationship with God and his fellow man; not what one thinks about God. Thus, prayer becomes the focal point in the Hebrew's relationship with their Creator and good deeds the center of their relationship with other people. Wilson writes:

"For the Hebrews, personal or individual relationship has always been far more expressive of the heart of religious faith than mere intellectual assent to abstract statements or religious ideas." (p. 138)

~ Logic ~

One of the marvels of Greek thinking was their ability to reason out an answer to a problem through a series of steps. This process is sometimes referred to as 'step logic,' and it was instrumental in the development of great schools of philosophy based on the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and others. However, the Hebrew language is more suited to reasoning through 'block-logic,' where concepts are self-contained in often unrelated 'blocks' of information. Once again Marvin Wilson writes:

"This way of thinking created a propensity for paradox, antinomy, or apparent contradiction, as one block stood in tension -- and often illogical relation -- to the other. Hence, polarity of thought or dialectic [*weighing contradictory ideas*] often characterized block logic." (p. 150)

Some of the seeming contradictions in Scripture can be explained when viewed as block logic, where one block examines an issue from God's point of view and another from man's. In such cases both can be true. For example, even as God hardened Pharaoh's heart (Ex. 7:3), so also Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15).

~ Hebrew Idioms ~

Another place to begin learning about Hebrew thought is in the realm of Hebrew idiom. By definition an idiom is:

"A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in *keep tabs on*." (*The American Heritage Dictionary*)

The English language is full of idiomatic expressions. That is one of the reasons it is such a difficult language to learn for non-English speakers.

Hebrew is also rich in idiomatic expressions. Since very few Believers are fluent in Hebrew, it is necessary for us to read and study the Scriptures in our native language. One of the most difficult tasks a translator faces is how to make the idioms understandable in the language to which he is translating. While this is certainly a challenge for the scholars who translate the Old Testament from Hebrew to English, the task is complicated even further when it comes to the New Testament. Many Biblical scholars now agree that the majority of the New Testament books were originally written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. This means that our English copies of the New Testament are really translations of translations, which makes the rendering of the Hebrew idioms even more difficult than merely going directly from Hebrew to English.

Because of these idiomatic problems, certain New Testament passages are difficult to understand, as the following example illustrates. Here *Y'shua* is teaching about putting material things (vs. spiritual things) in their proper perspective:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

""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 ['evil' in KJV], your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great *is* that darkness!

""No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.""

(Matt. 6:19-24)

This passage continues on with more exhortation about seeking the Kingdom of God, rather than chasing after physical things.

The question often arises: Why is the passage about the 'evil eye' stuck in the middle of an exhortation about material possessions as opposed to spiritual riches? The answer is simple if one understands the Hebrew idiom involved, for in Hebrew the expression 'evil eye' means a person who is stingy. In Jewish teaching it specifically pertains to the farmer who was required by *Torah* to leave the corners of his fields for gleaning by the poor:

""When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather *every* grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I *am* the LORD your God."" (Lev. 19:9-10)

A farmer who left large corners of his field unharvested and did not pick his grapes too closely was considered to have a 'good eye.' This meant that he was a generous man who provided adequately for the poor. However, one who left only very small corners on his field, and picked the vines nearly clean, was said to have an 'evil eye.' Thus, we see that *Y'shua* was using a Hebrew idiom common to His day in order to teach a lesson about being generous to those in need. In the larger context of the passage, it is evident that *Y'shua* was telling the people that a person with an 'evil eye' was one who was more concerned with the material than he was with the spiritual. Therefore, that person's god had become mammon, rather than the merciful God of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov*, who was intimately concerned about the needs of the poor. This understanding would have been readily apparent to the Jewish people present when *Y'shua* gave this teaching, but it is hidden from our understanding today because of His use of this Hebrew idiom.

~ Mistranslations and Misunderstandings ~

A common problem that exists in our English bibles is mistranslation of the original text. Sometimes this seems to be the direct result of translators who were attempting to remove all hint of 'Jewishness' from the New Testament in order to support their particular theology. Other times it appears to be caused by ignorance of the Hebrew idioms or expressions. A classic example of the latter can be found in the story concerning Peter's denial of *Y'shua* on the night of the Last Supper:

"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.'

"But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.'

"Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster [cock' in KJV] will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.'" (Luke 22:31-34)

Later that night the Temple Guard arrested *Y'shua* and took Him to the house of the High Priest. There Simon Peter was allowed admission to the courtyard in view of where they were questioning *Y'shua*:

"And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, 'This man was also with Him.'

"But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him.'

"And after a little while another saw him and said, 'You also are of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!'

"Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed saying, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean.'

"But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster [cock] crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster [cock] crows, you will deny Me three times.'

"Then Peter went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:56-62)

This is one of the more famous stories in the Gospel accounts; repeated in both Matthew and Mark as well. However, there is one problem with the translation; chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during Temple times.⁴ The reason for this prohibition was because chickens are very dirty birds and they have the obnoxious habit of finding their way into places where they do not belong. Therefore, to assure that chickens could not gain access to the Temple and desecrate the Holy Place or, worse yet, the Holy of Holies, the Priests simply forbid everyone in Jerusalem from having chickens.

So, what about this famous passage of Scripture? It clearly says in the *New King James Version*, just quoted, that a 'rooster' crowed and it was heard in the courtyard of the palace of the High Priest.

The proper translation is really quite evident when the practices of that time are understood. The 'rooster' or 'cock' that Peter and *Y'shua* heard was not a bird at all, but a man. That man was a priest at the Temple. He was the one who had the responsibility of unlocking the Temple doors each and every morning before dawn. Every night this priest would lock the doors to the Temple and place the key in an opening in the floor of one of the Temple side rooms. Then he would place a flat stone over the opening and place his sleeping mat over the stone. He would literally sleep over the key to the Temple. In the morning this priest would arise at first light and retrieve the key. He would then proceed to unlock the doors to the Temple and cry out three statements in a loud voice: "All the *cohanim* (co-heh-neem' = priests) prepare to sacrifice." "All the *Leviim* (Leh-vah-eem' = Levites) to their stations." "All the Israelites come to worship." Then he would repeat these statements two more times.

The priest in question was known as the Temple Crier, and he was called the *Gever* in Hebrew, which means 'cock' or 'rooster'.⁵ It was his obligation to rouse all the Priests, Levites, and worshippers and call them to begin their preparations for the morning sacrifice service. In the stillness of the early morning, sound carries well and since the palace of the High Priest was within a very short walk from the Temple, it was the *Gever's* cry that was heard in the courtyard where *Y'shua* was being questioned.

While this example does not change the meaning of the story (that Peter would deny *Y'shua* despite his bravado earlier in the evening), it does serve to illustrate how English reading Bible students have been shortchanged in their understanding of some of the events as they actually took place. Also, by knowing the true facts about the *Gever*, one's attention becomes focused on the fact that *Y'shua*, the Son of God, was being questioned while standing within earshot of the very House of God (the Temple):

"And He said to those who sold doves, 'Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!'" (John 2:16)

~ *The Son of God* ~

It is important for Messianic Believers to understand that *Y'shua* is the Son of God. He was not from the seed Adam, rather He was conceived by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Roo'-ach Hah-Koh-desh' = Holy Spirit):

"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus [*Y'shua* in Hebrew. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.'" (Luke 1:30-33)

Y'shua's primary mission during His first coming was to perform the role of the 'Suffering Servant' by making atonement for our sins, thereby granting Faith Righteousness to all who believe in Him:

**"Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.

But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He *was* bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;**

⁴ "As a precaution against impurity it was forbidden to maintain refuse heaps or rear chickens in Jerusalem." from *Encyclopedia Judaica* - CD Rom version article: *Judaism Practice, Purity and Impurity Ritual*.

⁵ "... the word *Gever* means both 'man' and 'cock;' the latter can, therefore, substitute for the former." from *Encyclopedia Judaica* - CD Rom version article: *Kapparot*. Also: "Everyday they take up the ashes from the altar at the cock's crow or near it." from *The Mishnah*, Yoma 1:8A.

**We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

...

**By His knowledge My righteous
Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities." (Isaiah 53:4-6, 11b)**

The fact that *Y'shua* is the Son of God does not detract from the fact that His *Abba* (Father) chose to send Him to this earth as a member of the Jewish community. At that time, only the Jewish people⁶ were still holding to the covenant God had given to all the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, for the house of Israel (northern ten tribes) had long before abandoned *Torah* observance, was divorced by God, and sent away. (See Jer. 3:8.)

~ *Y'shua HaYehudi* ~
~ (Jesus the Jew) ~

Y'shua HaYehudi is the betrothed Husband of Messianic Believers and, according to the ancient Hebrew laws of marriage, because we are already betrothed to Him we are also already legally married to Him. The only way in which our marriage can be dissolved is through a written bill of divorcement from *Y'shua* Himself.

As the betrothed bride of Messiah, it is our calling to prepare ourselves for our full marriage to Him. Part of the process of preparing for this marriage is to learn as much as possible about our Husband, *Y'shua HaYehudi* (Jesus the Jew), so that we can learn to please Him in every way. One of the first steps in accomplishing this task is to learn as much as we can about *Y'shua's* religious beliefs, traditions, and customs, all of which were deeply imbued within the Judaism of the first century.

In addition to *Y'shua's* primary commission of providing salvation for His people, there were other things that He was commissioned to do during His visit with us on earth. These might be termed secondary missions:

- ◆ **To announce the Good News (Gospel) of the coming Kingdom of God** (Mark 1:14)
- ◆ **"To heal the brokenhearted"** (Luke 4:18)
- ◆ **"To preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind"** (Luke 4:18)
- ◆ **"To set at liberty those who are oppressed"** (Luke 4:18)
- ◆ **"To preach the acceptable year of the LORD."** (Luke 4:18)

One of *Y'shua's* main purposes was to teach His disciples (the Bride) how to correctly observe the *Torah*. It was for this reason that His disciples referred to Him as the 'Living *Torah*,' for He lived it perfectly:

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

~ *Conflicts* ~

It is important to understand that because *Y'shua* was teaching His disciples the correct manner in which to apply the instructions of the *Torah*, it sometimes caused His *Torah* teachings to conflict with those of the other Rabbis:

"Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.

"Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?'" (Mark 7:1-5)

However, the *Torah* command about washing hands pertains only to the Priesthood, not to the common people:

"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it,

⁶ Jewish people = from the House of Judah. They were primarily descendants from the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Levi.)

for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them -- to him and his descendants throughout their generations." (Ex. 30:18-21)

This command was given to *Aharon* (Ah-hah-rone' = Aaron) the High Priest and his descendants and was to be done as a ritual before they began to do service in the Tabernacle. The ritual washing of hands and feet was never a *Torah* requirement for the common person. (It must be pointed out that it is perfectly fine for a person to ritually wash their hands before eating. Certainly, it shows a respect for the food and for God who has given it to us for consumption, however, it is not a requirement.)

Nevertheless, the School of Shammai (the strictest of the schools of the Pharisees), whose teachings predominated during the first century, taught that all men must ritually wash their hands prior to eating a meal. As can be seen, *Y'shua's* teaching on this matter held to the original intent of the *Torah*. Thus, *Y'shua* showed that He did not come to do away with the instructions of the *Torah*, but to restore them to their original and true meaning. On the other hand, this is not to say that, by restoring the proper *Torah* teachings, *Y'shua* did away with all the traditions and customs of the Jews. On the contrary, He and His disciples continued to observe many, if not most, of the customs of His people as long as those customs and traditions did not contradict the true intent of the *Torah*. Thus it is written:

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

~ The Jewishness of Y'shua ~

Y'shua grew up in a Jewish home. Both His stepfather, *Yoseif* (Yoh'-safe = Joseph) and His mother *Miriam* (Meer-ree-ahm' = Mary) were Jewish by birth. This is evident from the genealogical lists for *Yoseif* (found in Matthew 1:1-17) and *Miriam* (found in Luke 3:23-38). In addition, the Scriptures speak plainly about which tribe *Y'shua* was from:

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

His birthplace was prophesied to be in Bethlehem, which is in the territory that was assigned to Judah:

**"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth have been from of old,
From everlasting."** (Micah 5:2)

As the promised Messiah, *Y'shua* was a direct descendant of King David:

**"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD."** (Isaiah 11:1-2)

A check of the genealogical lists in Matthew and Luke shows that both *Yoseif* and *Miriam* were descended from King David and his father Jesse. Also, the term 'Branch' (Isa. 11:1) is recognized by Jewish and Christian scholars alike to be a reference to the Messiah.

It is this same *Y'shua* from *Yehudah* (Judah) who qualified to open the heavenly scroll and loose its seven seals:

"But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.'" (Rev. 5:5)

Thus we see that both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures agree that the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah.

~ *Yoseif and Miriam Were Observant Jews* ~

Y'shua's parents, *Yoseif* and *Miriam*, held closely to the teachings of the *Torah*. This is evident from the Scriptures, which speak clearly about their observance of the *Torah* commands, beginning with the circumcision of *Y'shua* on the eighth day of His life:

"And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus [*Y'shua* in Hebrew], the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." (Luke 2:21)

It is also evident from this verse that *Yoseif* and *Miriam* kept the customs of the Jews, for it is a Jewish custom not to publicly name a newborn male child until the day of his circumcision.

Thirty-two days later (forty days after the birth of *Y'shua*) the family went to the Temple in Jerusalem in order for *Miriam* to go through her *Torah* prescribed purification rite:

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD' [cited Ex. 13:15]), and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.' [cited Lev. 12:2-8]" (Luke 2:22-24)

Notice how the New Testament refers to the 'law of Moses' as the 'law of the Lord.'

It was the custom of *Y'shua's* family to attend the Festivals in Jerusalem:

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover." (Luke 2:41)

It is also evident that *Y'shua* was very well schooled in the Scriptures, for when He was twelve years old He accompanied His parents to Jerusalem for Passover and stayed on to question and learn from the Rabbis:

"Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers." (Luke 2:46-47)

Y'shua was well respected in His community and among His fellow Jews. This would not have been the case were He in rebellion against the *Torah* and the traditions and customs of the Jewish people:

"And Jesus [*Y'shua*] increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." (Luke 2:52)

From all of the above, it is evident that God chose to send our Savior and Husband to earth as a Jew (of the tribe and House of Judah), living among other Jews while participating fully in the Covenant that God had made with the children of Israel (Hebrew people). As His Bride, it behooves us to learn as much as we can about the traditions and customs of *Y'shua's* people (the Jews), for His people are now our people as well.

~ *The Jewish Rabbi* ~

Throughout the Gospel accounts *Y'shua* continued to hold to the teachings and customs of the Jewish people as long as they did not contradict the original intention of the *Torah*.

As an adult, it was *Y'shua's* custom to celebrate the Sabbath and to attend synagogue on a regular basis. There He would have heard the *Torah* and the Prophets read each and every Sabbath and, on occasion, have participated in the service as any good Jewish man would do:

"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." (Luke 4:16)

Y'shua was about thirty years old when He began the public ministry which led to His atoning death on the stake. During the years of His early adulthood, *Y'shua* spent time completing His study of the Scriptures and maturing in His relationships with other people. He also spent time communing with His Father in heaven, learning the true intent of the *Torah* instructions and what the Father would have Him to teach His disciples:

"...The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." (John 14:10b)

Y'shua made this same point again when He prayed for His disciples at the Last Supper:

"For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me." (John 17:8)

Y'shua came with a direct message from the Father. Yet that message was not a new one, rather it was the old, old story about faith and trust in God and obedience to the *Torah*. Regarding faith and trust *Y'shua* said:

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

(John 3:13-17)

Regarding obedience to *Torah*, *Y'shua* said:

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [*Torah*] or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:17-19)

In this passage, the Greek word for 'fulfilled' is *ginomai* (ghin-oh-my, Strong's #1096), and it is defined as: *to cause to be, to become (come into being)*. A better translation might be **"...till all is completed."** This phrase is a direct reference to a period of time following the Millennium, which is called in Hebrew the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the world to come). That is when all will finally be completed and fulfilled.

As of this writing, the physical heaven and physical earth are still in existence, so all has not yet been 'fulfilled' or completed. In other words, the *Olam Haba* is not yet here. Therefore, it stands to reason that the *Torah* (Instruction/Law) and the Prophets still stand as written, and will continue to be in effect during the coming one thousand year reign of *Y'shua* on this earth. This point should be evident from the latter part of the passage where *Y'shua* taught that even the 'least' of the commandments are of great importance when it comes to one's potential position in the Kingdom of God.

~ Style of Teaching ~

During the time of *Y'shua* there were two classic styles which the Rabbis used to teach their students. The predominant style was called *Halacha*, which is defined as the 'way one walks.' To teach in the *halachic* method involved expounding on various points of law as found in the *Torah* and in the oral traditions.

However, it was not *Y'shua's* general practice to teach *Halacha*, rather He primarily used a style called *Aggadah*. The *Aggadic* style employed stories and parables which were directed towards causing the student to understand a concept of truth or a principle of moral behavior. *Y'shua* often employed parables which, when properly understood, infused the hearer with profound understandings concerning proper behavior. Instead of listing a set of rules to follow, *Y'shua* helped the disciples understand a moral principle that they could apply in other situations as well.

One of *Y'shua's* *Aggadic* teachings was the *Parable of the Good Samaritan*. It was preceded by the following question concerning how to inherit eternal life:

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'

"He said to him, 'What is written in the law [*Torah*]? What is your reading of it?'

[*Notice how Y'shua immediately directed the man to the Torah.*]

"So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."

"And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live.'

"But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus [*Y'shua*], 'And who is my neighbor?'"

(Luke 10:25-29)

This interchange provided *Y'shua* with an opportunity to teach a broad principle about caring for the needs of others, no matter who they might be, for at that time the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

"Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

"On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

"So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"

"And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him.' Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:30-37)

In this story, both the Priest and the Levite had cause to not want to investigate the man who was lying by the side of the road. For if he were already dead and they touched him, they would incur corpse uncleanness and be disqualified from serving in the Temple for a period of seven days.

Y'shua used this story to point out the fact that the life of a person is more important than being able to participate in Temple service. Interestingly enough, this is exactly the position that was taught by most of the other Jewish teachers of *Y'shua's* day. According to classic Jewish teaching, saving a life takes precedence over all other *Torah* commands. *Y'shua* was not teaching some new thing here, rather He was expressing the majority opinion of the sages.

Y'shua was not a rebel or a renegade opposed to the Jewish teaching of His day, rather, he was the greatest of all Jewish Rabbis who taught the *Torah* in its fullness, the way it was intended to be taught. Rather than being a marginal Jew, *Y'shua* was the quintessential [*the pure, highly concentrated essence of a thing*] Jew.

~ *The Apostles* ~

Some have said that although *Y'shua* did live and teach as a Jew, His followers soon abandoned their Jewishness and started a new religion which became known as Christianity. This is simply not true. Consider the case of Peter, who received the following accusation from his fellow Apostle, Paul:

"But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

...

"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'" (Gal. 2:11-12, 14)

This was a stinging indictment. At issue here was the traditional Jewish attitude of that day concerning social intercourse with Gentiles. The hard-line Jewish position said that Jews and Gentiles could have no social contact at all, especially when it came to eating meals together.

The crux of the problem had to do with *Kashrut* (kahsh-root' = kosher), the way Jews handled their food. Not only were Jews forbidden to eat certain meats (as listed in Leviticus 11), they also had additional rules on how animals were to be slaughtered so that the maximum amount of blood could be drained from the carcass. This was done in order to fully obey the *Torah* command:

"And whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. ... Whoever eats it [blood] shall be cut off.'" (Lev. 17:13-14)

As quoted previously, there were also a number of other established traditions to ensure the proper washing of containers and utensils used in cooking. Since the Gentiles did not observe these traditions, some of the more strict members of the Believing Jewish community had an aversion to eating meals with their Believing Gentile brethren.

When Paul made the statement that Peter "lived as a Gentile," he was not saying that Peter had given up the correct interpretation of the *Torah* commands or the food restrictions of Leviticus 11, but that he had fallen back into observing some of those Jewish traditions which served to separate Jew and Gentile. The problem Paul was addressing here was that Peter stopped sharing meals with the Gentiles, not that he had abandoned *Torah*.

Peter should have known better. After all, he was the one God had used to open the door so that uncircumcised Gentiles could become full-fledged members of the Believing synagogues. This occurred when he was sent to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea and not only ate a meal with them, but baptized that entire household. At that time it was apparent to Peter that the vision he had seen of the unclean creatures was meant to convey the message that all men could now be accepted into fellowship without first converting to Orthodox Judaism:

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

~ Table Fellowship ~

Just as there are factions and differences of opinion in the Christian community today, the same was also true among first century Believers. Like their non-believing Jewish brethren, the early Jewish Believers thought that Gentiles could not become a part of their assemblies unless they first went through the traditional conversion process and became Jews. This process involved at least a one year period during which the person seeking membership would receive instruction in the *Torah* by attending synagogue and hearing Moses being read each week, plus learning their oral traditions and customs. People in this status were called *Godfearers*.

Once a *Godfearer* had learned enough about the *Torah* and the traditions and customs of the Jews, he/she was ready to become a *Proselyte*. This involved circumcision (for the men), immersion in a *mikvah* (meek'-vah = immersion pool), and the offering of a sacrifice at the Temple. Only then could a Gentile be brought into full fellowship in the synagogue and enjoy table fellowship (eating of meals together) with other Jews. This is why the Believing Jews of Jerusalem were incredulous when word reached them that Peter had eaten a meal at the home of Cornelius:

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

(Acts 11:1-3)

Instead of rejoicing at the fact that God was beginning to work among the Gentiles, the Jerusalem Jewish Believers were upset because Peter had allowed himself to become ritually unclean by eating a meal with Gentiles. However, to their credit, once Peter had explained all that had happened, including his vision and subsequent journey to Caesarea, their hearts were changed:

"When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.'" (Acts 11:17-18)

The issue was always about social contact with Gentiles, and this only because so many rules had been added concerning such contact. Social contact was also the issue when Peter went to Antioch. The issue there was never about giving up their Jewishness or abandoning the *Torah*.

~ Shaul the Pharisee ~

The Apostle Paul's given name was *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul). *Shaul* was a Jew from the beginning and, as we shall see, remained Jewish all of his life.

Shaul taught that all people (both Jew and Gentile) have sinned and come short of the glory of God and need to be forgiven for their sins so they will not have to die the second death. According to *Shaul*, forgiveness of this magnitude could only be obtained through the acceptance of the sacrificial death of *Y'shua HaMashiach* on the stake. However, once forgiveness had been obtained through the grace of God, *Shaul* taught that the forgiven individual needed to stop sinning:

"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)

And what exactly is sin?

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." (1 John 3:4-5)

And what is lawlessness? It is being without *Torah*, for it is the *Torah* which defines sin. This is why *Shaul* could say:

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

Shaul was a *Torah* observant Jew all of his life. He was a Pharisee, the sect which was noted for being very particular about keeping the Law of God. Paul claimed late in his life that he was still a Pharisee:

"Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee ..." (Acts 23:6)

While in prison in Rome, *Shaul* sent a letter to the Philippians in which he wrote:

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." (Phil. 3:3-6)

Shaul kept the *Torah* all of his life. Yet he realized that it was not his Work's Righteousness that would gain him salvation, but rather it was his Faith Righteousness (see Issue 99-1 for in depth articles on Work's and Faith Righteousness).

Not only did *Shaul* keep the *Torah* all of his life, he also kept the customs and traditions of the Jews as well. How do we know this? By his own testimony. First of all, *Shaul* had Timothy circumcised because he was Jewish from his mother's side:

"Paul wanted to have him [*Timothy*] go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek." (Acts 16:3)

Actually, the term 'Greek' could also refer to the possibility that Timothy's father was a Hellenistic Jew, some of whom had abandoned circumcision.

Shaul went to synagogue on the Sabbath day as a matter of course:

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,..." (Acts 17:2)

Shaul took a Nazarite vow (see Num. 6) which required him to remain ritually clean for the duration of that vow:

"He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow." (Acts 18:18b)

He observed the Jewish Festivals:

"For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost."

(Acts 20:16)

Shaul offered sacrifice at the Temple, not just for himself but for others as well. This was years after he had accepted *Y'shua* as his Savior and Messiah. The occasion was his last visit to Jerusalem when he met with *Ya'acov* (James) and the other leaders of the Jerusalem Believing community. False rumors about his teaching had preceded *Shaul* to Jerusalem, so he was advised by *Ya'acov*, that when he absolved himself from his own vow, he should also pay to have four other Believers absolved of their vows as well:

"Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men [*Believers*] who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. ..."

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them." (Acts 21:23-24, 26)

It is most interesting to note that *Shaul* and four other Jewish Believers were offering sacrifice at the Temple almost thirty years after Messiah *Y'shua's* death and resurrection.

By his own mouth, *Shaul* declared that he had never willingly broken the *Torah* commands:

"When he had come, the Jews [*non-believing*] who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, 'Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all.'" (Acts 25:7-8)

Finally, when *Shaul* arrived in Rome for his imprisonment, he once again reiterated his claim that he not only had kept the *Torah* all of his life, but that he also had observed the traditions of the Jews as well:

"And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: 'Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.'" (Acts 28:17-18)

Thus we see that *Shaul* (Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles), was a *Torah* and Tradition observant Jew all of his life. This should be a profound testimony to all Believers.

~ Learning Our Husband's Ways ~

It is our position that, as Believers in Messiah *Y'shua*, we should learn everything possible about the life and times of our betrothed Husband. In order to do this, we must learn about the time, the place, and the customs of the people to whom *Y'shua* was sent: to the Jews of Judea and to:

"... 'the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" (Matt. 15:24)

Y'shua was not sent as a Roman or a Greek, nor was He sent among the people living in what we call today, India, China, or Japan; even though all of those people now have access to Him through His sacrifice on the stake.

During His earthly ministry, *Y'shua* was only able to gather to Himself a relatively small number of Jewish disciples:

"And in those days [*after the ascension of Y'shua to heaven*] Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty) ..."
(Acts 1:15)

However, once the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) arrived, the number of Jewish Believers increased tremendously, so that on the Day of Pentecost:

"... those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41)

These new Believers were both natural born Jews and Jewish Proselytes:

"... 'how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.'" (Acts 2:8-11)

The people present at the Temple that day (where these events occurred) were all considered Jewish, even though they had come from the four corners of the known earth. This fact was confirmed when Peter addressed them saying:

"Men of Israel, hear these words:" (Acts 2:22)

Combine this information with the knowledge that all those who come to *Y'shua* and accept Him as their Savior become 'grafted-in' to the Commonwealth of Israel, whether they are members of the 'lost' tribes of the House of Israel or purebred Gentiles:

"And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you." (Rom. 11:17-18)

So all Believers become part of the Commonwealth of Israel:

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

~ Returning to the Faith ~

As members of the Commonwealth of Israel, we need to learn how to become good citizens of that chosen nation. This is the Quiet Revival that is currently sweeping across the nation and around the world. It is a revival of returning to the:

"...faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints." (Jude 3)

But what exactly does "returning to the faith" mean? How does one get started? Does one have to become Jewish in order to participate?

The answer to the last question is the same as it was in the first century: No, you do not have to become Jewish in order to receive the blessings of returning to the Roots of the Faith. However, some people may think you have done just that when you begin to follow the precepts of the *Torah*, for the average Christian associates *Torah* observance with Judaism simply because the Jews teach their people to walk in the *Torah* commands.

The best advice we can give is for you to let the *Ruach HaKodesh* lead you and guide you as you seek to worship *Abba*, our Father, in Spirit and in Truth. Do not be too quick to begin taking on the accouterments of Judaism. Never do something just for show, but make sure that you are convicted that it is the right thing to do and that God wants you to do it.

The most important thing you can do to begin with is to:

"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)

In Jewish teaching, one of the highest forms of worship is study, for study is the key to gaining a correct understanding of God's word. Without that correct understanding it is impossible to know what God really wants of us.

Begin by setting aside time for daily Scripture study (not just Scripture reading). Learn the *Torah* well, so that you know what it really says and not just what someone has told you it says. Search the Gospels and find where *Y'shua* gave instruction and taught concepts which came straight from the *Torah*.

It is common practice in the Jewish synagogues to study a portion of the *Torah* each Sabbath day. *Hebrew Roots* offers the *Weekly Torah Reading* schedule. (Write for a free copy.) This schedule provides *Torah* readings, plus additional portions from the Prophets and the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). If you follow it, you will study through the entirety of the *Torah* in one year's time. This was also the common practice in the Synagogues during *Y'shua's* time.

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath." (Acts 15:19-21)

The last verse in this passage tells us that *Torah* instruction was considered to be of primary importance for those Gentiles who were joining the Believing community. The one difference between the Believing Synagogues and the Non-Believing Synagogues was that the Believing Synagogues brought the Gentiles into full fellowship first and then gave them instruction in the *Torah*. The common practice in the Non-Believing Synagogues was to make the Gentiles learn the *Torah* first and then decide whether or not to admit them into full fellowship as proselytes.

~ Why Study Hebrew Roots? ~

The study of the *Hebrew Roots* of the Faith enables us to have a closer relationship with our betrothed Husband, Messiah *Y'shua*. As we learn more about our *Hebrew Roots* we develop a confidence and a peace, for we know that we are truly in touch with the God of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov*.

The following is a brief review:

- ◆ *Y'shua* was sent to this earth as a Jew, a member of the House of Judah, the only remaining division of the children of Israel who were identifiable in His day.
- ◆ *Y'shua* was reared to be an observant Jew by Jewish parents who respected the *Torah*, the Prophets, the Writings, and the traditions and customs of the Jewish people.

- ◆ *Y'shua* was a Jewish Rabbi who taught His disciples to be committed to the restoration of correct *Torah* interpretations.
- ◆ The Believers of the first century continued in their observance of the *Torah*, even to the point that some of them (including the Apostle Paul) offered sacrifice at the Temple many years after *Y'shua's* death and resurrection.
- ◆ *Shaul* (Shaw ool'; = Saul or the Apostle Paul) taught respect for the *Torah*, the traditions, and the customs of his people (the Jews). While *Shaul* emphasized that no amount of *Torah* observance could ever get a person saved, he also made it clear that our obedience to *Torah* (God's instruction) is still necessary to keep us from living in sin, for "**...sin is the transgression of the law [Torah].**" (I John 3:4b KJV)

We are the betrothed Bride of Messiah and, as His Bride, it is our responsibility to learn as much as we can about how the Kingdom of God will be administered during the one thousand year reign of *Y'shua*.

The constitution of the Kingdom of God (God's covenant with Israel) is contained within the *Torah*. Therefore, it behooves us to learn *Torah* now so that we will be ready to help administer that government once it is fully established here on earth.

The *Torah* is the foundation of all Scripture. All of the rest of the Scriptures (Prophets, Writings and *Brit Chadasha* or New Testament) is build upon the *Torah*. However, the mistranslation of many passages of Scripture has hindered correct understanding.

When we properly understand the Scriptures, we will see that everything in the Scriptures agrees with and builds upon what is taught in the *Torah*. Anytime there seems to be a discrepancy between what the *Torah* teaches and other parts of Scripture, further study is needed in order to resolve the misunderstanding. Because of past incorrect teachings it sometimes takes months or even years for us to properly grasp a correct interpretation of a specific passage. But do not be dismayed, this is one way in which *Abba* keeps us close to Him in study and in prayer, as we seek answers.

Pray for guidance. Ask *Abba* to reveal His will to you and cause your mind to be opened to the great truths that have been hidden from you because of erroneous instruction. Remember that it is much more difficult to correct an erroneous concept than it is to learn something correctly the first time.

~ *Final Authority* ~

Make the Scriptures your final authority so that you may:

"...be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Rom. 12:2)

There are many books, publications, and recorded messages available that can guide you to your goal of having the "**faith which was once for all delivered to the saints**" restored in your mind and heart. However, we caution you to never accept something taught as being true unless it can be proven from the Scriptures. The Bible must always be the final authority.

Expect to receive some flack from the people around you such as friends, neighbors, and relatives. Remember the words of our Savior and Husband, *Y'shua HaMashiach*:

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

(Matt. 10:34-39)

These are difficult words which our Husband left for us, but they are important ones, for as His wife it is our duty to please Him.

Therefore, study to show yourself approved, and ...

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus [Messiah *Y'shua*]." (Phil. 4:6-7)

May we all seek to follow the clear instructions of the Scriptures as this Quiet Revival takes root in our minds and hearts, so that we can truly become one with *Y'shua* and with each other.

Shalom!

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