

# Bible Basics I

containing:

The Hebrew Roots of Our Faith  
Paul the Pharisee  
The Temple Crier  
One Baptism or Many?  
Here Now But Not Yet

by

Dean & Susan Wheelock

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 perfect,  
Thoroughly furnished unto all good works.  
*II Timothy 3:16-17*

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## ~ Introduction ~

And He opened their understanding,  
That they might comprehend the Scriptures.  
*Luke 24:45*



Modern Christianity is divided into a myriad of denominations and sects, each believing they have a corner on truth which others do not possess. It is no different in the Messianic Community. Some look to the Rabbis for correct interpretation, others to charismatic teachers, or movements within the Messianic world -- while others seem to listen only to themselves.

In actuality, there is only one place to go for truth -- the Holy Scriptures. But even there one finds what sometimes seems to be disagreement, because of problems in translation and interpretation. As a result, some have cast out certain books found in the standard Bible, saying they do not belong in the canon of Scripture, while others add still other books back into their Bibles because they claim they belong there.

At *Hebrew Roots*®, we accept the entirety of Scripture canon (both Old and New Testaments) as the word of God. We accept other writings as just that -- other writings -- which may or may not have beneficial historical (or even spiritual) information which can be an aid to further one's faith. The bottom line is:

**"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,<sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."**

(II Tim. 3:16-17)

Therefore, when it comes to trying to understand the mind of the Creator God of the Universe, it behooves us to be like the *Bereans* who checked everything the disciples taught them against what Scripture says. Do not accept as fact everything a teacher teaches (including us). Do your own study, pray to the Father that He will reveal the truth to you -- and once you find it:

**"... hold fast what is good,"** (I Thess. 5:21)

This booklet contains five chapters that were originally published as separate articles in past issues of *Hebrew Roots*®. They are intended to teach some basic understandings about Scripture that we believe are essential to know when studying the Bible.

The first two articles were taken from the very first issue of HR (96-1): *The Hebrew Roots of Our Faith* and *Paul the Pharisee*. One of the problems many Christians face in their understanding of Scripture is the teaching that the New Testament makes a complete break with the Old Testament because Jesus (or Paul) founded a new religion called Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth. Both *Y'shua* and Paul were observant Jews of their day, and the *Sect of the Nazarene* (made up of the followers of *Y'shua*) was, for many years just another sect of Judaism.

*The Temple Crier* (from Issue 00-4) expands on the story of Peter denying *Y'shua* when He was on trial at the house of the High Priest *Caiaphas*. This story was originally set forth as an article in HR Issue 00-3 and is now in a booklet called *The Quiet Revival*. In this current chapter, additional references are given to support the claim that the "cock" which Peter heard that early morning was really a man.

*One Baptism Or Many?* (from Issue 01-4) addresses another cause of division between Judaism and modern Christianity -- the issue over the role of baptism in the spiritual walk of the Messianic Believer.

Finally, the last chapter, *Here Now But Not Yet* (from Issue 00-1), sets forth a very important concept which needs to be understood by every Bible student who wishes to know the way Hebrew thought deals with important spiritual concepts as opposed to the Greek or Western manner of thinking.

We hope you will find this booklet a blessing in your spiritual walk.

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom,  
December, 2011

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

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

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 do boast,  
*Remember that you do not support the root,  
But the root supports you.*  
*Romans 11:17-18*



any Believers seem to think there is little to be learned from Judaism. After all, they reason, were not the Jews the ones that had rejected *Y'shua* (Yeh-shoe'-ah = Jesus) as their Messiah and been responsible for His being put to death on the stake? What could possibly be learned from these people?

From a personal standpoint our change in view took place slowly over a period of a few years. One step forward was obtaining a book entitled *The Complete Book of Jewish Observance*, by Leo Trepp. This book became, over time, an important resource in the preparation of Holyday sermons, because Trepp presented some important concepts concerning Jewish understanding of certain aspects of the Festivals.

Sometime later, about 1989 or so, we came across two interesting books in a Christian bookstore. They were; *The Fall Feasts of Israel*, by Mitch and Zhava Glaser and *Celebrate the Feasts* (Of the Old Testament in Your Own Home or Church), by Martha Zimmerman. At the time it seemed quite amazing that Christian bookstores would carry books that dealt with the Festivals. What could these "Christian" authors possibly know about the Holydays? Actually, they were full of good information so it was obvious they knew quite a lot.

Then in 1991 a friend gave us a book entitled *Rosh HaShanah and the Messianic Kingdom to Come*, written by Joseph Good, and published by *Hatikva Ministries*. What a revelation. Here was a man who had never heard of the Sabbath keeping Churches of God, had formerly been an evangelical, charismatic, first-day Christian, and he knew more about many aspects of the Holydays than most of us Church of God people did after many years observance.

Learning about the Hebrew roots of our faith was like a return to first love. The early spirit of Ephesus returned. (Rev. 2:4) and we could not get enough of understanding, study, or insight into the Scriptures. To learn that, humanly, *Y'shua* really was a Jew, and to understand that Judaism (as it was practiced in the first century) was a key to unlocking many of the Scriptures, was a great revelation. Books were purchased, hours of reading took place, intense Bible study was accompanied by discussions with friends who were also back

into their first love. Gradually, as the big picture began to come into focus, we began teaching more and more on the Hebrew roots of our faith.

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

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

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

**"For he who is not against us is on our side."**

(Mark 9:40)

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

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

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

**"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."** (Matt. 5:44-48)

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

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

(Matt. 7:1-2)

We must be more than willing to let our Father make the judgment as to who is a member of His royal family. It is our opinion that all who truly profess that *Y'shua* is the Messiah, and remain obedient to His will, are going to be a part of that family.

~ Jesus the Jew ~

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

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

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

Some years ago a book was published that had three men depicted on the cover. One was the Catholic version of Jesus, the second was the Protestant form of Jesus, and the third was a Jewish rabbi. A question also appeared on the cover, it said; "Will the real Jesus please stand up?" Now I do not believe *Y'shua* dressed in the black clothes and black hat of modern day Orthodox Judaism any more than I believe that He looked like the Christian depictions. Yet the impact of this book cover drives home a very real and important point: **Jesus was a first century Jew!** He dressed like a Jew of His time, He acted like a Jew of His time, and He was, for all practical purposes, indistinguishable from any other Jew from the Galilee. Judas had to kiss *Y'shua* so that the Temple Guards would know which of the men present in the garden was the one they sought. Only when *Y'shua* began to teach, heal and cast out demons,

were people able to see the profound difference between Him and all other men.

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

~ We Are Not Teaching Judaism! ~

Let us make one thing perfectly clear. We are not teaching Judaism. We believe there is only 'one way' in which we can be saved:

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

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

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

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

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

Also important is the fact that our western democracies were based, not on scripture, but upon the models of the Greek and Roman Republics. All one needs to do is visit Washington DC and see the style of architecture that was chosen for our federal buildings. It is derived from Greece and Rome and was chosen because that was where the founding fathers believed the republican form of government and the principles of democracy sprang. This is not to imply that our form of government is bad. Considering the fact that the vast majority of our people would absolutely refuse to live under a government ruled by God, what we have is undoubtedly the best of human governmental forms currently possible, because it grants us great individual freedom. I do believe God's hand was in the forming of our western democracies so that people would be free to worship Him in safety. (If you ever wondered what it would be like not to have freedom of religion, may we suggest you read the history of the Jewish experience in Europe down through the ages.)

However, do not expect that King Messiah will set up His government like a Western democracy. *Y'shua* will not run for office every four or six years. He will reign as King of kings

and Lord of lords over the entire earth. A one world government ruled by God, not by man:

**"And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."**

(Rev. 19:16)

~ Who Was and Is Y'shua? ~

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

*Y'shua* was born in *Beit-Lechem* (Bait Leh-chem' = Bethlehem), which, in Hebrew means 'House of Bread.'

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

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

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

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

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

This prophecy concerns not just the birth of the Messiah, but also an allusion to His fate ("...they shall strike the judge of Israel with a rod...") and to the final outcome of God's plan of salvation ("...the remnant of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel.").

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

In the first century there was open land, between the two communities, on which the shepherds pastured their flocks. The interesting thing about this area is that it is within the domain where animals were raised for sacrifice at the Temple, especially the lambs offered at Passover. If one goes into Bethlehem proper, where the so-called Church of the Nativity is located, they are outside the area permissible for the raising

of sacrificial lambs. From this information we can deduce that *Y'shua* (our Passover Lamb) was probably born at the northern edge of Bethlehem in the area known as *Ephrathah*, for He needed to qualify as the ultimate and final Passover sacrifice.

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

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

**"For I am the LORD [YHVH],**

**I do not change;**

**Therefore you are not consumed,**

**O sons of Jacob."**

(Mal. 3:6)

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

Another interesting aspect is learned when we come to understand that the raising of the sacrificial animals was not left to just any ordinary shepherds. The shepherds watching over their flocks by night, in the area of *Bethlehem Ephrathah*, would, in all probability, have been none other than members of the tribe of Levi. They were part of the Levites who were dedicated to Temple service. The ordinary Levites were not permitted to function as priests, only those directly descended from Aaron could work in that capacity. The other Levites, however, assisted the priests by performing many duties connected with Temple Service. These included singing in the Levitical choir, acting as doorkeepers, and taking care of the treasury. Another Levitical duty was to raise the animals to be used for sacrifice according to the prescribed standards:

**"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup>And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. <sup>10</sup> Then the angel said to them,**

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

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

The birth of *Y'shua* did not take place in a corner, out of the way, where no one would notice. Members of the Levitical

Temple servants (the previously mentioned shepherds) were among the very first to know, and they undoubtedly announced it in Jerusalem so that all who came to worship at the Temple would hear that the Messiah had been born. Thirty years later, when *Y'shua* began His ministry, the facts of His birth had probably been forgotten by all but a handful of people. The reason being that during those intervening years many so called 'messiahs' had come and gone in the land of Judea.

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

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

**"And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ... <sup>9</sup> And they sang a new song, saying:**

**"You are worthy to take the scroll,  
And to open its seals;  
For You were slain,  
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood  
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and  
nation,..."** (Rev. 5:5-6,9)

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

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

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

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

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

Jesse (*Yishai*) was the father of King David from whom *Y'shua* was physically descended both through His natural mother *Miriam* (Mary) and His stepfather *Yoseif* (Joseph). (See Matt. 1 for *Yoseif's* genealogy and Luke 3 for *Miriam's* genealogy.)

### ~ The New Testament Writers Were Jewish ~

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

Matthew in Hebrew is *Mattityahu* (Mah-teet-yah'-hoo). The name means "gift of YHVH" and is believed to have been given by *Y'shua* to a man named Levi. (See Luke 5:27-32). He

was a Jewish tax collector, much hated by the general public because most tax collectors added extra, to the already heavy, taxes for their own personal use. *Y'shua* was condemned for being **"...a friend of publicans and sinners."** (Matt. 11:19). The publicans were the tax collectors.

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

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

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

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

James does not even carry the correct English name, for it should have been translated as Jacob. That would be the correct translation of the Hebrew name *Ya'akov* (Yah ah'-kov) which means "supplanter."

In addition to James, the brother of John, was another James who was the eldest half-brother of *Y'shua*. He is remembered in Judaism as 'The Pious One' and is considered to be one of the sages of first century Judaism. He is mentioned by Josephus (the first century Jewish general who fled to the Romans rather than commit suicide with his troops) who also recounts *Ya'akov's* tragic death at the hands of a wicked High Priest who had him stoned and then thrown off the highest pinnacle of the Temple Mount.

There is a story of how *Ya'akov* came to be known in the English speaking world as James, instead of Jacob, and, if true, is quite remarkable. It seems that a group of English clergymen wanted a new translation of the scriptures into the English language. They needed money to do it, so they went to the new king of England (James I) and petitioned him for the funds. He refused. They then concocted a story and went back to him. They told the king that Jesus' [*Y'shua's*] own half-brother had the same name as the king and that he had written an entire book in the Bible which carried the king's name. When the king heard this, he was more that happy to supply the funds needed for the new translation. As a result we have the King James Bible and ever since, we have called *Ya'akov* (or Jacob) by that English king's name, James.

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

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

Finally we come to the most prolific writer of the New Testament, Paul. His name in Hebrew was *Sha'ul* (Shah-ool'). We know him as Saul but he was known as Paul to the Greek speaking world. *Sha'ul* in Hebrew means 'to demand,' and the name Paul in Greek means 'little.'

It is almost a certainty that the gospel of Matthew (*Mattityahu*) was originally written in Hebrew, not in Aramaic as long believed. Some fragments of a Hebrew version have apparently been discovered, but the age of the document is in question. Some recent scholarship holds that almost all of the original manuscripts of the New Testament were composed in Hebrew and then translated into Greek. Whether this is true or not we cannot discern for we are neither Greek nor Hebrew scholars. It is interesting to note that the gospel of *Mattityahu* is the most Hebraic of all the gospels. There are many places in this book where distinctly Jewish idioms are used.

~ Summary ~

The list of Jewish influences on the New Testament Scriptures is much larger than what was presented here. Nevertheless, the fact that *Y'shua* was physically from the tribe of *Y'hudah* (in other words He was born a Jew) and that all of the New Testament writers were Jewish (with the possible exception of Luke) is significant. Not only that, but all of *Y'shua's* disciples were Jewish and they were told initially to go only to:

**"... to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."**  
(Matt. 10:6)

Of course, later on the commission was expanded to the entirety of the world.

We firmly believe, that in order to properly understand the New Testament Scriptures, one must gain a grasp of what it meant to be a 1st century Jew living in Judea. Only then does a proper understanding of who *Y'shua* really was and what He did becomes clear. In addition, it opens up new understanding about the epistles of the Apostle Paul.

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## ~ Paul the Pharisee ~

Men and brethren,  
I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee;  
Concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead  
I am being judged!  
Acts 23:6



It is evident, from studying the scriptures, that *Sha'ul* (Paul) the **"...apostle of the Gentiles..."** (Rom. 11:13) was a lifelong *Torah* observant Jew of the sect of the Pharisees. This statement goes contrary to popular mainstream Christian understanding. Therefore, before plunging headlong into this subject we need to define some terms.

Strictly speaking, the *Torah* consists of the first five books of the Scriptures, that is: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. In a generic sense it can also imply the entire Old Testament (that was the only Bible that *Y'shua* and the Apostles used). For our purposes we will use *Torah* in the strict sense, to mean the first five books.

The Hebrew word *Torah* (Toh-rah') appears many hundreds of times in the OT and is almost always translated into our English word 'law'. This is a poor translation mainly because of our Western concepts of law. When we think of the word 'law' we probably visualize policeman, tickets, judges, courts, fines, and jail sentences. The word *Torah* implies none of these things. *Torah* is derived from the root word *yarah* (yah-rah') which literally means 'to flow as water'. Figuratively it means 'to point out', to *teach*, inform, instruct, show. *Torah* could best be defined in English as 'instruction,' that is God's instruction to man. Once one gets a grasp of this concept (that the first five books of the Bible are not meant to threaten us but rather to instruct us in righteous living) we can begin to relax a little bit. Now instead of seeing God as a policeman waiting for us to break one of His laws so that He can punish us, we have the picture of a loving Father instructing us (His children) in how to live a life that will be both a blessing to us as children and an honor to Him (our Father in heaven).

With this as background let us briefly examine the book of Acts for some of the activities of *Sha'ul* (Paul) as well as some of his own statements.

*Sha'ul* belonged to one of the strictest sects of the Jews.:

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

Was Paul a liar? We know he was not. Therefore, we must accept this statement of *Sha'ul's* at face value. He did not say; "I was a Pharisee," he said; **"I am a Pharisee..."**

*Sha'ul* studied under *Gamaliel*, the head of the *Sanhedrin* (the highest court in Judea):

**"... brought up in this city (Jerusalem) at the feet of Gamaliel ..."**  
(Acts 22:3)



*Sha'ul* was most likely a member of the *Sanhedrin*, as evidenced by the following scripture, which fits perfectly the Jewish practice of stoning:

**"And cast him [Stephen] out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul [*Sha'ul*]."** (Acts 7:58)

Since it was the responsibility of the members of the *Sanhedrin* to witness public stonings, we believe that *Sha'ul* was present (in an official capacity) at the stoning, while those who were witnesses against Stephen were required to cast the first stones.

It was *Sha'ul's* habit to attend synagogue every Sabbath:

**"... they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, ..."** (Acts 17:1-2)

He upheld Jewish circumcision:

**"... behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: ... Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they all knew that his father was a Greek."** (Acts 16:1,3)

Paul observed the custom of the Jews, which was that all Jewish males had to be physically circumcised. This despite the fact that he was the primary one who taught that Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to fellowship with Believing Jews in the Body of Messiah.

There is no contradiction here at all. Paul was a *Torah* observant Jew. If he had not circumcised Timothy he would have stood in direct conflict both with the *Torah* and with Jewish tradition, because Timothy, being a Jew, needed to observe the customs of the Jews.

If Paul was a *Torah* observant Jew he would definitely be keeping the Festivals, as the following two scriptures indicate:

**"... for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost."** (Acts 20:16)

**"... For even Christ [*Messiah*] our passover is sacrificed for us:"** (I Cor. 5:7)

Now we get into some really heavy-duty stuff:

**"So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow."** (Acts 18:18)

Why on earth would Paul (after being an apostle to the Gentiles for all these years), have decided to take a 'Jewish' vow? (In reality its a *Torah* vow.) We believe the vow Paul (*Sha'ul*) took was that of a Nazirite:

**"When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD [YHVH], <sup>3</sup> he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from**

**wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. <sup>4</sup> All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. <sup>5</sup> All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD [YHVH], he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. <sup>6</sup> All the days that he separates himself to the LORD [YHVH] he shall not go near a dead body. ...**

**" <sup>13</sup>Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. <sup>14</sup> And he shall present his offering to the LORD [YHVH]: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, <sup>15</sup> a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings. <sup>16</sup> Then the priest shall bring them before the LORD [YHVH] and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; <sup>17</sup> and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD [YHVH], with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. <sup>18</sup> Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering"** (Num. 6:2-6,13-18)

This passage is quoted at length so that you can see the expense that one had to go through to be relieved of a Nazirite vow. Just add up the cost of those offerings at today's meat prices.

The scene changes to Jerusalem. *Sha'ul* (Paul) is now before *Ya'acov* (James) and all the elders of the Church. He tells them about his work among the Gentiles:

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

The Greek word translated thousands is *urias* (Strong's #3461) and it signifies a "myriad" or tens of thousands. In other words, there were tens of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem, at the Temple, who believed that *Y'shua* was the promised Messiah and they were **"all zealous for the Torah."** They were Jewish instruction keepers and they were the core of the Church in Jerusalem.

However, there was a problem. False rumors had been spread about *Sha'ul*. The Jews who did not believe that *Y'shua* was the Messiah were saying that *Sha'ul* was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children. This was a false charge. In truth, he was teaching Gentile Believers that they themselves did not have to be circumcised, whereas the *Torah* requires circumcision of all eight day old males whose parents are natural born Israelites or the offspring of Gentiles who have been 'grafted in' to the Commonwealth of Israel through faith in

*Y'shua*. But people love to believe a lie, and so *Sha'ul* became trapped by the lie.

"... 'but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. <sup>22</sup> What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. <sup>23</sup> Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. <sup>24</sup> 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 [*Torah*].'" (Acts 21:23-24)

Notice that *Sha'ul* is not only going to pay for his own sacrifices in order to be released from his Nazarite vow, he is also going to pay for the sacrifices for four other **Believers**. Here we see five 'Christians' going to the Temple to offer animal sacrifices, with the leading apostle to the Gentiles among them footing the entire bill. This passage, all by itself, requires that all Believers take a whole new look at what was 'nailed to the cross.'

One might expect that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, would recoil from doing this thing that *Ya'akov* (James) and the elders asked of him, but he does not:

"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. <sup>27</sup> Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, ..." (Acts 21:26-27)

You can read the rest of the story; how *Sha'ul* was taken into custody and finally sent to Rome where he was eventually put to death. The point to be made here is that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, not only took an active part in a very 'Jewish' vow, he also helped other Believers who had taken on the same vow.

Again, was Paul a liar? Read the following and then come to your own conclusions. Either he was a liar or he meant what he said:

"Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, 'Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.'" (Acts 23:1)

"When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, <sup>8</sup>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)

In other words, Paul claimed that he had never once intentionally broken the commandments of the *Torah*. Now there are said to be 613 commandments in the *Torah* which include both positive commandments (those which require one to do something) and negative commandments (those which

require one to avoid something). Paul is saying that he never intentionally broke any of those 613 commandments. He further states that he never defiled the Temple in any way by entering in an unclean state or bringing an inappropriate sacrifice.

Again, we ask, was Paul a liar?

"... he said to them: 'Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs [*ethos*] of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, <sup>18</sup> 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)

The key word in this passage is 'customs'. It is the Greek word *ethos* (Strong's #1485). It is defined as; "*a usage (prescribed by habit or law) -- custom, manner.*" Since Paul specifically mentions the "customs of our fathers," he is including both the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah* as well. These include the well known 'traditions' of the Jews, some of which *Y'shua* Himself said were inappropriate.

~ Summary ~

The Apostle Paul considered himself a *Pharisee* all of his life. The fact that he came to believe that *Y'shua* was the promised Messiah of Israel did not change that fact -- for the *Nazarenes* (as they were sometimes called) were originally just another sect of 1st century Judaism. Paul did not join, nor did he found a new religion called Christianity. He was faithful to both the *Written Torah* and the "customs" or "traditions" of his fathers all the days of his life.

From all of this we can see that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was a *Torah* and tradition observing Jew all the days of his life. With this information in mind, it is incumbent upon us to restudy the Epistles of Paul so that we can better understand the thrust of his teaching to the Gentile Churches.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ The Temple Crier ~

And immediately,  
While he was still speaking,  
The rooster crowed.  
Luke 22:60b



Occasionally something we publish in *Hebrew Roots*® stimulates discussion and points of disagreement from some of our readers. Such was the case in issue (00-3) with the publishing of the article *The Quiet Revival* (now in booklet form).

In that article we stressed the importance of learning about the culture and practices of the people and religion of the first century in order to properly understand what the Scriptures are relating. One example cited concerned what *Shim'on Kefa* (Simon Peter) heard in the early morning when *Y'shua* was being questioned in the courtyard of the High Priest. Most all Bible translations leave the impression it was a rooster (male chicken) which crowed in those early hours, just after *Shim'on Kefa* had denied that he knew *Y'shua*. We contend that what *Shim'on Kefa* heard was the voice of a man.

Before entering into a discussion on this issue, it would be good to review the portion of the article that is in question. Following is that excerpt:

### ~ Mistranslation 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. 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* (Coh-hah-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.' 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)."

(End of quoted excerpt.)

### ~ Ritual Impurity ~

In order to properly understand the reasons for the decree against having chickens in the city of Jerusalem during the second Temple era, it is important to understand the need for ritual purity and its relationship to Temple worship.

During the time of the second Temple, one of the worst things that could happen to a pilgrim coming to Jerusalem to worship was to be rendered ritually unclean. Being placed in a ritually unclean state prohibited the pilgrim from attending Temple service, the very reason for their coming to Jerusalem in the first place.

Many of the pilgrims spent weeks, or even months, just getting from their far distant homes to Jerusalem in order to celebrate one of the Festivals. We know this from both historical records and from Scripture:

**"And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ...**

**"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 ..."** (Acts 2:5, 9-11b)

For some, a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, to worship the God of Israel might be a once in a lifetime event. No one wanted to arrive there only to be told they must stand outside for seven days and watch others going into the Temple while they went through the Biblically prescribed purification process. Even more disconcerting would be to arrive at the Temple ritually clean and ready to enter, and then come into contact with something or someone which rendered them unclean.

### ~ Temple Purity ~

Because of the ever present possibility of becoming ritually impure, it was considered most important that the Temple and its precincts remain ritually clean at all times. A worst case scenario would be if the Temple itself were to become defiled, thereby closing down all worship until it could be cleansed. If this were to happen, both the people and the nation as a whole would be cut off from Temple worship and the prescribed animal sacrifices.

In order to avoid such a possibility, the Jewish officials went to great lengths to insure that even the city itself would be as free from ritual impurities as possible.

### ~ Whitewashed Tombs ~

One of the primary ways in which an individual might become ritually unclean was through the inadvertent touching of a grave:

**"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. 19:16)

The ritual for ridding oneself of uncleanness from touching a grave required seven days to complete:

**"And for an unclean person they shall take some of the ashes of the heifer burnt for purification from sin, and running water shall be put on them in a vessel. A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, sprinkle it on the tent, on all the vessels, on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched a bone, the slain, the dead, or a grave. The clean person shall sprinkle the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, wash his clothes, and bathe in water; and at evening he shall be clean."**

(Num. 19:17-19)

In an effort to protect the individual pilgrims from inadvertently touching a grave on their way into Jerusalem for a Festival, the Temple officials would send scores of workers out to whitewash all of the tombs so they could be easily identified and avoided. Since these 'whitewashed tombs,' or 'whitewashed walls,' were places to be avoided, these terms also became common slang expressions for someone who was spiritually unclean. These expressions are used twice in the New Testament, once by *Y'shua* and again by *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul, the Apostle Paul):

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

Here, *Y'shua* clearly identifies the whitewashed tombs with ritual uncleanness, using it as an analogy to spiritual uncleanness.

The second usage is by *Shaul*:

**"Then Paul said to him, 'God will strike you, *you* whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?'"** (Acts 23:3)

In this instance, *Shaul* was making a complaint against the High Priest, who had just ordered that the guards strike him across the mouth. *Shaul* did not know that it was the High Priest that had ordered him to be struck, because the High Priest was not wearing the proper clothing so that people could identify him. The reason he was not wearing the clothing of the High Priest was because the Romans had possession of the garments and only allowed the High Priest to wear them when he was officiating at the Temple. They did this as a means of controlling the office of the High Priest, which, at that time, had to be purchased from the Roman procurator.

As soon as *Shaul* understood who had given the command to strike him, he immediately apologized for his remark:

**"And those who stood by said, 'Do you revile God's high priest?'"**

**"Then Paul said, 'I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, "You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people."'"**  
(Acts 23:4-5)

The principle of not speaking evil of a ruler of one's people is one all Believers would do well to learn and practice.

From this brief description of ritual impurity one can understand that it was a primary concern of all pilgrims coming to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem.

#### ~ Readers Question ~

Several of our readers wanted to have hard extra-Biblical evidence that what we had written in the above excerpt was actually true. Certainly they are quite justified in requesting that we back up our claims with evidence. What follows provides the verification they requested.

The following quotes are taken from two sources: The CD Rom version of the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, and the *Mishnah*. The first reference indicates that chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during the second Temple period because they would have strewn trash around the city streets and the Temple precincts, thereby threatening worshippers with contracting ritual impurity. (Note: All underlining is ours):

"A whole series of *halakhot* were intended to remove from Jerusalem anything which would increase ritual impurity. Therefore no trash heaps were allowed which could produce insects, nor was it permissible to raise chickens which peck at trash heaps (BK 82b; but see *Eduy.* 6:1). Places of burial were allowed only outside the walls of Jerusalem; in addition no existing graves were maintained in Jerusalem 'except for the graves of the House of David and the grave of Huldah the prophetess which have been there from the times of the early prophets' (Tosef. Neg. 6:2). When there was a funeral procession (Sem. 10), the remains of the deceased were not taken through the city (Tosef. Neg. loc. cit, and see S. Lieberman, *Tosefet Rishonim*, 3 (1939) 190). In particular, the prohibition against leaving a corpse in Jerusalem overnight was strictly enforced, except for the honor of the deceased (BK 82b; Sifra, Be-Hukkotai, 6:1)."

(*Encyclopedia Judaica* - CD Rom version: from the section *Halakah* in the article *Jerusalem*.)

#### ~ No Chickens ~

A second reference to the fact that chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem is also found in the following article:

"In Jerusalem precautions were taken to guard the hallowed things and the priests from impurity. No burials were permitted there, and corpses were not allowed to be kept there overnight. As a precaution against impurity it was forbidden to maintain refuse heaps or rear chickens in Jerusalem (Yad, *ibid.*; BK 82b)."

(*Encyclopedia Judaica* - CD Rom version: from the article: *Judaism Practice, Purity and Impurity Ritual*.)

#### ~ The Gever ~

Having established that chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during the late Second Temple period (including the time of *Y'shua*) because they might contribute to ritual impurity, the next question to be answered is; what exactly did *Shim'on Kefa* hear?

As we pointed out in the article in question (*The Quiet Revival*), we believe he heard the Temple Crier. This was a Priest who was assigned the duty of opening the Temple each morning and calling the Priests, Levites, and Israelites to worship. In Hebrew, this individual was called the *Gever*.

Please note the following two definitions of *Gever*:

"GEVER: the adult male being in contrast to women and children (Ex. 10:11; Josh. 7:14). In poetry it often has a more general sense. The stem means 'to be strong, mighty.'" (*Encyclopedia Judaica* - from the article *The Nature of Man*.)

"...the word *gever* means both 'man' and 'cock;' the latter can, therefore, substitute for the former." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* - from the article *Kapparot*)

*Gever*, then, means both 'man' and 'cock,' but can we establish that this term was explicitly used to describe the Temple Crier? Yes indeed!

"A. Everyday they take up the ashes from the altar at the cock's crow or near it,

"B. whether before or after it.

"C. At the Day of Atonement from midnight, and on festivals at the end of the first watch [they do so].

"D. And never did the cock crow before the courtyard was filled with masses of Israelites."

(from *The Mishnah*, Yoma 1:8, p. 266)

"During the festivals, when great multitudes went up to Jerusalem, the order of the service was different because, in addition to the statutory sacrifices, time had to be found for the offering of the many sacrifices brought by the pilgrims. Their obligatory offering (*olat re'iyah*) was sacrificed on the festival itself, while their voluntary sacrifices were offered during the intermediate days (Bezah 2:4 and the ensuing discussion in both the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds). To make time for all these sacrifices, the service was begun at an earlier hour. Normally the ashes were removed from the altar when the *gever* (either "cock" or "Temple crier") sounded, or approximately at that time, either slightly earlier or later. On the Day of Atonement they were removed at midnight, and on the festivals at the beginning of the first watch; by the time the cry of the *gever* was heard, the Temple Court was already teeming with visitors [Israelites]' (Yoma 1:8)." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* - from the article *Temple - Pilgrim Festivals*)

~ Summary ~

It is clear from the above sources that chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during the time of *Y'shua* because they increased the possibility of spreading ritual impurity. Therefore, what *Shim'on Kefa* heard that morning could not have been a male chicken or rooster, but something else that went by that name. Given the evidence concerning the role of the Temple Crier (who was called the *Gever* or 'cock' in Hebrew) in opening the Temple and calling the people to worship, it must have been him who was heard so clearly that spring morning.

This understanding does not change the essential meaning of the passage concerning *Shim'on Kefa's* denial of *Y'shua*. However, knowing about the *Gever* gives us a more accurate understanding of the situation in which *Y'shua* was being questioned. Central to the entire story is the fact that the location where God had 'placed His name'\* for Temple worship was only a few hundred feet away from where the High Priest sought to bring false charges against the Messiah:

**"And those who had laid hold of Jesus [*Y'shua*] led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end.**

**"Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus [*Y'shua*] to put Him to**

death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, 'This fellow said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.'"

**"And the high priest arose and said to Him, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But Jesus [*Y'shua*] kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, 'I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ [*Messiah*], the Son of God!'**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.'**

**"Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!'"**

(Matt. 26:57-65)

Visitors to Jerusalem can now visit the very place where these events took place. The ruins of the palace of *Caiaphas* have been excavated and the very courtyard where *Shim'on Kefa* sat is accessible for viewing.

As Believers, we can all be edified by studying the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith.

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\* The Temple Mount. See I Kings 8:29

## ~ One Baptism Or Many? ~

There is one body and one Spirit,  
Just as you were called in one hope of your calling;  
One Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
One God and Father of all,  
Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.  
*Ephesians 1:4-6*

**I**n the days of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'-ahkh = Jesus the Messiah), immersion was performed in a kosher immersion pool called a *mikvah* (meek'-vah). Hundreds of *mikvaot* (meek'-vah-oat', plural form) have been uncovered by archaeologists in Israel. The *mikvah* was filled with *mayim hayim* (my-eem' high-eem' = living water), which was gathered from a natural spring or from rain. The person being immersed would fully submerge themselves in the water while being observed by a witness who ensured they went completely under the water.

The Scriptures specify purification through ritual immersion for three primary human conditions:

- ◆ Contact with dead bodies of humans and certain animals and insects.
- ◆ Leprosy of body, clothing or home. (Ancient leprosy was not considered to be contagious. It was said to be caused by an individual's sin.
- ◆ Discharges from the sexual organs.

Immersion was also required of anyone who wished to ascend the Temple Mount. In addition to these required immersions for ritual purity, many of the more observant people would also immerse prior to a Festival, and each Friday afternoon prior to the weekly Sabbath.

The main purpose of immersion was to change a person's status from ritual impurity, to ritual purity so that the ritually cleansed person could worship God at the Tabernacle or Temple. Immersions prior to a Festival or Sabbath, while also serving the purpose of rendering the individual ritually clean, were more likely done for spiritual purposes. Immersion was a way for an observant Jew to signify to himself and to God that he desired an unhindered relationship with Him as he celebrated the special day.

During the first century of the Common Era (CE), God sent a man named *Yochanan* (Yoh'-khah-non = John) to perform an immersion for repentance of sins:

**"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."**  
(Matt. 3:11)

Many Jews accepted the immersion of *Yochanan*:

**"And when all the people heard Him, even the tax collectors justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected**

**the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him."**  
(Luke 7:29-30)

*Y'shua* continued this practice of immersion for repentance during His earthly ministry:

**"After these things Jesus [*Y'shua*] and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized."**  
(John 3:22)

**"From that time Jesus [*Y'shua*] began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"**  
(Matt. 4:17)

It was not until after the ascension of *Y'shua* that yet another element was introduced into the ritual of immersion.

### ~ New Testament Baptism ~

The next stage in bringing Believers into a more complete understanding of immersion began on the day of *Shavu'ot* (Shaw-voe oat' = Pentecost), when Peter stood up at the Temple complex and declared to those who were listening:

**"... 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"**  
(Acts 2:38)

It is clear from this passage that this was still an immersion for repentance. Peter also made it clear that such an immersion, in the name of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, would remove the past sins of those being so immersed. However, in addition to the removal of past sins was the promise that those being immersed would also receive the free gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-ach' Hah Koh-dehsh' = The Holy Spirit).

Since those hearing Peter teach (about this need for immersion) were assembled right there at the Temple Mount, it was easy for them to comply. All they had to do was use the *mikvaot* (immersion pools) near the southern entrance.

Many years later, Peter wrote again about the meaning of being immersed in the name of *Y'shua*. In that epistle he made the point that immersion was not for the purpose of cleansing the body of physical dirt, but to effect an inner purity within the mind and heart of the Believer. This was identical with the traditional teaching of immersion for ritual purity:

**"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*], who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."**  
(I Pet. 3:21-22)

*Y'shua* had this to say about immersion, just before His ascension into heaven:

**"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."**  
(Mark 16:16)

While the primary message here is that we must believe that *Y'shua* is our Savior, it is also important to note that immersion is tied directly to belief.

The Scriptures teach that receiving the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) was dependent upon two rituals: being immersed in the name of *Y'shua*, and the laying on of hands:

**"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*]. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit."**

(Acts 8:14-17)

Occasionally an individual may be too ill to undergo an immersion (such as a person on their deathbed). In such cases, Jewish practice has always allowed that the expression of desire for immersion by such a person would have the same effect as if they actually were able to go under the water. In such cases the laying on of hands would then be performed.

It is also clear from Scripture that the Greek word *baptismos* means complete immersion of one's body under the water, and was not merely a form of sprinkling. Not only is this the meaning of the word, it is also evident through the following example:

**"So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him."**

(Acts 8:38)

There would be no need for them to "go down into the water," if the Ethiopian eunuch were not going to be completely immersed.\*

The one Scriptural exception to these two rules (immersion and the laying on of hands prior to receiving the Holy Spirit) was when Peter was directed by God to go to the house of the Gentile Roman soldier, Cornelius. There the *Ruach HaKodesh* fell upon the new Gentile Believers prior to their being immersed:

**"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.**

**"Then Peter answered, 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'"**

**"And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days."**

(Acts 10:44-48)

In this instance the giving of the *Ruach* (Spirit) prior to baptism was done so that Peter and the other Jews with him would clearly understand that Gentiles were to be immersed into the body of Believers without first going through an extensive training program, physical circumcision (for men\*\*), and conversion to Judaism.

Some, who had been immersed by *Yochanan*, had to be immersed again in order to become full-fledged members of the family of *YHVH* (the sacred name of God) and receive the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*:

**"And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'"**

**"So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.'"**

**"And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?'"**

**"So they said, 'Into John's baptism.'"**

**"Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*].'"**

**"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*]."**

(Acts 19:2-5)

Finally, immersion in the name of *Y'shua* imparts to the Believer the status of becoming a child of *YHVH* and the Betrothed Bride of *Y'shua*:

**"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*]. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [*Messiah*] have put on Christ [*Messiah*]. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*]. And if you are Christ's [*Messiah's*], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

(Gal. 3:26-29)

This does not mean that people stopped being male and female, or Jew and Gentile. What it does mean is that all, no matter what their gender or ethnic origin, stand equal before God when they come to Him through faith in *Messiah Y'shua*.

### ~ How Many Baptisms? ~

The first question that must be asked is whether the ancient practices of ritual purity immersion are still valid today? After all, the Apostle Paul, writing in the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = ReNewed Covenant or New Testament), speaks of only one baptism:

**"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."**

(Eph. 4:4-6)

A casual reading of this text seems to imply that, for the Believer, there is to be no other immersion or baptism except the one in which we were brought into the Body of *Messiah*.

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\*According to Jewish custom, the only time when it was permitted for the witness to enter the water with the person being immersed (and not cause the immersion to become invalid) was when the water at the shoreline was too shallow for the witness to properly see if the person went completely under water. In such cases, the witness could enter the water but was not permitted to touch the person being immersed, as physical contact would invalidate the immersion.

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\*\* Some non-biblical cultures also require women to be circumcised.



In another epistle *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul or the Apostle Paul) states the following:

**"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."** (I Cor. 12:13)

However, there is another verse which is often overlooked:

**"Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ [Messiah], let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits."**

(Heb. 6:1-3)

This passage lists six elementary principles of the faith which the writer of Hebrews says must be understood before a Believer can even begin to accomplish the seventh, which is to "go on to perfection." All six come right out of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and were foundational teachings of first century Pharisaic Judaism. Once again, the six 'elementary principles' are:

- ◆ Repentance from dead works.
- ◆ Faith toward God.
- ◆ The doctrine of baptisms.
- ◆ The doctrine of the laying on of hands.
- ◆ The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.
- ◆ The doctrine of eternal judgment.

Please notice that the word baptisms is plural. This is not a mistranslation, for this occurrence is the only time the plural form of the word is found in the Greek text.

What are we to make of this seeming dichotomy? Is there only one baptism or are there multiple baptisms? Or, are there both one and many baptisms? (The logical Greek mind would balk at the latter thought, but it is well within the parameters of circular Hebrew thinking. See the following chapter *Here Now, But Not Yet*.)

These questions cannot be adequately answered without a thorough understanding of the purposes and manner by which immersion was practiced during the time of *Y'shua*, for there were many baptisms (immersions), which the observant Jew of *Y'shua's* day would have practiced during his or her lifetime.

Complete immersion in water is an ancient rite that was performed regularly as an integral part of both Tabernacle and Temple worship and also, to a more limited degree, by the average Israelite as part of their everyday life. Its main purpose was to render a worshipper *tahor* (tah-hohr') or ritually clean. This was done so that the individual could participate in Temple Worship as prescribed by the *Torah*.

### ~ One Baptism ~

The title of this chapter poses a question concerning the practice of today's Believing Community. Is there only one baptism or are there multiple baptisms? Should Believers follow what seems to be the clear instructions of Ephesians 4 or

the foundations of the faith as set forth in Hebrews 6? Let us examine again the 'one baptism' passage in the context in which it was written -- unity of the faith:

**"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." ...**

**"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 of 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. 4:1-6, 11-16)

There is to be no division in the body. Even though the body is made up of many parts, it must function as a unified whole. Looking again at Eph. 4:4-6 we see that it is primarily speaking about the unity of the faith:

- ◆ There is only one body into which we are baptized.
- ◆ There is only one Spirit by which we receive power from God.
- ◆ There is only one hope: the resurrection from the grave to eternal life.
- ◆ There is only one Lord or name in which we are to be baptized, the name of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Jesus the Messiah).
- ◆ There is only one faith into which we are baptized: belief that *Y'shua HaMashiach* died to pay the penalty for our sins.
- ◆ There is only one baptism by which we enter the family of God as betrothed members of the Bride and children of the Father.
- ◆ There is only one God who is our Father in heaven.

In other words, there is only one baptism by which we are raised in status from sinner to saint. That one baptism is immersion in the name of *Y'shua*:

**"And Peter said unto them, 'Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38 ASV)**

This single act places the Believer into the family of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, provided they have truly repented of their sins and are committed to following the precepts of God, thus changing their life:

**"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit:"**  
(Matt. 28:19 ASV)

#### ~ Other New Testament Immersions ~

It is our opinion that this one most important baptism, into the very Bride of Messiah and the family of God, does not preclude any of the other immersions which were common practice in the first century. A short time after the giving of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) on the day of Pentecost, Peter and John went to the Temple for prayer at the time of the evening sacrifice:

**"Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour."**  
(Acts 3:1)

In order for Peter and John to participate in the Temple worship service, they would have been required to be immersed in a Temple *mikvah*. Their ritual immersion for this occasion did not invalidate their 'one baptism' into the Family of God, just as their immersion in the name of *Y'shua* did not replace the immersion required prior to attending Temple worship.

About thirty years later, *Shaul*, along with four other Believers, began to go through a Scripturally required seven day purification ritual in order to be relieved of their Nazarite vows (see Num. 6):

**"Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men 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."**

(Acts 21:23-24)

Not only did *Shaul* and the other four Believers have to be immersed prior to ascending the Temple Mount, they also were required to bring several rather expensive animal, bread, grain, and drink offerings in order to be released from their vow of separation. By publicly observing this Scripturally defined purification ritual, *Shaul* demonstrated clearly that he was not teaching against the precepts of the *Torah*:

**"Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. And he shall present his offering to the LORD [YHVH]: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.""**  
(Num. 6:13-15)

The examples of the Apostles teach us that ritual immersion, in addition to the 'one baptism' mentioned by *Shaul*, was the practice of the early Believers, especially those who

wished to worship at the Temple. It is our opinion that baptism, in the name of *Y'shua*, was not intended to replace the existing immersions for ritual purity, rather it was an additional immersion. For it is written:

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

(Mal. 3:6)

As long as the Temple stood, and as long as Believers wished to worship God at the Temple, the Ritual Purity laws were all in force and were required to be kept.

#### ~ Touch Not the Unclean ~

Today there is no physical Temple building where God dwells, so it is impossible for Believers to worship in that setting. Therefore, many of the purity laws have fallen into disuse among the Jewish people and even more so among Believers, where immersion other than the 'one baptism' into *Y'shua* has almost totally disappeared. However, there is a Temple that does exist today:

**"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:**

**'I will dwell in them  
And walk among them.**

**I will be their God,**

**And they shall be My people."**

(II Cor. 6:16)

If the *Ruach HaKodesh* dwells within us, and God is walking among us, then we are a part of the Temple of God, and just as it was required for the first century worshipper to be *tahor* (ritually clean) when he went to the physical Temple, even so we are required to be *tahor* (clean) in a spiritual sense in order for God to dwell within us and walk among us. *Shaul*, the Apostle Paul quotes from Isaiah 52:11 and Jeremiah 31:1, 9 making this very point:

**"Therefore**

**'Come out from among them**

**And be separate, says the Lord.**

**Do not touch what is unclean,**

**And I will receive you.**

**I will be a Father to you,**

**And you shall be My sons and daughters,**

**Says the LORD [YHVH] Almighty."** (II Cor. 6:17-18)

In this passage the Greek word for 'unclean' is *akathartos* [ak-ath'-ar-tos] meaning: "1) not cleansed, unclean 1a) in a ceremonial sense: that which must be abstained from according to the Levitical law 1b) in a moral sense: unclean in thought and life."

Taking this word in its fullest sense teaches us that we should be clean both morally and ceremonially. However, it must be pointed out that in the context of the passage, *Shaul* is telling the Corinthians:

**"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.  
For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?  
And what communion has light with darkness? And what**

**accord has Christ [Messiah] with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?"** (II Cor. 6:14-15)

The ultimate purpose of the ceremonial aspects of the Torah is to teach the moral aspects of our relationship with God and our fellow man. One of the lessons to be learned from avoiding the physically unclean is to also avoid morally and spiritually unclean people, especially when it comes to being 'yoked' (closely tied together) when entering into business, social, or marriage relationships.

While we are not to be 'unequally yoked,' to unbelievers, we are also instructed to have enough contact with them so that we might serve as a witness to them by the way in which we conduct the affairs of our lives. This does not mean we need to preach to them, but that we should conduct our lives in an honorable manner so that, hopefully, they will be attracted to God's way of life:

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

While this is the main instruction to be derived from this passage, there is a collateral teaching that can also be ascertained, which is that we should be so circumspect in our daily lives that we refrain, whenever possible, from coming into contact with anything that is unclean whether it be spiritual, moral, or physical.

#### ~ A Constant Reminder ~

The purpose, then, of the physical ritual purity instructions is to constantly remind us of the moral and spiritual precepts of the law (*Torah*). By being aware of the physical laws of ritual purity we are constantly reminded that we must remain spiritually *tahor* (clean) so that God will be willing to dwell in us through His *Ruach* (Spirit). However, the danger is that a person might become so hung up on trying to avoid that which makes them physically unclean, they forget the weightier matters of the law:

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

*Y'shua* did not say that they should neglect the details of the law in order to accomplish the weightier matters. What He said was that they should perform both.

It seems to be a flaw of human nature that most people are quick to forget the promises they have made to God to clean up their lives. Witness the many New Year's resolutions which are made every year, most of which barely make it through the first week of January.

People need constant reminders if they are going to change their behavior. This is the purpose and function of the ritual purity laws, for each time we are reminded to avoid coming

into contact with those things which make us physically unclean, our minds make a direct link with the mind of God and we begin to think the way He thinks.

These continual acts of remembrance ensure that the instructions of God become an integral part of our own mind and heart. Then, as our minds become more like our Father's mind (transformed through the physical ritual purity laws plus other observances found in the *Torah*), we are put into constant contact with the will of God. By being continually linked with the mind of *YHVH* when confronted with the physical, we are then more likely to choose the correct path when facing the moral and spiritual dilemmas found in the weightier matters of the law.

This is the ultimate purpose of all of the physical instructions found in the Scriptures, whether it be the wearing of tassels or *tzit-tzit* (tzeet'-tzeet' = fringes), writing the commandments on our doorposts or placing a *mezuzah* (meh-zoo'-zah = a small box containing Scripture verses) on our doorposts, avoiding unclean foods, or refraining from touching an unclean thing:

**"Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.**

**"I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD [YHVH] your God."** (Num. 15:38-41)

It must be remembered that being ritually unclean is not a sin. For example, on occasion it may be necessary to touch an unclean thing in order to help another person, or society in general. For example, the removal of a dead skunk from one's yard would be much appreciated by your family as well as your neighbors.

#### ~ Immersion For Repentance ~

The immersion that is needed most by Believers today (who have already been immersed into the Family of God in the name of *Y'shua*) is the immersion for repentance as practiced by *Yochanan HaMatzvil* (Yoh'-cah-nahn Hah Mahtz-vill' = John the Immerser or Baptist). For it remains true that all have sinned, and on occasion we all do sin even after accepting *Y'shua* as our Savior:

**"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ...**

**"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."** (I John 1:8, 10)

The Scriptures make it clear that the immersion of *Yochanan* was for repentance, it was not intended to be an immersion that placed one into the Bride of Messiah or the family of God, nor was it necessarily one that brought the

person being immersed into a state of ritual purity, although that might be an added benefit:

**"John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."**

(Mark. 1:4)

*Yochanan's* call to repentance was not a call for conversion to a new religion. What he was doing was pointing out to people how they had fallen away from God and from proper Biblical practice. His purpose was to bring the sinner back into a state of righteousness before God. Then, if they still had to perform some other purity ritual, they would be in the proper spiritual frame of mind to want to do so, even if it meant an expensive offering.

As Believers, we sometimes find ourselves in a situation where we have fallen from grace and committed a sin before God. The proper thing to do is to confess that sin:

**"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)

It is clear from the teachings of *Y'shua* and the Apostles that it is our inner purity which is most important. Remember that outward ritual purity was intended to teach an inner spiritual lesson. This is one of the ways in which the *Torah* becomes our schoolmaster:

**"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ [*Messiah*], that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."**

(Gal. 3:24-25)

Once we have learned a spiritual or moral lesson as a result of keeping a physical ritual, then we may no longer need that particular physical ritual to remind us of that specific lesson. However, on the other hand, continuing to observe the same physical ritual may, in the future, bring us yet another new understanding in some other area. Our education in God's way of life is on going for the duration of our lives.

### ~ Accomplishing Spiritual Purity ~

Following are some ways in which spiritual purity can be accomplished. First must come purity of heart and mind:

**"Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God."**

(Matt. 5:8)

A Believer should also learn charity, as such acts can have a cleansing effect on our soul:

**"But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you."**

(Luke 11:41)

Studying the Scriptures, as enlightened by *Y'shua's* teaching, and believing what they teach, is also important:

**"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."**

(John 15:3)

**"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)

Keeping away from close contact with sinful or impure people is also important:

**"Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure."**

(I Tim. 5:22)

Visiting those in need and keeping oneself from being overcome by the impurity of the world demonstrates a desire to be spiritually clean:

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

The whole idea of becoming ritually pure through the agency of the living water of the *mikvah* was to teach mankind that one could not approach God in an unclean or impure state:

**"Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus [*Y'shua*], by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, 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)

A primary sign that we are clean and pure is when it is apparent to others that the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) indwells us. Not only does the inner dwelling of the *Ruach* signify that we are spiritually clean (for the *Ruach* would not dwell in an unclean place), it also serves to allow that same *Ruach* to be poured forth from us as a spiritual cleansing agent for others:

**"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus [*Y'shua*] stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'**

**"But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus [*Y'shua*] was not yet glorified."**

(John 7:37-39)

And so, it is through the power of the *Ruach* (Spirit) that we are enabled to live pure lives:

**"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."**

(I John 3:2-3)

Spiritual impurity is not something which we can have washed from our bodies by going into a pool of water. It requires daily effort to resist sinful temptation, whether in thought or in deed, so that holiness can be perfected:

**"Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."**

(II Cor. 7:1)

Spiritual purity is needed so that *Y'shua* will have a pure and chaste Bride when He returns to take her to their wedding:

**"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ [*Messiah*] also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish."**

(Eph. 5:25-27)

Spiritual purity would not be possible if it were not for the shed blood of *Y'shua*. It is only through His blood that we can be forever forgiven for our sins:

**"... the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin."**

(I John 1:7b)

**"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ [*Messiah*], who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"**

(Heb. 9:13-14)

Our part in all of this is to become vessels which are willing to become pure in every way:

**"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded."**

(James 4:8)

#### ~ Physical Immersion ~

Spiritual purity, being of supreme importance, is to be our ultimate goal. It dictates how we conduct our daily lives and how we treat others. However, it is also important that we not spiritualize away the instructions of the *Torah* just because they might be inconvenient. Therefore, we must ask the question: Are there still multiple immersions (baptisms) which are valid for today's Believer?

It is important to again note that the Apostles frequented the Temple in the months and years following the resurrection of *Y'shua*:

**"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."**

(Acts 2:46-47)

The disciples went to the Temple daily, not forsaking the form of worship commanded in the *Torah*. According to historical records, in order to do this they had to be ritually immersed prior to entering the Temple precinct. Some twenty years later the Believers in Jerusalem were still 'zealous' for the *Torah* way of life:

**"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; ...'"**

(Acts 21:20)

The Scriptures also teach that our faith is to be based on the teachings and examples of the Apostles and the Prophets:

**"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God [*grafted into the commonwealth of Israel*], having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."**

(Eph. 2:19-21)

If we, as Believers, are to build our faith upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, it seems logical that we would gain spiritual insight if we followed their example. After all, *Shaul* taught:

**"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ [*Messiah*]."**

(I Cor. 11:1)

The ritual purity laws were very important to all of the early followers of *Y'shua*, including the Apostle Paul. Therefore, we believe they are important to us as well.

#### ~ Modern Practice ~

While in theory it may be well to say that Believers can learn spiritual truths by practicing the ritual purity immersions of the *Torah*, in practice it may be difficult to accomplish. Frequent immersion for ritual purity can be difficult unless special provision is made for a *mikvah*. In the Orthodox Jewish world this is not a problem because their practice is to provide a *mikvah* for the congregation before constructing a building in which to meet. Therefore, every Orthodox Synagogue has a *mikvah*.

In today's Orthodox circles, the most common reason for immersion is to render a wife ritually clean after her monthly cycle. This is done before she returns to having marital relations with her husband so that she not infect him with her natural uncleanness. Immersion is also practiced by Orthodox worshippers who wish to prepare themselves spiritually prior to the weekly Sabbath or annual Festival day. In Jerusalem, many of the worshippers will be ritually immersed before going to pray at the *Kotel* (Koh-tell' = Western Wall), even though it is outside the Temple Mount.

In the extant Believing community, frequent immersion can be more difficult. Although many churches do have (non-kosher) baptismal fonts, many congregations so equipped may have theological objections to individuals using them for ritual purity immersions.

Within home fellowships the problem is even greater, since it would be unusual (although not unheard of) for someone to have a *mikvah* in their home. Likewise, immersion in a lake, pond, or river can be problematic because of weather restrictions.

If *Abba* (our Father) is creating a desire within you to perform ritual immersions for purity, repentance, or spiritual preparation for a Holyday, then we encourage you to find a way to fulfill that calling. However, we suggest that you be

prepared to experience resistance from friends, family, and/or other Believers.

~ Pointing Toward Messiah ~

It must be remembered that all of the ritual purity instructions (like all instructions in the *Torah*) are intended to point us in some way to Messiah. In this case, they are to teach us that we become separated from God because we live as corruptible flesh in a sinful world, susceptible to sin ourselves, for it is our sins which separate us from God:

**"But your iniquities have separated you from your God;  
And your sins have hidden His face from you,  
So that He will not hear."** (Isa. 59:2)

Once our sins have been removed, access to God is open to us. Before the sacrifice of *Y'shua* this was accomplished by repentance, followed by ritual immersion. In some cases, additional rituals, such as animal sacrifices, also needed to be performed before complete ritual purity was achieved. However, with the sacrifice of *Y'shua* a new way was opened for the Believer. This is the very way which was pointed to by the ritual purity laws, but instead of living water in a *mikvah*, it involved the living blood of *Y'shua*:

**"And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission. ... so Christ [Messiah] was offered once to bear the sins of many."** (Heb. 9:22, 28a)

Therefore:

**"... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] once for all."** (Heb. 10:10)

And:

**"... after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, [*He*] sat down at the right hand of God, ..." (Heb. 10:12)**

**"Now where there is remission of these, *there is no longer an offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus [*Y'shua*], by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, 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. 10:18-22)

The 'pure water' with which we are washed is none other than our faith in the efficacy of the blood of *Y'shua* and our willingness to follow His instructions for us as laid down in the Scriptures:

**"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ [*Messiah*] also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ..."** (Eph. 5:25-26)

Now, instead of being immersed time and again in 'living water' for ritual purity, we are to have the 'Living Water' flow out from us so that others can see our faith and good works:

**"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."** (John 7:38)

~ Many Immersions ~

As we have seen, spiritual cleansing comes through the shed blood of *Y'shua*, not through the physical immersion in the living waters of the *mikvah*. Does that mean it would be wrong to be immersed for ritual purity, for repentance, or in order to draw close to *YHWH* prior to a Sabbath or Festival? *Y'shua* answered this very basic question when He said:

**"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [*Gk. pleroo = to make complete in every particular*]. 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 [*Gk. ginomai = finished*]."** (Matt. 5:17-18)

We believe that such immersions are permitted and that they can be a vehicle for drawing us into a more intimate relationship with our Creator. Are such immersions required for salvation? No! It is faith in the efficacy of *Y'shua's* sacrifice that grants us salvation:

**"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 3:14-17)

However, this same belief and faith in *Y'shua* should also bring about a work of obedience in us:

**"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, ..."** (Heb. 5:9)

This desire to be obedient to the instructions (*Torah*) of God can also cause us to want to practice the ritual purity laws, including *mikvah* immersion, when it is possible to do so. Such practice in no way nullifies or diminishes our one baptism into the Family of God in the name of *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Rather, it solidifies and confirms that great change of status which we have undergone at some point in our lives.

~ Immersion for Repentance ~

As mentioned earlier, perhaps the most spiritually meaningful immersion that a Believer can practice is one for repentance, which, following the clear instructions of the *Brit Chadasha* (ReNewed Testament), takes place after we confess our sins before God:

**"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)

Even though the very act of confession cleanses us from unrighteousness, the act of also immersing in the waters of the *mikvah* can serve as an additional spiritual release. As physical human beings it is often important to perform some physical act, in addition to the verbal and heartfelt confession of sin, in order for our minds to accept the fact that we are completely rid of the offense. The physical act of immersion is symbolic of the fact that we have been washed clean. In this way it is possible for us to place that sin so far away from us that we view it in the same manner as God does:

**"He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.  
For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;  
As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.  
As a father pities *his* children,  
So the LORD [YHVH] pities those who fear Him."**  
(Psalm 103:10-13)

We encourage our readers to study the ancient practices of ritual purity and immersion as a way to draw closer to our Father in heaven and His Son *Y'shua*, our Husband. When used in a proper manner (by emphasizing the spiritual aspects of the ritual practice) immersion can be a wonderful way to improve one's spiritual life.

#### ~ Summary ~

The answer to the question posed in the title of this chapter (One Baptism, Or Many?) is the typical Hebrew answer. There are both one and many baptisms.

There is one very special baptism that changes our status from that of a sinful human being to a forgiven member of the Family of God and the betrothed Bride of Messiah. There are also immersions for ritual purity found in the *Torah*, many of which can still be meaningfully observed today by those who

seek to follow the *Torah* in its fullness. In addition, there is an immersion for repentance when we have fallen back into sin, as well as an immersion for spiritual preparation and cleansing.

In all of this we should remember what *Y'shua* said to the Samaritan woman at the well:

**"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."**

**"The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?' ...**

**"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'"** (John 4:13-14)

In the final analysis ritual purity is just that; ritual purity. Of and by itself it can do nothing for us. However, when it is done in a proper frame of mind, desiring to know the very mind of God (understanding that it is merely a ritual which is meant to point us to the Living Water of the Messiah *Y'shua*), it can have a cleansing effect on our spirits:

**"Therefore,  
'Come out from among them  
And be separate,' says the Lord.  
'Do not touch what is unclean,  
And I will receive you."**

(II Cor. 6:17)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ Here Now But Not Yet ~

And John, calling two of his disciples to him,  
Sent them to Jesus, saying,  
"Are You the Coming One,  
Or do we look for another?"  
Luke 7:19

Anyone who studies religion, especially the views of various Christian groups, understands that religious people often seem to find it much easier to disagree than to agree on certain Scriptural topics. This is a shame. Since all Christians profess to believe that *Y'shua* (Jesus) is the promised Messiah, it would seem, to the outsider, that having agreement on such a profound doctrine as the person of the Messiah would cause many of the other disagreements about Scripture to become minor in comparison. Such is not the case.

One of the reasons for so much disagreement is because students of the Bible tend to zero in upon those verses of Scripture which support their particular belief system, often excluding verses which seem to contradict that system. However, the Apostle *Shaul* (Shaw-ool' = Saul or Paul) wrote to Timothy that:

**"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)

Since all Scripture is profitable, none of it should be cast aside as worthless. However, it must be remembered that when *Shaul* wrote the above words the only canonized Scripture in existence was the *Tanakh* (Tah-nahk' = Old Testament). At that time the 'New Testament' was in the process of being written and would not be fully canonized for quite some time. Nevertheless, it is our belief that the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah = ReNewed Covenant or New Testament) is also Scripture and as such 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."**

### ~ Problems In Translation ~

One of the problems we, as twentieth century English speaking students of the Scriptures have, is that we are working with language translations rather than with the original languages.

It is difficult enough to properly understand the Old Testament where the translation is made directly from Hebrew into modern English, because the English translation loses much of its Hebraic flavor in the process. The matter is much worse with the Greek Scriptures (the New Testament) because many, if not all of the New Testament books were not originally written in Greek, but in Hebrew (some say in

Aramaic). From these original languages (Hebrew and/or Aramaic) the New Testament Scriptures were then translated into Greek, which was the 'universal' language of the first century, just as English is the 'universal' language today. It is these Greek translations from which our English versions are derived. Thus we have, in the New Testament, many passages which were originally written in Hebrew having totally lost their Hebraic flavor and idiomatic meanings because they have gone through, not one, but two translation processes.

It has long been known that the gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. Several of the so called "Church Fathers" testify to this fact in their writings, the Church historian Eusebius being the most prominent. Now, however, many scholars are beginning to believe that most, if not all, of the books of the New Testament were also originally written in the Hebrew language.

These problems of language will have to be left to the scholars who understand Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. Already, there are renditions of the New Testament being published in Hebrew. Some of them are modern translations from the Greek manuscripts back into Hebrew. However, with the book of Matthew there are also claims of ancient manuscripts in Hebrew that are said to be authentic. Whether this is true or not awaits further study by those who have the ability to prove it one way or the other.

### ~ Coming To Agreement ~

In the meantime, we need to come to a moderate amount of agreement on the doctrinal differences that seem to divide the Believing community. The key to resolving some of these disputes lies in understanding a very Hebraic concept, which is commonly referred to as *"Here Now, But Not Yet."*

### ~ Ancient Origins ~

To properly understand the Scriptures, it is necessary to also understand how the Hebrew mind thinks as opposed to the thinking common in Western civilization. Modern Western culture stems primarily from two basic and intimately related sources, ancient Greece and ancient Rome. In turn, these two cultures share a common origin from an even more ancient civilization, that of Babylon. Thus, modern civilization has its true origins from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream about a great image. This dream was from God and it was an announcement concerning what He (God) was about to do regarding the civilizations of the worldly nations. A young Jewish man named Daniel was able to both identify the dream and give Nebuchadnezzar its proper interpretation. The dream was about a great image whose:

**"... 'head was of gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.**

**"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the**



wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.'" (Dan. 2:32-35)

It is not the purpose of this article to try and untangle all the intricacies of this prophecy and apply them to specific nations down through history. That has already been done (and is hotly debated) by many. For our purposes, what is important to notice is that Babylon was the beginning of a 'New World Order' on earth, which was both prophesied and permitted by God Himself.

Because God allowed the establishment of this Babylonian New World Order, it was therefore destined to control all of the earth. Many of its underlying principles were in direct contrast to those of the nation of Israel, which had been totally set apart in conduct from all of the other nations of the earth, through the instructions of the *Torah*, thereby becoming a light to the world. However, Israel failed in its charge of bringing God's culture and instruction (*Torah*) to the earth, and both the house of Israel and the house of Judah were already in captivity (their punishment for sin) at the time when God established the Babylonian civilization as supreme.

All the civilizations of the earth (except for the remnant nation of Judah) were, from that point forward, to come under the influence (and thereby indirectly under the control) of the king of Babylon. Judah too was influenced to some degree by this system, despite the best efforts of the Rabbis to teach the *Torah* to the people. The Babylonian influence was also prophesied to exist through various other major kingdoms down through history until the very end time. Note Daniel's interpretation of this dream:

**"You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all -- you are this head of gold."** (Dan. 2:37-38)

This passage indicates that all peoples on earth were given into the hands of this Babylonian system. The one exception to this decree was the children of Israel, as long as they followed *Torah*. However, when they departed from *Torah*, God's own people, the house of Israel and the house of Judah, were also handed over to the Babylonian system for punishment.

It is written that at the end of days, God will set up a new Kingdom which will destroy this Babylonian New World Order along with all of its offshoot daughter kingdoms. Once this is accomplished the Kingdom of God (*Malkut Shamayim* -- *Mahl-koot' Shah-mah'-yeem*) will rule over the entirety of the earth. It is our opinion, that when this time comes, all mankind will learn the *Torah* through the One who is the Living Word, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. In other words, His Kingdom will succeed where the children of Israel failed.

In Jewish eschatology (end time teachings), this future Kingdom of God is often referred to as the *Ahtid Lavo* (Ah-teed' Lah-voh' = the Coming Age). Both terms refer to the coming one thousand year reign of *Messiah ben David*, the King Messiah:

**"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom [*Malkut Shamayim*] which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms [*Babylonian nations*], and it shall stand forever."** (Dan. 2:44)

### ~ Modern Babylon ~

Today, the kingdom of Babylon lives on in the guise of the nations of our modern world. It is our opinion that the spirit of Babylon came down through the Medo/Persian Empire, the Hellenistic Empire of Greece and on into the Roman Empire. Today it exists within those nations of the world whose primary cultural guide is the civilization and culture established by Greece and Rome. This culture has permeated all of the nations of the world, although it is more predominant in Western civilization.

It is true that at times some nations tried very hard to bring about a culture that was based upon the *Torah* instructions given to the children of Israel. This was the case when the United States of America was first founded. However, the founding fathers failed in that attempt, in no small part because they allowed an anti-*Torah* type of slavery to continue within their new nation, having made no provision for release from that slavery as required by *Torah*. This proved to be a profound weakness which eventually caused a great Civil War. It continues to have a negative effect on our society down to this very day.

Over the centuries, the principles upon which this nation was founded have been so completely eroded away that we can only agree with today's Orthodox Jewish view of America. They call it 'Babylon.'

### ~ The Kingdom of God ~

The timing of the arrival of the *Malkut Shamayim* (the Kingdom of God), prophesied in Daniel is sometimes a point of division between Believers. Some say that the Kingdom is here now and that it arrived on earth with *Y'shua*. They cite the fact that He began His ministry by saying:

**"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."** (Matt. 4:17)

Later on, as He was casting demons out of people, *Y'shua* was challenged by some Pharisees who accused Him of casting out those demons through the power of Satan. Included in *Y'shua's* reply was:

**"But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."** (Matt. 12:28)

At another time *Y'shua* complimented one of the Scribes when he responded favorably to *Y'shua's* teaching concerning the *Shema*, which He described as the "first commandment of all:"

**"So the scribe said to Him, 'Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is one God, and there is no other but He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the**

**strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.'**

**"So when Jesus [*Y'shua*] saw that he answered wisely, He said to him, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' ..."** (Mark 12:32-24)

Even more to the point, that the Kingdom of God was then present, is found in *Y'shua's* remarks to the Pharisees:

**"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, "See here!" or "See there!" For indeed the kingdom of God is within you.'"** (Luke 17:20-21)

Scriptures such as these teach that the Kingdom of God is already here in the hearts of true Believers.

### ~ Yet Future ~

And yet there are more Scriptures that speak of the Kingdom of God as being yet future; both to *Y'shua's* day and to ours. In the Sermon on the Mount, *Y'shua* repeatedly expressed the concept that the Kingdom of Heaven\* had not yet arrived but was to be expected some time in the future:

**"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. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."** (Matt. 5:19-20)

In this passage, *Y'shua* refers three times to the *Malkut Shamayim* (the Kingdom of Heaven) in the future tense. So, obviously, the Kingdom of Heaven, of which He spoke, was not in existence at that time, even though *Y'shua* was there with them teaching them principles by which to live.

In the 'Lord's Prayer' one of the first things Believers are instructed to ask for is:

**"Your kingdom come."** (Matt. 6:10a)

Another Scripture which pictures the Kingdom being yet future is found in the Olivet Prophecy:

**"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ...'"** (Matt. 25:31-34)

The Son of Man has not yet returned in all His glory, nor has the dividing of the sheep and goats taken place. Therefore,

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\* Matthew uses the terminology "Kingdom of Heaven" while the other writers use "Kingdom of God." Both expressions refer to the same Kingdom.

based on this Scripture, the Kingdom of Heaven (God) is yet future.

Many more Scriptures could be cited, but the point has been made that the Kingdom of God is not yet here on earth, although previously we saw that the Kingdom of God was already here in the person of *Y'shua* and is now here in the hearts of the Believers.

It is dilemmas like this which cause some people to throw up their hands in despair. Some even go so far as to throw out the New Testament in confusion. But there really is a very simple Hebraic answer. It is summed up in the concept:

### HERE NOW, BUT NOT YET

The Kingdom of God is already here in the minds and hearts of those who believe that the Messiah *Y'shua* came to set men free from their bondage to sin and establish the hope of the Kingdom. On the other hand, the Kingdom of God is not yet fully here; we must await the return of the Messiah to bring it to us in its fullness.

In the meantime, while we await that future and final manifestation of the Kingdom of God, we need to be learning to follow *Torah*, while living at peace with all men (as much as it is possible) as though the Kingdom (which is in our hearts) were already here.

### ~ Hebraic Thought ~

In Hebrew thought (as opposed to Babylonian, Medo/Persian, Greek, and Roman thought) things do not have to be either black or white. In Hebrew thought, gray is a perfectly fine color, and multiple meanings to seemingly singular concepts are common. In the Hebrew mindset, it makes perfectly good sense to say that something already exists even though it will exist in a more complete form in the future. So, the Kingdom of God does exist now in the faithful and hopeful hearts of the Believers, but the fullness of the Kingdom will not exist until Messiah returns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The mistake of both positions is that they have denied the other side's equally correct interpretation, for both positions are true. Yes, the Kingdom does exist now, but the Kingdom in its fullness is yet to come. While the phrase 'Here Now, But Not Yet,' may be confusion to the Western mind, it is perfectly clear to the Hebrew mind.

### ~ Born Again ~

Another disagreement has to do with being "born again." Are we Born Again when we are baptized after accepting *Y'shua* as our personal Savior? Or does it happen when we are changed from flesh into spirit at the coming of the Messiah and the resurrection of the dead? Or does it happen at some other time in between these two events?

The foundational 'Born Again' passage is found in the Gospel of John:

**"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus [*Y'shua*] by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a**

teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.'

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

"Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'" (John 3:1-8)

The Apostle Peter lends credence to the idea that Believers are Born Again in this life by placing that concept in the present tense:

"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, ..." (I Peter 1:22-23)

Here Peter tells us that the process by which this rebirth takes place is through the "word of God." First century Jewish Believers would have understood this to mean that it is through *Y'shua* that one is Born Again, since He was called the "Living Torah" or the "Living Word."

Finally, it is the Apostle John who rounds out the Scriptural teaching on this subject in his first epistle:

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." (I John 3:9)

This verse is often used to 'prove' that a person who is Born Again will not continue to live in sin even though they are still in the flesh, since earlier in the letter John indicated that we are all still sinners:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (I John 1:8, 9)

However, still later John states:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (I John 4:7)

And finally:

"For whoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus [*Y'shua*] is the Son of God?" (I John 5:4-5)

Without getting into a deep theological discussion on this topic, let us just say that different people have used these very same Scriptures to prove various points of view. Some say:

- ◆ They were Born Again at the time when they came to accept *Y'shua* as the Messiah.
- ◆ They were Born Again when they were baptized.
- ◆ They were Born Again when they received the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ They will be Born Again when they are changed from flesh to spirit in the resurrection.

Once again, another solution is possible. It is called:

#### HERE NOW, BUT NOT YET

It is true that a person is not completely Born Again and totally free from the pulls of the flesh and of sin until they are raised incorruptible; for it is written:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. ... For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality." (I Cor. 15:50, 53)

On the other hand, the Believer experiences a form or type of being Born Again upon emergence from the waters of baptism. In fact, Judaism has always taught that when one comes out of the *mikvah* (meek'-vah = waters of immersion) it is as though they have been Born Again. The symbolism of the *mikvah* is:

"... the water of immersion ... [*is*] one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward God, ..." (I Pet. 3:21 CJB)

Therefore, Nicodemus, because he was a Jewish leader and teacher, should have understood this definition of being Born Again. However, when *Y'shua* told him that he must be Born Again, Nicodemus apparently thought that *Y'shua* was talking about something quite different, thus he asked how it were possible for such a thing to happen.

#### ~ When Is the Time of Salvation? ~

The last doctrinal issue which we will pursue in this chapter has to do with when Salvation occurs.

Are 'salvation' and being 'born again' synonymous? Is a person who has accepted *Y'shua HaMashiach* as their personal Savior already saved? Or is Salvation something that comes when *Y'shua* returns and the Believers are raised from the dead? Once again, Scriptures can be quoted which support both of these views.

However, let us begin by examining a quote from our Rabbi, *Y'shua*. In this passage the situation concerned a tax collector (one of the most hated Jews in Judah because they worked for the Romans) named Zacchaeus. He wanted to get a good look at *Y'shua* as He passed by, so he climbed up into a tree in order to see over the crowd:

**"And when Jesus [*Y'shua*] came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.'**

**"So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw *it* they all murmured, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.'**

**"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.'**

**"And Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"** (Luke 19:5-10)

Here the Scriptures seem to clearly indicate that Salvation comes with the acceptance of *Y'shua* and the turning away from sin. Other Scriptures which support this view are found in the writings of *Shaul*, the Apostle Paul:

**"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life."** (Titus 3:4-7)

**"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] before time began, ..."** (II Tim. 1:8-9)

**"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)

All of these Scriptures, and many others, are used to prove that Salvation is here today. Now, let us look at some other passages which seem to say just the opposite:

**"Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the fulfillment of the law. And *do* this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed."** (Rom. 13:10-11)

**"Are they [*angels*] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"** (Heb. 1:14)

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

The Scriptures just quoted plainly state that Salvation is yet future. Yet the ones quoted previously indicated that we have already been saved. Both are Biblical concepts, and one clear way these two seemingly opposing views can be reconciled is through the Hebrew concept:

HERE NOW, BUT NOT YET

~ Summary ~

In this chapter we have seen that in order to properly understand some of the seemingly contradictory New Testament Scriptures, we need to embrace the Hebrew context in which they were written. To the Western mind these passages may seem to indicate a mutually exclusive conflict that cannot be resolved, however, the problem is not with the Scriptures, rather it is due to a lack of proper understanding.

To the Hebrew mind, none of these three concepts: the Kingdom of God, Born Again, and Salvation, are in conflict; either internally, or with each other. Rather, they are all understood through the concept of *Here Now, But Not Yet*.

The *Malkut Shamayim* (Kingdom of God) is here already in the minds and hearts of all Believers, because we know without a doubt that *Y'shua* will return as King of kings and Lord of lords, bringing in the fullness of the Messianic Kingdom Age. Therefore:

THE KINGDOM IS HERE NOW,  
BUT IT IS YET TO COME

Likewise, once we have accepted *Y'shua* as our Lord and Savior, have been immersed in the waters of baptism, and received the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit), we have been Born Again spiritually. Therefore, we are already new creatures in Messiah, as it is written:

**"Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ [*Messiah*], *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."** (II Cor. 5:17)

Nevertheless, we are still flesh and blood, subject to the pulls of the flesh, and certainly still capable of committing sin. So our full and complete rebirth will not take place until that blessed time when mortal will put on immortality and we are changed from corruptible to incorruptible. In other words:

WE ARE BORN AGAIN NOW,  
BUT NOT YET IN FULLNESS

The same is true with Salvation, which is received in this life when we accept *Y'shua* and agree to following Him as our Guide in every aspect of our daily life. But the Scriptures also teach that Salvation can be lost if we turn away from the One who saves us:

**"And let us do this all the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies."** (Heb. 10:25-27 CJB)

Although *Y'shua* and the Father will not cast us aside once they have accepted us into their family as a part of the Betrothed Bride, we can depart from that Family through deliberate actions. Therefore, full Salvation cannot be ours until that day when we will see *Y'shua* in all His fullness and be changed to spirit just like Him. In other words:

SALVATION IS HERE NOW,  
BUT IT HAS NOT YET FULLY ARRIVED

~ Another Look ~

If this concept is still difficult to grasp, just think about our relationship with *Y'shua* in the marriage covenant. The Bride of Messiah (all called out Believers) are currently in a state of Betrothal to *Y'shua*. We await His return to take us to the *Chuppah* (Who'-pah = the wedding chamber) where we will become fully and intimately married to Him. Yet, in the eyes of the Father, we are already married to His Son, *Y'shua*, and that marriage cannot be broken except by the writing of a bill of divorcement, which He has promised not to do. So, as Betrothed members of the Bride of Messiah, we are right now in a marriage state that is:

HERE NOW, BUT NOT YET

One day, the fullness of all these things will arrive. When that happens we will truly understand all of these concepts, but even more importantly we will fully understand what we shall be, as it is written:

**"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."**  
(I John 3:2)

We pray these words will give each of you comfort and hope. For our Husband, Savior, Messiah, and King: *Y'shua* the Son of God is indeed:

HERE NOW, BUT NOT YET

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