

Bible Basics III

containing:

Replacement Theology Abraham's Seed The World's Oldest Hatred

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven;
I will give to your descendants all these lands;
And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;
Genesis 26:4

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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 New Testament, saying they do not belong in the canon of Scripture, while others have added other books 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 [Old Testament] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."
(II Tim. 3:16-17)

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 (*Bible Basics III*) contains three chapters which 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. It is the third booklet in this series.

The first chapter is entitled *Replacement Theology*. It was first published in *Hebrew Roots*® issue 09-2 and deals with the false idea that the "Church" has replaced Israel, as the focus of Scripture -- especially prophecy.

The second chapter, *Abraham's Seed* is also from issue 09-2. It addresses the question: Who exactly are the people known as "Abraham's Seed?"

Finally, *The World's Oldest Hatred* (from issue 12-1) shows where hatred originated and why it is primarily directed toward the Jewish people.

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

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom,
December, 2018

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~ Replacement Theology ~

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



There are many reasons why the second century "church" chose to begin breaking away from its original Jewish or Hebraic roots: the influx of Gentiles into the church from various pagan backgrounds, the final break with non-Messianic Judaism after the Bar Kochba revolt (132-135 CE), and the persecution this final revolt brought upon the Jewish people living in the Roman Empire, to mention a few.

~ Justifying a Break ~

In order to justify a complete break with Judaism, the Roman Church needed to devise theologically oriented explanations for their position. One of those derived theological reasons is known as *Replacement Theology* -- that the people of Israel (the Jews) have been replaced by a "New Israel" which is the "church." Today this doctrine is held by most mainstream Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches, even though these major Christian groups cannot agree among themselves on who or which denominations constitute "the church." It should be noted that many fundamentalist Christians do not support *Replacement Theology*.

The original scholarly term for *Replacement Theology* is *Supersessionism*, which simply means that the "church" has superseded Israel as the "people of God," or the "chosen people." According to Michael J. Vlach, Ph.D., there are three major categories of *Supersessionism*: Punitive, Economic, and Structural.

~ Punitive Supersessionism ~

This form of *Supersessionism* is based upon the belief that, because of disobedience, God has placed the people of Israel into a state of permanent punishment by replacing their "chosen people status" with that of the "church." It is commonly held that the chief reason for God's rejection, and supposed replacement of Israel, is because the Jews rejected *Y'shua* as the Messiah. One Scripture passage used to support this claim is:

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures:

**""The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.
This was the LORD's [*YHVH*]'s doing,
And it is marvelous in our eyes'?"**

""⁴³ Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation [*ethnos*] bearing the fruits of it.""
(Matt. 21:42-43)

A cursory glance at these verses would seem to support the proposition that God was going to take away the physical "type" of the kingdom of God from the Jews and give it to another nation, which would then be, by nature, a nation of Gentiles. However, in the context of this passage the Greek word *ethnos* would be better translated as "people" rather than "nation."

Reading the rest of the passage establishes the context. *Y'shua* was not saying that leadership in the coming Kingdom of God was to be given to a Gentile nation, but to a different group of leaders within the Israelite community:

""Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.⁴⁶ But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet."
(Matt. 21:45-46)

Y'shua was speaking directly to a group of Jewish leaders -- the Chief Priests and Pharisees -- not to the Jewish population as a whole. This is made clear by the statement that the multitudes (of Jews) believed *Y'shua* יְשׁוּעָה was, at the very least, a prophet. It is certainly true that both the Chief Priests and the Pharisees had their role as "national" leaders removed when Judah was dispersed after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE. While the nation of Judah was not the Kingdom of God per se, it was the only remaining physical "type" of God's Kingdom on earth after the House of Israel went captive.

After the fall of the Temple a group of Rabbis, eventually under the leadership of Rabbi Akiva, reconstituted Judaism. However, that reconstitution was in the form of a religion, not a nation.

Where is the leadership of the Kingdom of God today? It is in Messiah *Y'shua* who resides at the right hand of the Father in heaven. The Kingdom of God, which was lost to man at the fall of Adam and Eve, was returned in "physical type" when God called the children of Israel out of Egypt. The Kingdom of God will be returned to this earth in its fullness when *Y'shua* comes back to establish it for His one thousand year reign:

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews [*Jewish Leadership*]; but now My kingdom is not from here.'"
(John 18:36)

~ First Century Messianic Jews ~

It is clear from the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) that a large number of first century Jews accepted *Y'shua* as Messiah:

"And when they [*the elders*] heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him [*Paul*], '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 English word *myriads* is translated from the Greek word:

3461 μυριάς murias {moo-ree'-as}

Meaning: 1) ten thousand 2) an innumerable multitude, an unlimited number 3) innumerable hosts

As can be seen from this definition, myriad means a very large number. Based upon this passage, it can be estimated that ten thousand or more Jews (who were zealous for the *Torah*) comprised this first century Messianic Jewish sect in Jerusalem alone. It was to this group of called out Jewish Believers to whom *Y'shua* transferred the leadership of the "physical type" of the Kingdom of God. At the time of Paul's visit to Jerusalem, the undisputed leader of this earthly Kingdom of God "type" was *Ya'acov* **יַעֲקֹב** (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob or James) the half-brother of *Y'shua*. Thus, the leadership of the physical Kingdom of God remained firmly in Jewish hands.

~ Missing the Point ~

Despite these clear Scriptural teachings, a number of the "Church Fathers" missed the point and began to devote much writing to denigrating the Jews because they rejected Messiah and refused to convert to a Gentile "church." The Church Fathers seemed to think they could convert the Jewish people by presenting the best argument or the winning oration in a debate. However, just like today, it is the way a person walks out his faith that has the greatest impact on others. Words can be good or bad, but they are just that -- words. Below are some samples of statements made against the Jewish people for not accepting "Jesus" as their Messiah.

Justin Martyr (c. 100 - 165 CE) a prominent Christian apologist is quoted as stating:

"For the true spiritual Israel ... are we who have been led to God through this crucified Christ."

The mistake modern day Replacement Theologians make when they read Justin Martyr's statement is taking it to mean the Gentile "church" replaced Israel as God's "chosen people." Yes, God has called Gentiles to be part of the "Chosen People," but not to replace them. Rather, as will soon be evident, the Gentiles have been grafted into the *Commonwealth of Israel*. They have not replaced Israel, they have expanded it. To accept the replacement position is arrogance against the people God had "chosen" in the past. Who are we to dictate to God whom He has "chosen" and whom He has not? God established an "everlasting covenant" with Abraham -- a covenant which is still in force today:

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you." (Gen. 17:7)

God is God to the descendants of Abraham whether they want Him to be or not. So what if Abraham's descendants broke the terms and conditions of this covenant? Does that annul God's part in the covenant? The Apostle Paul said no:

"For what if some [Jews] did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"

"Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar." (Rom. 3:3-4)

God remains faithful to Israel no matter what they do. Of course, in the process He does punish disobedience, just like a loving human father disciplines his son. The House of Judah is still being punished for their sins, and God is still their God.

Another "Church Father" was Hippolytus (c. 170 - 235 CE) who wrote:

"And surely you [the Jews] have been darkened in the eyes of your soul with darkness utter and everlasting. ... Furthermore, hear this yet more serious word: 'And their backs do you bend always.' This means in order that they may be slaves to the nations, not four hundred and thirty years as in Egypt, nor seventy as in Babylon, but bend them to servitude, he says, 'always.'" (Hippolytus, *Treatise Against the Jews*)

It is apparent from this statement that Hippolytus ignored the Scriptures which say:

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

**"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;**

²⁷ For this is My covenant with them,

When I take away their sins." (cited: Isaiah 59:20-21, 27:9)
(Rom. 11:25-27)

The error of *Punitive Supersessionism* has carried down through the centuries. Here is what the former Catholic priest and first Protestant, Martin Luther (1483 - 1546), had to say:

"Listen, Jew, are you aware that Jerusalem and your sovereignty, together with your temple and priesthood, have been destroyed for over 1460 years? ... For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they assuredly have erred and gone astray. ... Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God." (Martin Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies*.)

~ Judah's Restoration ~

Of course Martin Luther did not live to see the day when God once again began the process of restoring the Jewish people to their homeland -- an event which has been taking place throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, culminating in the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the reclaiming of the Temple Mount in 1967. This was prophesied to happen just prior to the coming of the Messiah:

**"For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and
Jerusalem,**

² I will also gather all nations,

**And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,**

**Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land."** (Joel 3:1-2)

**"And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.'
¹¹ It shall come to pass in that day
That the LORD [YHVH] shall set
His hand again the second time
To recover the remnant of His people who are left,**

**From Assyria and Egypt,
From Pathros and Cush,
From Elam and Shinar,
From Hamath and the islands of the sea.**

**¹² He will set up a banner for the nations,
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth.**

**¹³ Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart,
And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off;
Ephraim shall not envy Judah,
And Judah shall not harass Ephraim." (Isa. 11:10-13)**

The fact that God punished the House of Judah is indicative of the fact that He is still involved in their well being, for the purpose of God's punishment is to bring them back to the Promised Land in a spirit of repentance:

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD [YHVH] your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD [YHVH] your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD [YHVH] your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD [YHVH] your God has scattered you." (Deut. 30:1-3)

While a sizable portion of the current population of the nation of Israel are not religious, there are many others of Orthodox persuasion who are. While many of these Orthodox Jews do not yet understand that *Y'shua* is the Messiah (often because their minds have been closed due to all the persecution they have received from *Y'shua's* supposed followers, the Christians), many Orthodox Jews are now coming to faith in Him. There is a vibrant group of Messianic Jews now living in Israel, and their numbers are growing.

The bottom line is that God has not punished the Jews (Israel) by replacing them with a Gentile Church.

~ Economic Supersessionism ~

Economic Supersessionism is not quite as harsh as the Punitive type, although the outcome is essentially the same. This theory teaches that Israel's mission was completed with the coming of Messiah, and for this reason Israel is now replaced by the "church" as the "people of God." In other words, this

theory teaches that God is no longer working through Israel as a people, rather, He is now working only through the "church."

In this view, Israel is recognized as the first configuration of "the church." Ancient Israel's mission was to prefigure Christ (Messiah) by pointing to His first coming. However, *Economic Supersessionists* teach that Messiah's first advent made "carnal" Israel obsolete. Israel, therefore, is not replaced because of disobedience, but because its role in the history of redemption is finished. This view paves the way for the new "spiritual Israel" (the church) to take over and bring Gentiles into the fold. It is rather like a spiritual relay race where the baton is handed off from one group to another. Israel is now said to be obsolete, relegated to the dustbin of history.

Karl Barth (1886 - 1968), one of the 20th century's most notable Christian theologians put it this way:

"The first Israel, constituted on the basis of physical descent from Abraham, has fulfilled its mission now that the Saviour of the world has sprung from it and its Messiah has appeared. Its members can only accept this fact with gratitude, and in confirmation of its own deepest election and calling attach themselves to the people of this Saviour, their own King, whose members the Gentiles are now called to be as well. Israel's mission as a natural community has now run its course and cannot be continued or repeated." (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*.)

Perhaps Mr. Barth did not read the following passage from the book of Romans. After taking to task those Jews who do not obey *Torah*, calling them "uncircumcised," Paul went on to ask:

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God."

(Rom. 3:1-2)

The Jewish people still have an advantage because they are descended from the Patriarchs to whom God made the covenant promises and gave His "oracles:"

"This is he [Moshe] who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, ³⁹ whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected." (Acts 7:38-39)

It is clear that the *Written Torah* constituted the "living oracles" of the Creator God. To this day, the Jews have retained that important part of God's message to mankind. However, as we have already seen, Paul said it did not matter if some of the Jewish people do not believe the next step of His revelation (the gospel), for God's promises to the Jews of Israel are still in effect:

"For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? ⁴ Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar."

(Rom. 3:3-4)

It was because of His promises to the Patriarchs that God sent the gospel of Messiah to the Jew first and then to the Gentile:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ [Messiah], for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek."
(Rom. 1:16)

Later, in the same epistle, Paul went on to expound on the advantages given to Israel (embodied in the Jewish people at that time):

"For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ [Messiah] for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh,⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ [Messiah] came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen."
(Rom. 9:3-5)

Paul continued, in chapters 10 and 11, to show in detail how Israel has not been cast aside in favor of a Gentile "church." In fact, he taught just the opposite, that Believing Gentiles are grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel and become part of the *Commonwealth of Israel*:

"I say then, have they [Israelites] stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles.

"¹² Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!¹³ For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry,¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are my flesh* and save some of them.¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what *will* their acceptance *be* but life from the dead?"

"¹⁶ For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.¹⁷ And if some of the branches were broken off, and you [Gentiles], 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,¹⁸ do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you [Gentiles] do not support the root, but the root [Israel] supports you.

"¹⁹ You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.'

"²⁰ Well said. Because of unbelief they [Israelites] were broken off, and you [Gentiles] stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.²² Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.²³ And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.²⁴ For if you [Gentiles] were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree [Israel], how much more will these [Israelites], who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

"²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

**'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;**

**²⁷ For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.'** (cited: Isa. 59:20-21, 27:9)

"²⁸ Concerning the gospel *they [Israelites] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.*²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.³⁰ For as you [Gentiles] were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,³¹ even so these [Israelites] also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all.³³ **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"**
(Rom. 11:11-33)

God's calling is irrevocable, therefore, in the end all Israel will be saved! How will this be accomplished? We do not know, but this we do know: God's ways are "**past finding out.**"

This passage (Rom. 9-11) needs to be studied carefully and repeatedly if one wants to have a real understanding of the relationship of the Gentile Believers to the Jews and of God's relationship to both groups. There were (and are) many Jews who did not, and have not, accepted *Y'shua* as the promised Messiah. This fact does not change God's relationship with the children of Israel, whether they be lost sheep of the ten tribes of the divorced House of Israel or from the House of Judah. It should be remembered that the majority of the earth's Gentiles have not accepted *Y'shua* either.

~ The Righteous Remnant ~

Central to understanding this dilemma of salvation for the Jews is to understand the concept of the *Righteous Remnant*. While God has always worked with the entire people of Israel, usually only a remnant has responded positively to His teachings. This is why the children of Israel had so much trouble with God -- for as a corporate entity the nation of Israel did not follow the *Torah*.

One Scriptural example of God working with a remnant of Israelites took place when the Jews returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity to rebuild the Temple. However, more Jews stayed in Babylon than actually returned -- thus only a remnant came back. Certainly the Scriptures are clear that a *Righteous Remnant* was to be found within this larger remnant, but some were either in rebellion to *Torah* or did not fully understand its precepts. Thus, history repeated itself and eventually the Second Temple was destroyed and Judah was dispersed among the nations because of their iniquities.

Ezra עֲזָרָה (Ez-raw'), the Priest and Scribe, was having trouble with some of those who had returned, so he turned to God in prayer:

"And I said: 'O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens.'" (Ezra 9:6)

Ezra recalled how Israel had always been prone to sin, not obeying the *Torah* of God. He indicated this was still a problem with the remnant people who had returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple:

"Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, and our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as it is this day." (Ezra 9:7)

Despite the fact that some members of this remnant were breaking God's *Torah* (and thereby committing sin), God still blessed their Temple rebuilding work. God can work through anyone if He so chooses -- even sinners.

God is good, and despite the sins of the people of Judah, He allowed this remnant of them to return to Jerusalem and the Promised Land to reestablish their presence there, after the allotted seventy years of captivity:

"And now for a little while grace has been shown from the LORD [YHVH] our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. ⁹ For we were slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem." (Ezra 9:8-9)

Previous to Ezra's time, the prophet Isaiah had bemoaned the fact that the sins of Judah were so profound that it could only be through a miracle of God that a remnant would be left:

"Unless the LORD [YHVH] of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, We would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah." (Isa. 1:9)

Even when Israel or Judah seemed to have turned totally away from God's ways, there always existed a *Righteous Remnant*. Elijah the Prophet learned this lesson when he complained about being the only living person who was following God's way of life. Elijah had fled for his life from king Ahab and queen Jezebel to the mountain called *Horeb* (which is Mount Sinai). There he found refuge in a cave:

"So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' ¹⁴ And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD [YHVH] God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the

sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.'" (I Kings 19:13-14)

God answered Elijah's claim:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; ... ¹⁸ Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.'" (I Kings 19:15, 18)

It is important to notice that God is the one who calls people into the *Righteous Remnant*, it is not based upon man's efforts.

~ Today's Righteous Remnant ~

Likewise, God is even now calling a *Righteous Remnant* to partake in the fullness of the Kingdom of God when *Y'shua* returns to earth. This *Righteous Remnant* will not be just from the House of Judah but from the House of Israel as well:

"But I will gather the remnant of My flock out of all countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. ⁴ I will set up shepherds over them who will feed them; and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, nor shall they be lacking,' says the LORD [YHVH].

"⁵ 'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD [YHVH],

'That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

⁶ In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely;

Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

⁷ Therefore, behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'that they shall no longer say, "As the LORD [YHVH] lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt," ⁸ but, "As the LORD [YHVH] lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them."

"And they shall dwell in their own land.'" (Jer. 23:3-8)

Obviously, this is not a prophecy about the return of Judah to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, but a yet future return of both houses of Israel to the Promised Land at the end of this age and the beginning of the next.

God is working with a *Righteous Remnant* of both Israelites and Gentiles who will have a part in that future return at the coming of *Y'shua*. Being only a remnant signifies that the majority of both Jews and Gentiles will not have a part in it. This accords with the words of *Y'shua* who indicated that even many of those who profess to know Him will be denied entry into the *Righteous Remnant* of the Millennium:

"Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" ²³ And

then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matt. 7:22-23)

It will only be the *Righteous Remnant* who do not willingly practice lawlessness (deny the commandments of the *Written Torah*) and accept *Y'shua's* blood as payment for their sins, who will be given eternal life in the first resurrection and become kings and priests in the Kingdom of God under *Y'shua's* rulership:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [Messiah], and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)

Does this mean that the vast majority of people who have ever lived, whether they be Israelites or Gentiles, will not be given eternal life, even in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come after the Millennium)? Not necessarily, because there is yet another judgment which takes place after the Millennium at the time of the second resurrection:

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Rev. 20:11-12)

~ Structural Supersessionism ~

The third theory about why the "church" has supposedly superseded Israel is based upon an alternative concept of how the Scriptural Canon should be viewed. *Structural Supersessionism* teaches that the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) are, what R. Kendall Soulen (in *The God of Israel and Christian Theology*) terms as being:

"... largely indecisive for shaping Christian convictions about how God's works as Consummator and as Redeemer engage humankind in universal and enduring ways."

Soulen believes that the Early Church accepted a model of Scripture that revolved around four key episodes:

- ◆ "God's intention to create the first parents,
- ◆ The fall;
- ◆ Christ's incarnation and the inauguration of the church, and
- ◆ The final consummation."

In this stripped down view of Scripture, the Early Church (according to Soulen) "... completely neglects the Hebrew Scriptures with the exception of Genesis 1-3."

While this may be an overstatement, it is certainly true that many Church Fathers took a rather dim view of much of the Old Testament, as also did the *Gnostics*. Apparently the Church Fathers did not understand Paul's admonition:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be

complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (II Tim. 3:16-17)

It is clear that when Paul penned these words, what was known as Scripture was what is currently found in the Hebrew Scriptures, for the New Testament was just in the process of being written. Likewise:

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4)

The Apostles were adamant that the Hebrew Scriptures contained the word of God and they were to be studied, understood, and used as the basis for the way a person was to walk out his life:

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12)

To ignore all of the Old Testament except Genesis 1-3 makes no sense at all.

~ The Original Church ~

The structure of the Scriptures, when taken as a whole, do not in any way indicate the "church" has replaced Israel. Instead, the Gentiles, who were attached to the *ekklesia* (Greek for church), were brought into a body which God had previously initiated at the time of the Exodus -- the *Church or Congregation in the Wilderness*. According to Stephen, at the time of his trial before the Council:

"This is he [Moshe or Moses] who was in the congregation [ekklesia] in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, ..." (Acts 7:38)

It is curious to note that while the *New King James Version* nearly always translates the Greek word *ekklesia* as "church," in this particular instance they use "congregation." The word "congregation" is a better translation than "church" in all instances of *ekklesia*. However, it is the inconsistency (not the translation) which is most troubling -- making it look like what God established in the Wilderness was not similar to what is called the *ekklesia* today.

The "church" actually began in the Wilderness, when God led the children of Israel out of Egypt, not on the Day of Pentecost in 33 CE as so many Christian denominations teach.

Two words are used in the Hebrew Scriptures to identify the "Church or *Congregation in the Wilderness*:"

6951 קהל qahal {kaw-hawl}

Meaning: 1) assembly, company, congregation, convocation 1a) assembly 1a1) for evil counsel, war or invasion, religious purposes 1b) company (of returning exiles) 1c) congregation 1c1) as organized body

Origin: from 06950; TWOT - 1991a; n m

Usage: AV - congregation 86, assembly 17, company 17, multitude 3; 123

The other word is:

5712 קָהָל `edah {ay-daw'}[or *edat*]

Meaning: 1) congregation, gathering

Origin: from 05707 in the original sense of fixture; TWOT - 878a; n f

Usage: AV - congregation 124, company 13, assembly 9, multitude 1, people 1, swarm 1; 149

~ The Wilderness Church ~

The first time the words *kahal* and *edat* are used to indicate the children of Israel as constituting a "congregation" or "church" occurs at the time of the first Passover:

"Speak to all the congregation [edat] of Israel, saying:

""On the tenth day of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. ⁴ And if the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of the persons; according to each man's need you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly [kahal] of the congregation [edat] of Israel shall kill it at twilight [between the two evenings]."" (Ex. 12:3-6)

As can be seen from the Usage sections, these words are translated rather interchangeably with "congregation" being the most popular, followed by "assembly."

Meanwhile, the definition of the Greek word for "church" yields a similar definition:

1577 ἐκκλησία ekklesia {ek-klay-see'-ah}

Meaning: 1) a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly 1a) an assembly of the people convened at the public place of the council for the purpose of deliberating 1b) the assembly of the Israelites 1c) any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance, tumultuously 1d) in a Christian sense 1d1) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship in a religious meeting ...

Origin: from a compound of 1537 and a derivative of 2564; TDNT - 3:501,394; n f

Usage: AV - church 115, assembly 3; 118

From this point in the *Torah* onward, both *kahal* and *edat* are used to identify the children of Israel as a congregation or "church." Here are a few examples:

""Now if the whole congregation [edat] of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly [kahal], and they have done something against any of the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] in anything which should not be done, and are guilty; ¹⁴ when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly [kahal] shall offer a young bull for the sin, and bring it before the tabernacle of meeting. ¹⁵ And the elders of the congregation [edat] shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD [YHVH]. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD [YHVH]."" (Lev. 4:13-15)

Thus, *kahal* and *edat* in Hebrew, and *ekklesia* in Greek, are somewhat interchangeable.

As already mentioned, in our opinion it would be better if the Greek Scriptures were to translate *ekklesia* as "congregation" or "assembly" since the English word "church" carries a lot of baggage. First off, many people think of a building when they hear the word "church," rather than an assembly of people which is the correct meaning. Neither "congregation" or "assembly" carry the connotation of a building.

In addition, the origin of the English word "church" also leaves much to be desired, since it is derived from the Old English word "*cirice*" which comes from a Greek deity called "*Circe*." According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* "*Circe*" was:

"... in Greek legend, a sorceress, the daughter of Helios, the sun god, and of the ocean nymph Perse. She was able by means of drugs and incantations to change humans into wolves, lions, and swine. The Greek hero Odysseus visited her island, Aea, with his companions, whom she changed into swine. But Odysseus, protected by the herb moly (a gift from Hermes), compelled her to restore them to their original shape. He stayed with her for one year before resuming his journey. Greco-Roman tradition placed her island near Italy or located her on Mount Circeo." (CD-Rom Version)

This passage seems to indicate that the word *edat* (translated as "congregation") identifies that portion of the *kahal* (translated as "assembly") which is gathered together. Thus we find the entire assembly [edat] being gathered in verse 13, but only the elders of the assembly [edat] being gathered in verse 15.

The word *kahal* seems to indicate the entire body of people (what we might call a "church denomination" in today's parlance.) For example, in modern usage, the word "church" (*kahal*) can mean all Christians, or all Roman Catholics, while the word "congregation" (*edat*) specifies a group of people within the *kahal* or "church."

Another example:

"And they assembled [kahal #6950 (a different form)] together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, 'You have gone far enough, for all the congregation [edat] are holy, every one of them, and the LORD [YHVH] is in their midst; so why do you exalt yourselves above the assembly [kahal] of the LORD [YHVH]?'" (Num. 16:3)

The predominant word used to indicate the children of Israel in the book of Numbers is *edat*, and it is almost always translated as "congregation." However, *edat* does not occur in

the book of Deuteronomy. There the word *kahal* is used and it is translated as both "assembly" and "congregation" in the KJV:

"These words the LORD [YHVH] spoke to all your assembly [*kahal*], in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me." (Deut. 5:22)

The Ten Commandments were spoken to the entire *Church in the Wilderness*.

What happened in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost the year *Y'shua* was crucified was not the beginning of the "church era" as so many claim. While it was an extremely important event, it was not the beginning of the "church." Rather, it was the consummation of what began some 1500 years previous. It was God giving His already existing "Church" the spiritual power they needed to obey His *Torah*:

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

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

(John 14:26)

It is not possible that the "Christian Church" replaced Israel when Israel was the "Church" from the beginning.

~ Other "Proof" Texts ~

Supersessionist theologians have a number of other Scriptures which they cite as "proof" of their position. A few of the more important ones are included here, however, those dealing with the "seed of Abraham" will be covered in the following chapter.

One characteristic found in all of these passages is that *Supersessionists* ignore the literal meaning of some texts in favor of a "spiritual" interpretation. This is the same technique used by some to "spiritualize" away the law of God, the *Written Torah*. Thus, because Christians are said to be "in the Spirit" they claim to no longer concern themselves with the physical. If we all "love" one another, then we are said to be "fulfilling the law," and therefore do not have to keep it in the physical sense. This is how unclean meats can suddenly become "clean" and the Sabbath can be changed to Sunday.

It should be noted this device is common in *Gnostic* teaching.

~ A Special People ~

Supersessionists like to use the following passage to "prove" their replacement doctrine:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (I Pet. 2:9-10)

At first glance it seems pretty convincing that God has selected an entirely new group of people to be His chosen ones. However, it behooves us to go back and see to whom this epistle was addressed:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*],

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]: Grace to you and peace be multiplied." (I Pet. 1:1-2)

Peter was not writing to Gentiles but to Messianic Jews who had been dispersed into other countries. Some of those recipients were, in all probability, Jews who had been present at the Temple when the Holy Spirit fell upon the Disciples on *Shavu'ot* (Day of Pentecost):

"And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ... ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:5, 9-11)

Remember also that Peter was designated the Apostle to the Jews, not to the Gentiles. That office had been given to Paul:

"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me [*Paul*], as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸ (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ..." (Gal. 2:7-8)

The fact that this epistle was written to Messianic Jews, and not to Gentiles, is further confirmed by another passage where Peter admonished the Messianic Jewish recipients to show the Gentiles, by their example, how to live a righteous *Torah* lifestyle:

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ¹² having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation." (I Pet. 2:11-12)

Apparently, Peter was not writing to all of the Jews living in those areas, but only to those who had become followers of Messiah *Y'shua*. They, along with their Gentile brethren, had become part of the *Righteous Remnant Church in the Wilderness*, and therefore a "special remnant people" to God. Because their numbers included physically uncircumcised Gentiles, who had been grafted-in through faith in *Y'shua*, they truly had become a unified people who had not been unified previously.

Notice, however, this new special *Righteous Remnant* subset was not separated out from Israel, they are part and parcel of Israel. Instead of the Messianic Jews being separated from Israel into a new "church," the Gentiles had been separated out from other Gentiles and become members of the *Commonwealth of Israel*. They were similar to Jewish Proselytes without having initially undergone physical circumcision.

Paul said much the same thing, in his epistle to the Ephesians, when he wrote to the Gentiles in that congregation:

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- ¹² that at that time you were without Christ [Messiah], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua] you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [Messiah]." (Eph. 2:11-13)

Paul did not state that the Gentiles had been brought near to God to be placed into a Gentile Church. Instead, he emphasized they had been brought near to God to be placed into the *Commonwealth of Israel* and had thereby become partakers of the ancient covenants of promise. Of course, these covenants of promise also included the New Covenant set forth by Jeremiah in chapter 31, but they also included the covenants of promise that had been given to the physical descendants of Abraham (through Isaac and Jacob), and to the entire congregation of the children of Israel at Mount Sinai.

~ The Circumcision ~

Another common claim of *Supersessionists* is that Christians are now considered to be the only people circumcised and therefore are the "New Israel."

"For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua], and have no confidence in the flesh, ..." (Phil. 3:3)

It is true that grafted-in Gentiles who have accepted the blood of *Y'shua* are now considered to be circumcised in a spiritual sense, but this verse does not say that only Messianic Believers are now circumcised. It is merely stating that Gentiles, who have not had their flesh cut can be considered included among the Circumcision. This squares with the *Written Torah* which states that God will circumcise the heart:

"And the LORD [YHVH] your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." (Deut. 30:6)

From the beginning, God has set apart a *Righteous Remnant* that allowed Him to circumcise their hearts. That fact does not preclude the covenant sign of physical circumcision among the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. What Paul is communicating here is that physically uncircumcised Gentiles, who have had their hearts circumcised, are part of the people known as the Circumcision. As noted previously in

Romans 11, "heart circumcision" grafts those Gentiles into the *Righteous Remnant of the Olive Tree of Israel* but it does not eliminate physically circumcised Jewish Believers from also being a part of that same *Righteous Remnant*. Do not forget what Paul said:

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

Paul did not say that all Gentiles will be saved.

~ Renewing Israel ~

Some take passages which speak about the renewal of Israel and say they now apply only to Christians because they are the true spiritual Israelites. Yet many of the passages they quote directly apply to the descendants of the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD [YHVH]: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, "Know the LORD [YHVH]," for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb. 8:10-12)

This New Testament passage is a direct quote from the book of Jeremiah where it states specifically that the New Covenant will be made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. It does not say the New Covenant will be made with a Gentile Church. Gentiles who wish to participate in the New Covenant need to become a grafted-in part of Israel.

Ezekiel 36 is often cited as referring to the "New Israel" even though it is clearly referring to physical Israel:

"Therefore say to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord GOD:

"I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD [YHVH],' says the Lord GOD, 'when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.

"²⁴ For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. ²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*. ²⁸ Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.'" (Ezek. 36:22-28)

These promises are to covenant Israel and Judah, not to the Gentiles. One cannot take the term "House of Israel" out of context and bend it to apply to a Gentile Church.

~ Summary ~

God is calling a *Righteous Remnant* from among all people, both Israelite and Gentile. Nevertheless, God's original promises were made to the Patriarchs of Israel and those promises have never been revoked.

Prior to the coming of *Y'shua* the Messiah, the only way a Gentile could share in God's covenant promises was to become an Israelite Proselyte. The northern ten tribes of the House of Israel had long before received a bill of divorcement from God (Jer. 3:8), so by the first century, to become a Proselyte, meant converting to Judaism.

However, because *Y'shua* was the Son of God, Savior, and promised Messiah, His offering of Himself for the sins of all people allowed the Gentiles a new path into the covenant promises given to the children of Israel. That path was through Faith in *Y'shua's* shed blood. Once this happened, a Gentile could be grafted into the *Commonwealth of Israel* without becoming a proselyte to Rabbinic Judaism and being physically circumcised.

This new path to Israelite citizenship came amidst much controversy, as can be seen from the *Jerusalem Council* meeting recorded in Acts 15. At that meeting the leadership of the *Righteous Remnant* determined that Gentiles did not need to be circumcised and convert to Judaism in order to be saved. In fact, Peter stated that physical circumcision was not sufficient to obtain personal salvation, but that personal salvation could only be achieved through faith in the shed blood of *Y'shua*:

"And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them:

"Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

¹⁰Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] we shall be saved in the same manner as they." (Acts 15:7-11)

The "church" has not and never will replace Israel, for the Real Church was the *Righteous Remnant* of the children of Israel and it began in the Wilderness, not in Jerusalem in 33 CE.

In order to become attached to the Creator God of the Universe, man must come to Him on His terms. Those terms have always included becoming a part of the people who bear His name -- the children of Israel (Israel means "God prevails").

Gentiles are no longer without God, strangers to the covenants, and excluded from the *Commonwealth of Israel*. Now they can be grafted-in through *Y'shua*:

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- ¹² that at that time you were without Christ [*Messiah*], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [*Messiah*]. ... ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God." (Eph. 2:11-13, 19)

Let us rejoice and be glad that God has provided a way in which all people can become part of "His People."

Shalom!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Abraham's Seed ~

O seed of Abraham His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
Psalm 105:6-7

By far the most common New Testament Scripture passages used to support *Replacement Theology* are those dealing with Abraham's Seed. While there are a number of verses which address this topic, one which the *Supersessionists* especially like is:

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

Supersessionists claim this passage goes a long way toward "proving" that God is no longer working with the Jewish people (Israel), but has transferred His love and guidance to "the church." The only exception to this claim, they say, is the calling of individual Jews to salvation in Christ, to become full fledged members of the "church," who must give up their Jewishness in the process.

Dr. David Stern, the translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* and author of *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, wrote another book specifically about Messianic Judaism entitled *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*. There Stern recounts how, in the past, Jewish converts to Christianity often had to "prove" they were "truly converted" (and therefore no longer Jewish) by eating unclean meats and disregarding the *Torah* commandment Sabbath and annual Festivals. Thus, in *Replacement Theology*, a physical "seed" of Abraham is not considered to be a true "seed" without full conversion to Christianity.

~ Four Types of Seed ~

A Baptist *Supersessionist*, John G. Reisinger, has written a book (*Abraham's Four Seeds*) in which he identifies four different ways in which the Scriptures identify "Abraham's seed." Unfortunately, Reisinger spends a lot of ink trying to debunk both *Dispensational Theology* and *Covenant Theology* instead of just directly addressing the issue, as He states:

"... the primary purpose of this book is an examination of the basic presuppositions of both *Dispensationalism* and *Covenant Theology*." (p. 35-36)

Since there is much good material in Reisinger's book (although we disagree with his ultimate conclusion), let us explore this work in light of Scripture, as he identifies the four "seeds" of Abraham:

- ◆ Natural Seed
- ◆ Special Natural Seed

- ◆ Spiritual Seed
- ◆ The Unique Seed

~ Natural Seed ~

Without a doubt *Avraham* אַבְרָהָם (Ahv'-rah-hahm = Abraham) did father natural physical seed (children and their descendants), both the one "promised" by God (through Isaac) and others who were not promised by God.

After he and *Sarai* שָׂרַי had spent many years childless, God appeared to *Avram* אַבְרָם (Ahv'-rahm' = Abram, which was his name before it was changed to *Avraham*) and promised that a physical child would be forthcoming. Since *Sarai* שָׂרַי (Sahr-aye' = *Sarah's* original name) was already past menopause, the promise must have seemed farfetched. Nevertheless *Avram* believed, and God counted his "trusting faith" as righteousness:

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

"² But Abram said, 'Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?' ³ Then Abram said, 'Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!'

"⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD [YHVH] came to him, saying, 'This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.' ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'

"⁶ And he believed in the LORD [YHVH], and He accounted it to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:1-6)

Here, then, is the very basis of *Avraham's* well known faith in God. He trusted and believed that what God had promised would come to pass. It should be noted that not only did *Avraham* believe God fully and completely -- his faith spawned a desire in his heart for obedience to God's commands. When passing the covenant promises on to Isaac, God said:

"And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws [Torah]." (Gen. 26:4-5)

However a child was not immediately forthcoming to *Avram* and *Sarai*. After ten years had elapsed, *Sarai* gave *Avram* her handmaid, *Hagar* חַגָּר, as a concubine wife and she bore him his first physical son through normal natural means:

"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, 'See now, the LORD [YHVH] has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.' And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai."

"³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. ⁴ So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes." (Gen. 16:1-4)

Sarai became upset because of the despised manner in which *Hagar* behaved toward her after the conception. Therefore, *Sarai* dealt harshly with *Hagar*, who consequently fled into the wilderness. An angel of God appeared to *Hagar* and comforted her:

**"And the Angel of the LORD [YHVH] said to her:
'Behold, you are with child,
And you shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the LORD [YHVH] has heard your affliction.'"**
(Gen. 16:11)

As a result of this encounter, *Hagar* returned to *Avraham* and *Sarai* and gave birth to a son. Thus, *Avraham* obtained his first *Natural Seed* son, named *Ishmael* יִשְׁמָעֵאל, the progenitor of today's Arab people.

However, there were to be other *Natural Seed* children, after the death of *Sarah*, when *Avraham* took a wife named *Keturah* who bore him six more *Natural Seed* sons:

"Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. ² And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah." (Gen. 25:1-2)

According to Jewish tradition, *Keturah* קְטוּרָה was actually *Hagar* under a different name. If that is so, then *Hagar* bore *Avraham* seven sons including *Ishmael*. Historically, the most important after *Ishmael* was *Midian* מִדְיָן, the progenitor of the Midianites. These seven *Natural Seed* sons, in turn, fathered other *Natural Seed* descendants (also called sons in Scripture) to *Avraham*. Today there are multiple millions of men and women who are descended from these original seven men. All of them are *Natural Seed* of *Avraham*.

Reisinger counts among the *Natural Seed* descendants of *Avraham*:

"... all of his physical progeny or every person who was in any way physically descended from Abraham. The natural seed includes Ishmael, as well as Isaac; Esau, as well as Jacob; the Arabs as well as the Jews; and Judas, as well as Paul. In this sense, Gentile believers can never be Abraham's seed." (p. 10)

~ Special Natural Seed ~

Reisinger terms the next category *Special Natural Seed*. The first of these was *Yitzchak* יִצְחָק (Yeetz'-sock = Isaac). *Yitzchak* is considered a *Special Natural Seed* son because his birth had certain supernatural aspects to it, even though the outcome was a physical (*Natural Seed*) son born of *Sarah* through natural means. Thus, *Yitzchak* (like Israel and his descendants who were to follow) fall into two of Reisinger's

categories: *Natural Seed* and *Special Natural Seed*. As will be seen, the covenants given to both *Avraham* and *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה were sealed only with this second category of people.

Sarah was now long past her childbearing years and had yet to give birth. *Avram* too may have been beyond the age when he was sufficiently fertile to father a child. Then three "men" came to *Avraham's* tent in *Mamre*. One of them is identified as *YHVH*:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ..." (Gen. 18:1-2)

After preparing food and feeding the three "men," they proceeded to engage *Avraham* in conversation:

"Then they said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?'

"So he said, 'Here, in the tent.'

"¹⁰ And He [YHVH] said, 'I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.' (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

"¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. ¹²Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, 'After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?'" (Gen. 18:9-12)

Because *Sarah* laughed, her first and only son was named *Yitzchak*, which means laughter. Sure enough, by that season the following year, *Yitzchak* had been born. He was more than a *Natural Seed* son however -- he was the "son of promise" -- for his birth had been promised by God long after *Sarah* was physically capable of bearing children. It was a miracle.

It was *Yitzchak* through whom God perpetuated the covenant which He had made with *Avraham*:

"Then God said: 'No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.'" (Gen. 17:19-21)

God promised to bless *Ishmael* because he was *Avraham's* son and was loved. However, *Ishmael* was not to have any part of the covenant promise. In this generation, covenant descendants came only from *Yitzchak* whose birth was the first fulfillment of the original covenant promise God had made with *Avraham*:

"Now the LORD [YHVH] had said to Abram:

'Get out of your country

From your family

And from your father's house,

To a land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation;

**I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.
³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;**

**And in you all the families of the earth shall
be blessed."** (Gen. 12:1-3)

Thus, *Yitzhak* became *Avraham's Special Natural Seed* while *Ishmael*, and the other six brothers who came later, were simply his *Natural Seed*.

The next generation saw a continuation of the *Special Natural Seed* with the birth of *Ya'acov* (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob). However, this passing on of the *Special Natural Seed* was not without controversy, for *Ya'acov* had a twin brother *Esav* עֵשָׂו (Ee'-sahv = Esau) who was the actual firstborn of the two and, according to the customs of the time, should have received the *Special Natural Seed* status instead of *Ya'acov*.

Ya'acov, however, bought the birthright status from his brother *Esav* for a bowl of lentil stew, and obtained the blessing of the firstborn, from his father *Ya'acov*, through deception. Through these seemingly rather devious means, God granted the next phase of the *Special Natural Seed* to *Ya'acov* and he was given the *Covenant Promise* for that generation.

On his way to *Padan Aram* אֲרָם פְּדָן, to escape the wrath of his brother *Esav* and to seek a wife from his mother's family, *Ya'acov* stayed overnight at a very special place where he had an encounter with God. According to tradition this very spot was where *Avraham* had offered *Yitzhak* on the altar (Gen. 22) and where the Temple was to be built in the future:

"So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

¹³ And behold, the LORD [YHVH] stood above it and said: 'I am the LORD [YHVH] God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.'" (Gen. 28:11-15)

Meanwhile, *Esav* became the progenitor of the people of *Edom*, who were not always friendly to the "Chosen People" Israelites descended from *Ya'acov*. Thus we see God, at this point in time, making a choice as to who would be the progenitor of his *Special Natural Seed* (or chosen) descendants of promise, even to the point of making a distinction between the offspring of twin brothers:

"The burden of the word of the LORD [YHVH] to Israel by Malachi.

² 'I have loved you,' says the LORD [YHVH].
'Yet you say, "In what way have You loved us?"
Was not Esau Jacob's brother?'
Says the LORD [YHVH].
'Yet Jacob I have loved;
³ But Esau I have hated,
And laid waste his mountains and his heritage
For the jackals of the wilderness.'" (Mal. 1:1-3)

This is a primary example of God's "selection" process and will become very important in the understanding of Paul's comments about Israel in Romans 9.

Finally, we come to the descendants of *Ya'acov* whose name was changed to Israel. His twelve sons, and their descendants, were all accepted by God as a "chosen" nation, strictly because they were considered *Special Natural Seed* descendants of the three Patriarchs *Avraham*, *Yitzhak*, and *Ya'acov*, not because they were more righteous than other people. In this manner, all of the children of Israel (*Ya'acov* or Jacob) became the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham*. Here is how king David portrayed them:

**"O seed of Abraham His servant,
You children of Jacob, His chosen ones!
⁷ He is the LORD our God;
His judgments are in all the earth.
⁸ He remembers His covenant forever,
The word which He commanded, for a thousand
generations,
⁹ The covenant which He made with Abraham,
And His oath to Isaac,
¹⁰ And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute,
To Israel as an everlasting covenant,
¹¹ Saying, 'To you I will give the land of Canaan
As the allotment of your inheritance,'" (Psalm 105:6-11)**

There have always been many blessings available to those who are the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham*. However, along with those blessings came strict obligations -- as the children of Israel discovered when they agreed, at Mount Sinai, to obey God no matter what He said:

"Then all the people answered together and said, 'All that the LORD [YHVH] has spoken we will do.'" (Ex. 19:8)

Scripture records the difficulty the children of Israel experienced in living up to that commitment because they were still subject to their carnal human nature, not having yet received the indwelling of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-akh' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit). As a result they have, in addition to the blessings, had to endure the Father's punishment down through the centuries.

~ The Righteous Remnant ~

At this point it would be well to review the section on the *Righteous Remnant* (p. 5) in the previous chapter. As will be seen, while there are covenant advantages and responsibilities that go with being a physical member of the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* -- *Righteous Remnant* status does not

automatically fall on either the nation of Israel as a whole or upon any individual among the *Special Natural Seed*. The *Righteous Remnant* consists of a subgroup, in each generation, of people within the *Special Natural Seed* who are selected by God as exhibiting true faith, as did their father *Avraham*.

Many Israelites have, over the centuries, attained the status of *Righteous Remnant*, for example, the seven thousand during the time of Elijah who had not bowed the knee to *Baal*. However, before the coming of Messiah *Y'shua*, no Gentile outside of Israel could become a *Special Natural Seed* of Israel, much less a part of the *Righteous Remnant*, without going through the Proselyte process and being circumcised in the flesh. However, that too was about to change as the story continues.

~ Spiritual Seed ~

Reisinger calls his third category the *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham*. A key verse for this group is:

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

Here is the crux of the issue about how Gentiles become part of the *Righteous Remnant* of the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* without going through Jewish Proselyte conversion, thereby committing themselves to all of the traditional rules and regulations of the Rabbis.

When the *Ruach HaKodesh* fell upon the uncircumcised Gentile Believers in *Caesarea* (about ten years after the resurrection of *Y'shua*), the Apostle Peter recognized that God had, by that act, opened a new door through which Gentiles could directly enter the "seed of *Avraham*." This new conversion process allowed uncircumcised Gentiles to become part of the *Righteous Remnant Spiritual Seed*, so they too could enjoy all of the rights, privileges, and obligations inherent through citizenship in the *Commonwealth of Israel*. They were given this status without undergoing circumcision and coming under the rule of the *Special Natural Seed* Rabbis:

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ⁴⁵ 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. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.

"Then Peter answered, ⁴⁷ 'Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' ⁴⁸ 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 Galatians chapter 3, Paul made some observations which tend to confuse people who have had it ingrained into their minds that the "law has been done away" and that the "church has replaced Israel" as God's Chosen People. First of all, Paul made the following comment:

"Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -- ⁶ just as Abraham

'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.'" (Gen. 15:6)

⁷ Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham."
(Gal. 3:5-7)

Please notice the addition of the word "only" in verse 7. This is typical of *Replacement* and *Antinomian* (against law) translators who like to tweak the Scriptures to meet their preconceived ideas about doctrine.

The point Paul was making here shows that since *Avraham* was the "friend of God" (see II Chron. 20:7 and James 2:23), and because he "trusted" or had "faith" in God's promises, he is recognized as the "father of the faithful." Therefore, individuals who possess "trusting faithfulness" such as *Avraham* possessed, are also to be considered *Spiritual Seed* "sons of Abraham" even if they are Gentiles in the flesh (uncircumcised).

Let it be said that if we were tweaking this verse and wished to add a word for clarification, the word would be "also" as follows:

"Therefore know that those who are of faith are [also] sons of Abraham [in a spiritual sense]."
(Gal. 3:7)

This verse does not mean that *Avraham* just lost all of his *Natural Seed* and *Special Natural Seed* sons as the result of Paul's statement to the Galatians. Instead of losing members, *Avraham's* family was expanded to include those Gentiles who had come to "trusting faith" in Messiah *Y'shua*.

It must be remembered that the book of Galatians was written to a predominantly Gentile congregation and some of them were toying with the idea of converting to Judaism because they had been told -- probably by Believing Proselytes in the congregation -- that physical circumcision was the only way in which they could be saved. Paul made it clear that if Gentiles truly had "trusting faithfulness" in the blood of *Y'shua* as payment for their past sins, they too could become one of the "sons of Abraham," in a *Spiritual Seed* sense, without the physical cutting. Thus, the Gentiles became citizens of the *Commonwealth of Israel*, along with all of the *Special Natural Seed*, but not through physical circumcision. *Spiritual Seed* circumcision has to be of the heart:

"And the LORD [YHVH] your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."
(Deut. 30:6)

~ Spiritual Seed Jews ~

The same is true for Jews who had accepted *Y'shua*, for they too had their sins forgiven through the same blood as the Gentiles, and had their hearts circumcised through repentance. Heart circumcision made those Messianic Jews both *Special Natural Seed* and *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham*, while the physically uncircumcised Gentiles could only claim to be *Spiritual Seed* unless they went through with the Proselyte process, then they too would become *Special Natural Seed* as well. However, to become a circumcised Proselyte meant the

converted Gentile would be required to keep the "whole law," which included the added rules and regulations of the Rabbis:

"And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law."
(Gal. 5:3)

All of this was known by God far ahead of this particular point in time:

"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying,

'In you all the nations shall be blessed.' (cited Gen. 12:3)

⁹ So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham."
(Gal. 3:8-9)

None of this takes anything away from the covenant promises God made with the children of Israel, *Avraham's Special Natural Seed*, for God does not change:

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

It is important to remember that, according to Paul, there were now three methods by which a person could become a citizen in the *Commonwealth of Israel*. One was through birthright as a *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham*, the second was through Proselyte conversion, and the third was to become a *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* through Messiah *Y'shua*. Uncircumcised Gentiles could only achieve citizenship through the *Spiritual Seed* manner:

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh -- who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands -- ¹² that at that time you were without Christ [*Messiah*], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*] you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [*Messiah*]. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances [dogma = man made ordinances such as found in Oral Torah or church tradition], so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."
(Eph. 2:11-16)

Please remember that becoming a *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* was not just for uncircumcised Gentiles. There were distinct advantages for a *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* (a Jew), to also become a *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham*. That advantage had to do with personal salvation and eternal life in the Kingdom of God, beginning with the 1000 year Millennial reign of King Messiah Y'shua and extending on into the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come), which is described in Revelation 21 and 22. In other words, becoming a *Spiritual Seed* was the door through which both Jew and

Gentile could become unified brethren in the *Righteous Remnant*:

"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."
(Eph. 2:19-22)

While it is true that an uncircumcised Gentile could become a citizen in the *Commonwealth of Israel* through faith in the salvation blood of *Y'shua* -- as ordained by God the Father -- nevertheless, the non-believing Jewish leadership of the day no doubt rejected this method of entry. Eventually, they closed this door by breaking fellowship with the followers of *Y'shua*.

~ The Purpose of the *Torah* ~

The *Torah* was given to the *Special Natural Seed* children of Israel as a standard or a code of conduct. Thus, all *Special Natural Seed* sons of *Avraham* were considered to be citizens of the *Commonwealth of Israel* as their birthright (similar to modern citizenship in most countries). However, it is very important to note that the very same code which comprises the Terms and Conditions of the covenant made at Mount Sinai with the children of Israel, also makes up the "laws" (or Terms and Conditions) of the New Covenant, which is written on the hearts of all *Spiritual Seed Righteous Remnant* Believers in Messiah *Y'shua*, whether Jew or Gentile:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD [YHVH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD [YHVH]. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD [YHVH]: I will put My law [torah] in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

(Jer. 31:31-33)

Notice carefully, the New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not with a Gentile church. Therefore, Gentiles must be joined with the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham*, who have also become *Righteous Remnant Spiritual Seeds* among the children of Israel, in order for both groups to partake of the New Covenant. In addition to accepting the blood of *Y'shua* in payment for personal sin, members of both groups are expected to accept the *Torah* instructions as a code of conduct. Acceptance of the *Torah* commands was expected of all *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* (although it was not always practiced). It was also taught to all *Spiritual Seed* Gentile converts (although future generations abandoned it later):

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

These two things, the blood of *Y'shua* and the *Written Torah*, serve to unite the *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* whether they be Jew or Gentile.

The *Torah* had a second purpose when being applied to the everyday living of carnal men who did not have the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* to assist them in its observance. That purpose was to show the people their sins so they would come to understand their need for a redeemer and desire to have their sins forgiven and thereby become a *Special Natural, Spiritual Seed, Righteous Remnant*, of *Avraham*.

Although it was effective in some degree for both groups, this second purpose of the *Torah* actually gave the pre-Believing *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* an advantage over the Gentiles, for they already knew what displeased God having been taught the Terms and Conditions of the *Written Torah* from childhood. Nevertheless, without becoming part of the *Spiritual Seed Righteous Remnant*, they were still individually under the death penalty "**curse of the law**" because they were not able to keep the *Torah* commandments perfectly:

"For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'" (Gal. 3:10)

It is impossible to be justified by keeping the law simply because flesh and blood is not able to observe it perfectly no matter how good might be the intentions. Therefore, God uses the *Torah* to show everyone (but especially the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* who are the children of Israel) the need to accept *Y'shua's* blood in payment for the Second Death penalty -- the "**curse of the law**" which *Torah* places upon those who sin by breaking its precepts:

"But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith.' ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.' ¹³ Christ [*Messiah*] has redeemed us from the curse of the law [*the Second Death*], having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal. 3:11-14)

All mankind is under the death penalty from sin, whether they know it or not. Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles need to become *Spiritual Seeds* of faithful *Avraham* in order to obtain personal salvation and eternal life as part of the *Righteous Remnant*. When this miracle happens in an individual's life, it means the *Torah* (law) has accomplished one of its intended purposes:

"Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin,

that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] might be given to those who believe.

²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ [*Messiah*], that we might be justified by faith.

²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor [*the death penalty of the Torah is a great teacher*]. ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*]. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [*Messiah*] have put on Christ [*Messiah*].

²⁸ 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*]. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's [*Messiah's*], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:21-29)

All of this has come about because of God's grace or favor on both Jews and Gentiles:

"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom. 11:5)

The *Torah*, then, serves God's purposes by way of two functions:

- ◆ To provide the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* (Israel) with a code of conduct which they could not keep in the flesh, so they would become convicted of their need of the blood of *Y'shua* to save them individually from their sins and --
- ◆ To provide the *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* (both Jew and Gentile) with a standard, or code of conduct, which they will now be able to keep because the *Ruach HaKodesh* is indwelling them.

~ A Kingdom of Kings and Priests ~

The *Righteous Remnant* (of individual called out Believers) which will comprise the ruling body in the Millennial Kingdom of God under *Y'shua*, is now in the process of being selected by the Father on the basis of His grace toward the called out individual *Special Natural Spiritual Seeds* of *Avraham* (the Jews) plus the *Spiritual Seed* Gentiles whom He is grafting into the *Commonwealth of Israel*.

However, this dual *Spiritual Seed* calling does not do away with the corporate covenants God made with the children of Israel, promising them a future as the leading people in the millennial Kingdom of God with David as their national king serving under *King Messiah Y'shua*. This is made clear by the fact that the Millennial city of Jerusalem will have only twelve entrance/exit gates and they are reserved only for the twelve tribes of Israel. Not a single one is labeled Gentile:

"These are the exits of the city. On the north side, ... the three gates northward: one gate for Reuben, one gate for Judah, and one gate for Levi; ³² on the east side, ... three gates: one gate for Joseph, one gate for Benjamin, and one gate for Dan; ³³ on the south side, ..., three gates: one gate for Simeon, one gate for Issachar, and one gate for Zebulun; ³⁴ on the west side, ... three gates: one gate for

Gad, one gate for Asher, and one gate for Naphtali. ³⁵ All the way around *shall be* eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from *that day shall be*: THE LORD [YHVH] *Is* THERE.'" (Ezek. 48:30, 32-35)

The same will be true in the New Jerusalem of the *Olam Haba* (the World to Come) after the Millennium:

"Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are *the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel*:..." (Rev. 21:12)

Y'shua's twelve Jewish apostles will also have their names engraved on New Jerusalem's foundation stones:

"Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." (Rev. 21:14)

These are the same twelve apostles whom *Y'shua* promised will be ruling (in the Millennial Kingdom) under Messiah and King David, over the twelve tribes of Israel, not the twelve tribes of the "church:"

"So Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'" (Matt. 19:28)

In God's wonderful plan, He has graciously allowed Gentiles to be grafted into the *Commonwealth of Israel* so they, as additional *Spiritual Seed of Avraham*, can become an integral part of the future ruling *Righteous Remnant* in the Kingdom of God along with the *Spiritual Seed of Avraham* from among the children of Israel. However, it should be remembered, from what we have just seen in Scripture, that the top leadership in the Kingdom of God comes from the *Special Natural Spiritual Seed of Avraham* (the Israelites), not from the *Spiritual Seed* of the Gentiles. They are not mentioned in Scripture as holding high level positions in the Kingdom, although *Righteous Remnant* Gentiles will also become kings and priests:

"And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.'" (Rev. 5:10)

Lest Gentile readers become despondent over this plan of Almighty God, remember what king David said:

"For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalm 84:10)

If God had the right to chose between *Esav* and *Ya'acov*, does He not also have the right to decide the leadership position of every *Spiritual Seed* Believer in the Kingdom? Truly, God's ways are beyond the comprehension of the mind of man:

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴ 'For who has known the mind of the LORD [YHVH]? Or who has become His counselor?' (Isa. 40:13)

³⁵ 'Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?' (Job. 41:11)

" ³⁶ For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen." (Rom. 11:33-36)

~ The Unique Seed ~

We now turn to Reisinger's fourth "seed," which he calls the *Unique Seed of Avraham* -- that is Messiah *Y'shua*. This category sometimes confuses the "seed" issue because some take it to mean that from this point on the only proper definition for the term "Seed of Abraham" is *Y'shua* and *Y'shua* only:

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ [*Messiah*]. ¹⁷ And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ [*Messiah*], that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. ¹⁹ What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions [CJB = to create transgressions], till the Seed [*Messiah*] should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one." (Gal. 3:16-20)

Does this passage mean that Messiah *Y'shua* is the only true "Seed of Avraham?" We have just spent several pages observing that not to be the case, for there are millions of people on the face of the earth who can legitimately claim to be *Avraham's Special Natural Seed* (Israelites) and many millions (billions?) more who are his *Natural Seed* through *Avraham's* other seven natural sons.

However, the *Unique Seed of Avraham* is absolutely required for there to be a constituency in the *Spiritual Seed* category. Without, *Y'shua*, the *Unique Seed*, there could be no *Righteous Remnant* consisting of *Spiritual Seed* from among any of the *Natural* or *Special Natural Seeds* of *Avraham*, or from the Gentiles. In this one sense, Messiah is the only "true" seed of *Avraham*, since He was the only one who was a *Spiritual Seed of Avraham* strictly by His own standing and who has the power to bring others into that category.

Please recall that after chastising those Gentiles who wanted to become circumcised in "order to be saved," Paul wrote that because they had accepted the blood of *Y'shua* as full payment for their sins, they had already become *Spiritual Seed of Abraham*:

"Therefore know that those who are of faith are [*also*] sons of Abraham." (Gal. 3:7)

There are *Natural Seeds* (all the physical descendants of *Avraham*, most of whom are considered Gentiles), *Special Natural Seeds* (Israelites and Proselytes), and *Spiritual Seeds*

(called out Israelites, Proselytes, and Gentiles), who are all part of the all encompassing *Seed of Avraham*. However, no one, Jew or Gentile, can become a *Spiritual Seed*, and member of the *Righteous Remnant*, without accepting the shed blood of the *Unique Seed*, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. Thus, only *Spiritual Seeds* will have a part in the First Resurrection and become kings and priests in the Kingdom of God:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [Messiah], and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)

Y'shua, the *Unique Seed of Avraham*, is the door through which anyone, *Special Seed* Israel or Gentile, can enter into the *Righteous Remnant* of the *Spiritual Seed of Avraham*. Therefore, the *Spiritual Seed* are all privileged to be called **"sons of God"** because of their faith in Messiah *Y'shua* and relationship with Him:

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua].²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [Messiah] have put on Christ [Messiah].²⁸ 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].²⁹ And if you are Christ's [Messiah's], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29)

Through faith, all mankind has the opportunity to become the *Spiritual Seed of Avraham*.

~ The First Century "Church" ~

Because only *Spiritual Seeds* will be part of the *Righteous Remnant* in this age, many say this group constitutes a "church" (congregation) which has replaced the *Special Natural Seed* nation of Israel. While the first part of that statement is true, the second part is false. Again, it is necessary to state that the term "church" conjures up all kinds of incorrect connotations such as:

- ◆ The Roman Catholic Church
- ◆ All Christians, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant.
- ◆ Only Protestants.
- ◆ Only those who have spoken in tongues.
- ◆ Etc., etc.

It was true in the first century, and it is equally true today, that only the *Spiritual Seed of Avraham*, can gain membership into the *Righteous Remnant* of the children of Israel through the shed blood of the *Unique Seed*, *Y'shua*. Being merely a *Natural Seed* or a *Special Natural Seed* without the blood of Messiah does not qualify a person to have a part in the Millennial Kingdom of God.

However, being *Spiritual Seed* members from the *Special Natural Seed of Avraham* (Israelites or Jews) does have advantages. For example, the first century *Nazarenes* (followers of *Y'shua* from Nazareth) were initially a sect within the *Special Natural Seed* (Judaism). Therefore, leadership in

the *Righteous Remnant* was solely in the hands of Believing Jews, as *Y'shua* indicated to Peter:

"And I also say to you that you are Peter [petros = small rock or stone], and on this rock [petra = a large rock or stone] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18)

Peter was not the *petra* (large rock) upon which the *ekklesia* or *kahal* (congregation) of *Y'shua* was to be built. That *petra* was Messiah *Y'shua* -- the One who had followed the *Special Natural Seed* children of Israel in the Wilderness:

"For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ [Messiah]." (I Cor. 10:4)

However, Peter was appointed, by *Y'shua*, to become one of the new religious leaders and judges, not only among the *Spiritual Seed of Avraham*, but also among the *Special Natural Seed of Israel* (the Jews) as well (both Believers or nonbelievers):

¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:19)

It is our opinion that the first century Apostles should have been accepted by the house of Judah as their new spiritual leaders, in place of the corrupt Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees. (This is why they wanted to get rid of Him.) However, they were not allowed that privilege:

"Jesus [Y'shua] said to them, 'Have you never read in the Scriptures:

""The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's [YHVH's] doing, And it is marvelous in our eyes?" (Psalm 118:22-23)

⁴³ 'Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation [leadership or people] bearing the fruits of it. ⁴⁴ And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.'

⁴⁵ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them." (Matt. 21:42-45)

The word "nation" in verse 43 has already been discussed in the last chapter. In this context it could be better translated as people, meaning leadership. The kingdom of God was not taken from the entire nation of Judah. However, God did remove the leadership of that physical kingdom type from the Chief Priests and Pharisees. Since the Chief Priests and Pharisees refused to recognize *Y'shua* as the Messiah, and they refused to give up their leadership to His disciples, as God required, their national leadership was stripped from them at the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

Some might say that *Y'shua's* disciples could never have taken leadership positions in the Temple because they were not *cohenim* (coh-hen-eem' = priests). However, that was not true,

for shortly after *Y'shua's* resurrection a number of *cohenim* came to faith:

"Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

However, instead of accepting *Y'shua* as Messiah and selecting the Chief Priests from among His qualified disciples, the corrupt leadership of Judea refused to accept His followers into those leadership positions they were supposed to obtain. Thus, many *Special Natural Seed* Jews followed their old corrupt leadership instead of the new righteous leadership ordained by *Y'shua*. It all became a moot point in 70 CE when the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were dispersed throughout the earth.

Today, we await the restoration of all things, including righteous leadership. That leadership is not the Pope in Rome, the Archbishop of Canterbury in England, the heads of Protestant denominations, or TV Evangelists. The new leadership in the Kingdom of God will be selected from among the *Spiritual Seed Righteous Remnant* of the *Commonwealth of Israel* under the kingship of *Y'shua*. Until that time we must look only to *Y'shua*, who sits at the right hand of our Father in heaven. He only is our true spiritual leader:

"Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. ¹⁰ And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ [*Messiah*]. ¹¹ But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. ¹² And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Matt. 23:9-12)

This does not mean that Messianic Congregations should be a leaderless free-for-all. There definitely needs to be righteous leadership in every individual congregation. However, there will be no Messianic leaders to be found within the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* (today's nation of Israel as well as Judaism at large), until *Y'shua* Himself comes to claim that role.

~ God's Choice ~

What then is the *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* (those who have been called by God and believe in *Y'shua*) if they are not a "church" separate from Israel? This is an important question and the answer is found in another question asked by Paul:

"I say then, has God cast away His people?" (Rom. 11:1)

Paul's answer is emphatic:

"Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,

³ 'LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life?' (from: I Kings 19:10, 14 NKJ)

⁴ But what does the divine response say to him?

" 'I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.'" (cited: I Kings 19:19)
(Rom. 11:1-4)

God has not turned His back on Israel the way the *Replacement Theologians* would like us to believe. Rather, He has called a *Righteous Remnant* from within the original stock of *Special Natural Seed* and elevated them to an even higher plain:

"Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace." (Rom. 11:5)

But what about the others -- those who have not been called or answered the call?:

"What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

"God has given them a spirit of stupor, Eyes that they should not see And ears that they should not hear, To this very day.' (from: Isa. 29:10, 13 & Deut. 29:3-4)

⁹ And David says:

'Let their table become a snare and a trap, A stumbling block and a recompense to them.

¹⁰ Let their eyes be darkened, so that they do not see, And bow down their back always.'" (from: Psalm 69:23-24)
(Rom. 11:7-10)

This all sounds pretty dire for non-believing Jews. It is no wonder so many fall into the *Replacement Theology* trap. How can God possibly extricate the *Special Natural Seed* (Jews) from this condemnation ditch into which He seems to have placed those who have not answered His call?

First of all, mercy and compassion are God's prerogative, and have nothing to do with the desire of any human individual. Does that make God unrighteous because He has called some *Special Natural Seed* to become *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* and not others?:

"As it is written,
" 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' (from: Mal. 1:2-3)

¹⁴ What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! ¹⁵ For He says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.'" (from: Ex. 33:19)

¹⁶ So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." (Rom. 9:13-16)

We believe the reason God chose to exclude many of the *Special Natural Seed* from the *Spiritual Righteous Remnant* at this time, was so the remnant did not become unattractive to Gentiles by becoming a strictly Jewish sect. In this manner, God created an attractive opportunity for Gentiles to be brought into the fold:

"I say then, have they [Israelites] stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles."
(Rom. 11:11)

Rather than becoming arrogant because *Special Natural Seed* Israelites have been cut out of the *Olive Tree of Israel* so Gentiles could be grafted in -- Gentiles should humbly seek the calling of more Israelites (Jews) into the fold so they too can have a place in the end time *Righteous Remnant*.

Does all of this make God unfair?

~ God's Timing ~

It is not a matter of God's fairness, it is a matter of God's timing. Much of *Replacement Theology* and their misunderstanding of the *Seed of Abraham* stems from the Christian doctrine of heaven and hell and the mistaken doctrine which holds this is the "only" day of salvation. Therefore, they teach that unless a person "accepts" Christ and says the "Sinner's Prayer" today, he/she will have no hope of eternal life in heaven (a place never promised to Believers), but instead face the horror of eternal life in a non-Scriptural ever burning hellfire:

"For He says:

**"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."**

(cited Isa. 49:8)

**"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the
day of salvation."**

(II Cor. 6:2)

The crux of the problem here is the underlined word "the." If this is the only day of salvation, then the mainstream Christian view may be correct. However, an accurate translation of this verse reads as follows in *Young's Literal Translation*:

"... for He saith, 'In an acceptable time I did hear thee, and in a day of salvation I did help thee, lo, now is a well-accepted time; lo, now, a day of salvation,'"

(II Cor. 6:2 YLT)

The *Interlinear Bible* by J.P. Green confirms this translation.

If today is not the only day of salvation, when is there another and how many are there? In our opinion the answer lies in the following greatly misunderstood passage:

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books."

(Rev. 20:11-12)

The *Great White Throne Judgment* is just that -- a judgment. It is not an automatic sentencing. It is the judgment phase, not the penalty phase. Everyone not in the First Resurrection will be judged according to their works at the

close of the Millennium just prior to the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come):

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸ so Christ [Messiah] was offered once to bear the sins of many."
(Heb. 9:27-28)

Some would say this verse applies to everyone at the instant of their first death. We disagree. This judgment pertains only to those resurrected in the Second Resurrection mentioned in Rev. 20. Those who are the *Spiritual Seed of Abraham* (today's *Righteous Remnant*) are being judged right now:

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

(II Pet. 4:17)

The *Righteous Remnant* are the blessed ones who will have their part in the First Resurrection:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, ..."
(Rev. 20:6)

Those who remain in the grave until the Second Resurrection are still under the threat of a "second death," but that is not a foregone conclusion, otherwise there would be no purpose for a Second Resurrection. Why would God bother to resurrect all those people just so He could say: "You should have listened to the fire and brimstone Christian evangelists," and then throw them all in the Lake of Fire?

At the *Great White Throne Judgment* there will be those who are not found worthy to be written into the *Book of Life* and they will experience the Second Death, but not eternal torment in hellfire. (For a more complete understanding of this Scriptural truth, please request our *Death and Resurrection* booklet.)

With this understanding, we can now get a glimpse of why Paul was able to make the following enigmatic statement found near the end of Romans 11:

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

No, not all Israel will be a part of the *Spiritual Seed* who comprise the *Righteous Remnant* of the First Resurrection. However, if God decides to grant them all entrance into the *Book of Life* at the time of the *Great White Throne Judgment*, enabling them to participate in the *Olam Haba*, that is His prerogative:

"For He says to Moses,

"I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." (cited Ex. 33:19)

"¹⁶ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy." (Rom. 9:15-16)

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33)

~ Summary ~

John Reisinger is correct when he identifies Abraham's Four Seeds:

- ◆ The *Natural Seed* of *Avraham* are all of the physical descendants of *Avraham*, such as *Ishmael*, *Yitzchak* and the sons of *Keturah*. (For an interesting article on the *Natural Seed* of *Avraham* and the Gentiles, request the booklet *A Biblical History of the Lost Tribes* which contains an article called *Abraham's Math*.)
- ◆ The *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* are the physical descendants of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov* -- the people identified in Scripture as the children of Israel. Today the best known of these descendants are the Jewish people, although there are, no doubt, many others.
- ◆ The *Spiritual Seed* of *Avraham* are those who have accepted the blood of Messiah *Y'shua* as payment for their sins. This category includes both the above category and Gentiles who are grafted into the *Commonwealth of Israel* as a result of their faith in *Y'shua*. All of these *Spiritual Seed* sons of *Avraham* constitute the *Righteous Remnant* which will have a place in the Millennial Kingdom of God and be in the First Resurrection.
- ◆ The *Unique Seed* of *Avraham* consists only of Messiah *Y'shua* whose perfect sinless life as the Son of God has made it possible for *Spiritual Seeds* to be called. *Y'shua* is the goal toward which all of the Hebrew Scriptures (OT) point. Without *Y'shua's* shed blood, as payment for our sins, we would all be

spiritually lost and subject to the Second Death in the Lake of Fire.

None of the above can cause the *Special Natural Seed* of *Avraham* to lose their status as the original Chosen People of God. Therefore, the covenants which God made with the children of Israel will be honored in the age to come, when God regathers all Israel and places them in the Promised Land:

"For thus says the LORD [YHVH]:

'Sing with gladness for Jacob,

And shout among the chief of the nations;

Proclaim, give praise, and say,

"O LORD [YHVH], save Your people,

The remnant of Israel!"

⁸ Behold, I will bring them from the north country,

A great throng shall return there.

⁹ They shall come with weeping,

And with supplications I will lead them. ...

For I am a Father to Israel,

And Ephraim is My firstborn. ...

He who scattered Israel will gather him,

And keep him as a shepherd does his flock."

¹¹ For the LORD [YHVH] has redeemed Jacob,

And ransomed him from the hand of one stronger

than he."

(Jer. 31:7-11)

May you all be granted *Spiritual Seed* status through the shed blood of Messiah *Y'shua* and be part of the *Righteous Remnant* in the Kingdom of God.

Shalom!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ World's Oldest Hatred ~

Let all those who hate Zion
Be put to shame and turned back.
Psalm 129:5



Even a brief survey of the history of mankind reveals that history books are not written about mankind's love for one another, but about mankind's hatred, which finds its fulfillment in destruction. On a private or individual level this destruction is called murder -- which can be actual physical killing, or through the spoken word which destroys another person's reputation or livelihood. On the tribal or national level it ultimately manifests itself in legalized killing -- in other words through warfare. Such is the case today, and as a result the world is full of strife and warfare because the world is full of hatred:

"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matt. 24:6-8)

Surely there are those in America who believe that if the United States ruled the world all would be peace and prosperity. However, no government of mankind can bring peace and prosperity to the world because none of them recognize the absolute sovereignty of God (*YHVH* = the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) as the Lawgiver.

Adolf Hitler believed he was a type of messiah who was going to conquer the world and bring peace to the earth. He believed that once the Third Reich was established it would last for a thousand years -- a millennium. Political leaders today, whether on the right or the left, seem to have this same basic flaw in their thinking. However, true peace and freedom will never come through the perverted political philosophies of men.

Today the world finds itself well into "the beginning of sorrows" spoken of by *Y'shua* יֵשׁוּעַ. From whence do all of these wars originate? James had an answer. (Look at the following passage in terms of mankind generally, not just what goes on within the Messianic Community):

"Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ² You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:1-4)

Those who are friends with the world want and want and want (covet) still more -- but they never receive satisfactory fulfillment of their desires, maybe because they are seeking the wrong things, in the wrong places, and/or with wrong motives. People seek many things: power, money, and sexual gratification, to name a few. Such people are generally not seeking the Kingdom of God:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3)

~ The Origin of Hatred ~

From whence comes hatred? Is it just a natural condition within the heart of man or did it have an origin? Is all hatred wrong?

Taking the last question first, the answer is that to "hate" evil is considered, by God, a form of righteousness:

**"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
And find out knowledge and discretion.
¹³ The fear of the LORD [*YHVH*] is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogance and the evil way
And the perverse mouth I hate."** (Prov. 8:12-13)

Hatred began before man was even created. It was *Lucifer** (the one who became *HaSatan* הַשָּׂטָן (the Adversary) who brought evil into *Gan Eden* גֶּן עֵדֶן (Gahn Ay-dehn). A key component of that evil was the attitude of hatred -- for *Lucifer* was jealous and wanted to be like God:

**"For you have said in your heart:
I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High."** (Isa. 14:13-14)

Instead of elevating his throne above that of God, *Lucifer* was cast down to the earth:

**"Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your
splendor;
I cast you to the ground,
I laid you before kings,
That they might gaze at you."** (Ezek. 28:17)

~ A Brief History of Hatred ~

HaSatan's hatred first manifested itself among mankind in the person of *Kayin* קַיִן (Kah-yeen' = Cain). He hated his brother *Hevel* הֵבֶל (Heh-vehl' = Abel) because God accepted *Hevel's* offering and did not accept *Kayin's*:

"Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." (Gen. 4:8)

* In Hebrew the word translated as "Lucifer" in our English bibles is *Haylal* הַיְלָל (Hay-layl'). It is only used one time in Scripture and that is in Isaiah 14:12. It is defined as "light-bearer."

With whom was *Kayin* really angry? His hatred was actually toward God. However, since God was not available for elimination, *Kayin* took it out on the one whose offering God had accepted -- his blood brother *Hevel*. Thus, the very first act of human hatred, recorded in Scripture, had a religious root. This root cause erupted in the heart of *Kayin* as a fierce jealousy which manifested itself in murder, the ultimate act of hatred. From it sprang the pagan religions with their dark view of multiple "gods" -- those who supposedly had to be appeased by human sacrifice lest they become angry and punish men with famines, pestilence, or destruction.

Other hatred's against God's people, as recorded in Scripture, include:

- ◆ *Ishmael* יִשְׁמָעֵאל (Eesh'-mah-ehl) who was jealous of *Yitz'chak* יִצְחָק (Yeetz sock' = Isaac) because *Yitz'chak* was the "son of promise" who was chosen by God to inherit *Avraham's* אַבְרָהָם (Ahv'-rah-hahm = Abraham) calling to be a patriarch of God's people:

"And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing [mocking].¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.'" (Gen. 21:9-10)

- ◆ *Esau* עֵשָׂו (Ay-sahv') who wanted to kill *Ya'acov* יַעֲקֹב (Yah ah'-cove) because God decided to give *Ya'acov* both the birthright and the blessing:

"So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.'" (Gen. 27:41)

- ◆ *Amelek* עֲמֹלֵק (Ah'-mah-lehk) was a descendant of *Esau* and was the people group which first attacked the children of Israel during their trek to Mt. Sinai. They have been a perpetual enemy of Israel ever since:

"And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD [YHVH]-Is-My-Banner;¹⁶ for he said, 'Because the LORD [YHVH] has sworn: the LORD [YHVH] will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.'" (Ex. 17:15-16)

Notice that when someone sets themselves against God's Chosen, they set themselves against God Himself. Therefore, God will fight and win the battle for His people, but only in His own timing. We need to be very careful whose side we join:

"For the LORD'S [YHVH's] portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.¹⁰ He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." (Deut. 32:9-10)

"For thus says the LORD [YHVH] of hosts: 'He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye.'" (Zech. 2:8)

- ◆ *Haman* חָמָן (Hah'-mahn) so hated *Mordecai* מֹרְדֵכַי the Jew he wanted to hang him on the gallows:

**"So the king said, 'Who is in the court?'
"Now Haman had just entered the outer court of the king's palace to suggest that the king hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him." (Esther 6:4)**

A close check of *Haman's* genealogy shows that he was a descendant of *Amalek*. Interestingly enough, it seems that many people, who today hate the Jewish people, are descended from those individuals mentioned above. The most obvious case being the descendants of *Ishmael* (the Arab people). Thankfully, such hatred is not a universal trait among *Ishmael's* descendants -- for many Arabs truly do love their Jewish cousins.

This is also the case among some who claim descent through the "Lost Tribes" of the House of Israel (sometimes referred to as *Ephraim*). They often express a frustration with those of the House of Judah (the Jews) and vice versa:

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.¹³ The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." (Isa. 11:12-13)

Thus we see that hatred for God's Chosen People is not a new phenomenon -- but goes back to the beginning of mankind's time here on earth. Sadly, the hatred for God's chosen is often most intense within the extended family:

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword.³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;³⁶ and a man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Matt. 10:34-36)

When God places His hand of love upon an individual or group of people, they can expect hatred to follow:

"Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake.²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets." (Luke 6:22-23)

~ Early Persecutions of Believers ~

The early true Believers in *Y'shua* were also among God's special or chosen people. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Adversary inspired men to persecute them. In this case the persecutors came from among the Jewish leadership:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."
(I Pet. 2:9-10)

Scripture leaves no doubt that certain leaders of the Jewish people in Judea (those who had demanded that *Y'shua* be crucified by the Romans) also wanted to stamp out anyone who was following His teachings. It began with threats:

"Now as they [*Peter and John*] spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, ² being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus [*Y'shua*] the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening."
(Acts 4:1-3)

"But when they had commanded them [*Peter and John*] to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, ¹⁶ saying, 'What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.'

¹⁸ And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus [*Y'shua*]."
(Acts 4:15-18)

When threats did not work, the *Sanhedrin* turned to more violent methods:

"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*], receive my spirit.'

⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep."
(Acts 7:59-60)

A young man named Saul took up the banner of hatred against the Messianic Believers:

"Now Saul was consenting to his [*Stephen's*] death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. ³ As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison."
(Acts 8:1-3)

Saul eventually journeyed toward Damascus with permission from the High Priest to persecute the Messianic Believers he found there:

"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or

women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem."

(Acts 9:1-2)

Did God hate Saul? No, but He surely hated what Saul was doing. However, that did not interfere with Saul's calling to become the Apostle to the Gentiles:

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

Once again, the root cause of this hatred against the Believers was religious, but with political overtones as well -- for the corrupt leadership of 1st century Judea did not want anything to happen that might disrupt the tenuous relationship between the Jewish leadership and the Roman government.

~ Modern Hatred ~

Today, the most virulent hatred against the Jewish people comes from the Arab Muslims. This fundamentalist Muslim hatred is against the Jew first, but also against the United States (which generally supports Israel) and those Christians, throughout the world, who are pro-Israel. However, in the relationship between the Jews and Christians, we find that the tables are turned from what existed in the early years after the crucifixion of *Y'shua*. Now hatred and persecution is too often Christian against Jew.

It seems hard to believe that some people in the Christian world, who profess their belief and acceptance of the Jewish Savior *Y'shua* (Jesus) and who hold to the timeless validity of Scripture, could be anti-Semitic. However, that is sometimes the case. It is our opinion that the basic premise of this evil hatred stems from an ancient "Church" teaching that the "Jews killed Christ," and therefore are to be despised, harassed, and even martyred, just because they are Jewish.*

This ancient false doctrine teaches that God abandoned the Jewish people because they rejected *Y'shua* and that all Jews who are not "Christians" are doomed to burn forever in hell. Therefore, over the centuries, some perverted minds have reasoned that it is acceptable, in God's sight, to kill Jews.

It was actually the Romans who put *Y'shua* to death, not the Jews, even though it was the leadership of the Jews who requested capitol punishment in His case. However, when it came to the common Jews of the 1st century, thousands believed in *Y'shua* and became followers of "The Way:"

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

(Acts 21:20)

The Scriptures are clear: neither the Jews, as a people, nor the Romans, as a people, are to be held responsible for the crucifixion of *Y'shua*. It was a political decision made, in that

* To the best of our knowledge the official position of the "Church" no longer holds to this doctrine. Nevertheless, it is still believed and taught by some to this very day.

day, by the leadership of both groups in a vain effort to stamp out what they believed would become an insurrection. What both groups of people (Jew and Gentile) did not know at the time, was they were carrying out *Y'shua's* purpose for coming to this earth -- to die for our sins:

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ [*Messiah*] died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ..." (I Cor. 15:3)

It was our sins (the sins of the entire human race) which caused *Y'shua* to go to the stake. We, and all our ancestors and descendants are the ones who are truly responsible:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:16-17)

~ Blood Libel ~

One of the most bizarre stories, which has been a curse to the Jewish people over many centuries, is called the "Blood Libel." This belief claims that Jews, prior to each Passover, seek out Christian children to sacrifice so they can use their blood to make Passover matzah. While most Christians today find this idea both abhorrent and absurd, there are still cases where ignorant people make this claim. Any Christian who has read the Old Testament should know that one of the strictest *Written Torah* prohibitions (the very foundation of Jewish belief) is to abstain from blood in any way shape or form:

"Whoever eats any blood, that person shall be cut off from his people." (Lev. 7:27)

Since the blood of clean animals is to be avoided at all costs, how much more should human blood be avoided. Yet this story still makes the rounds every year at Passover. Over the centuries the circulation of this story has caused thousands of Jews to be martyred.

Accompanying the "Jews killed Christ" and "Blood Libel" doctrines is another which falsely teaches that the "Church" has replaced Israel as God's chosen people and that He is no longer dealing with Israel as a people, only with individuals. This doctrine is known as *Replacement Theology*. While it is true that Messianic Believers in *Y'shua*, who follow "The Way," are God's special *Righteous Remnant* (grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel), called out from both the children of Israel and the nations (gentiles), that does not mean the Jewish people as a whole have lost their special status. God is big enough to love both groups:

"Concerning the gospel they [*the Jews who do not accept Y'shua*] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰ For as you [*Gentile Romans*] were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their [*the Jews*] disobedience, ³¹ even so these [*Jews*] also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you [*Gentiles*] they also may obtain mercy. ³² For God has committed

them all [*both Jews and Gentiles*] to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all." (Rom. 11:28-32)

~ The Voice of HaSatan ~

In addition, there are those who claim to be Believers in Jesus (*Y'shua*) who say that all Jews are automatically part of the *Synagogue of Satan*, spoken of in the book of *Revelation*:

"Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie -- indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." (Rev. 3:9)

When you hear Jews being excoriated just for being Jewish, you are hearing the voice of *HaSatan*, the Adversary, who wants to destroy the Jewish people through such individuals -- just as he also wants to destroy those individuals who believe and teach this lie. When a person becomes an ally with *HaSatan*, in his perpetual war against God's chosen people, they become part of the Adversary's evil spirit and a destroyer right along with him. What many such people do not realize is that, by harboring hatred for the Jewish people, they become a partaker of the Adversary's spirit of hatred, in opposition to becoming a partaker of the spirit of God's love.

~ The Unique Calling of Judah ~

The Jewish people have not been written off by God and thrown into the trash bin of history. This is proven historically by the fact that the Jewish people still exist, as both a people group and a religious faith, despite 2000 years of dispersion and some of the worst kind of persecution. Only God could have sustained them throughout all these centuries without their disappearing from view as did the Ten Lost Tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel and the ancient people of numerous pagan nations. God's support is further proven by the fact that the House of Judah has now been called to begin the return of the children of Israel to *Tzion* תְּצִיּוֹן (Tzee-own' = Zion or the promised land) just as prophesied:

"In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place -- Jerusalem. ⁷ The LORD [*YHVH*] will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah." (Zech. 12:6-7)

While God has already begun the task of returning the House of Judah to the land, He is reserving His spiritual calling of the majority of the Jewish people to fit His own time frame. When that occurs it will be as Paul wrote:

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

**'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
27 For this is My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.'**" (cited: Isa. 59:20-21, 27::9)
(Rom. 11:25-27)

In the meantime Believers are commanded to not only love those in the Faith, but even to love those whom they consider to be enemies:

"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, 45 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." (Matt. 5:44-45)

~ History Brings Understanding ~

In the early days of Roman rule, Judaism held a special place in the Roman Empire. Jews were allowed to follow their own religious practices and were not required to worship the Emperor, as were other people (i.e. the pagans). However, there was always a faction of Jews (primarily the Zealots) who agitated for a total break with Roman rule -- they wanted revolution and independence. Their desire for freedom from Rome worked its way down into the ranks of many of the common people, while the majority of the upper classes continued to support the Romans so they could remain in positions of leadership under Roman rule.

Although the first century *ekklesia* (congregation of Messianic Believers) was far from a totally unified body, it did have a central "headquarters" in Jerusalem (not Rome as claimed by the Roman Catholic Church). This headquarters congregation was first led by *Ya'acov* or James, the brother of *Y'shua*, until his death in 62 CE. *Ya'acov* was succeeded by 14 more Jerusalem "bishops"* which led the *ekklesia* until the *Bar Kochba* revolt which ended in 135 CE. During those 100 plus years, Messianic Believers looked to Jerusalem for guidance when questions of doctrine and practice arose, as can be seen in Scripture when the question of Gentile conversion to Judaism was taken up by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).

Ominous rumblings first began to take place during the reign of the Emperor Claudius (41-54 CE) which effected both Jews and Messianic Believers in the capitol city of Rome:

"And he [Paul] found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them."
(Acts 18:2)

* The first fifteen leaders of the Jerusalem Synagogue (congregation) were listed by Eusebius, the 4th century Christian historian, in his *Ecclesiastical History* as:

"James the brother of our Lord; after whom, the second was Simeon, the third Justus, the fourth Zaccheus, the fifth Tobias, the sixth Benjamin, the seventh John, the eighth Matthew, the ninth Philip, the tenth Seneca, the eleventh Justus, the twelfth Levi, the thirteenth Ephres, the fourteenth Joseph, and finally, the fifteenth Judas. These are all the bishops of Jerusalem that filled up the time from the apostles [to the rule of the Emperor Hadrian] ... all of the circumcision [i.e. Jewish Believers]." (p. 131)

Although the relationship of the Jews to Claudius was generally good, and he did uphold their privilege to worship according to their religion, there appears to have been some type of problem within the city of Rome itself. Here is how the *Encyclopedia Judaica* explains it:

"According to Suetonius, Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, but the details are obscure. Disputes between Jews and members of the Christian sect in Rome had caused disturbances and Claudius apparently either banished certain Jews or prohibited them from assembling, which led to their voluntary departure, sometime between 41 and 50 CE. It is generally accepted that the emperor's aim was the preservation of peace and not an act of hostility toward the Jews." (*CD-Rom Version*)

This banishment of the Jews from Rome had an effect upon the Messianic Believers as well, because, as far as the Romans could tell, the Messianics looked and acted pretty much like Jews. In other words, they kept the outward signs of Judaism: Sabbath, Festivals, and the eating of only clean meats. Like the Jews, the Believers in *Y'shua* would not have participated in Emperor worship as did the pagans. They were given this liberty because, at that time, they were still considered to be a sect of Judaism.

It was under the rule of Nero (54-68 CE), when the Roman Church suffered some of its worst persecution. Nero burned down a great portion of the city of Rome so he could rebuild it the way he wanted it and then blamed the fire on the "Christians." It was during the subsequent persecution when the Apostle Paul was put to death. This event made Roman Jews want to pull even further away from the Roman Church. Neither side wanted to be persecuted because of supposed transgressions against Rome by the other side. If persecution was to occur, each group preferred to be persecuted for their own beliefs and actions.

Roman-Jewish antagonism came to a head as a result of the Jewish revolt, which culminated in the destruction of the Temple and the sack of Jerusalem in 70 CE. After this time the Jews no longer held special status with the Roman government, but instead were considered enemies of the state. Thus began a general persecution of the Jewish people, no matter where they lived in the Empire.

As a result of this revolt, the Messianic Believers also suffered persecution because they were still looked upon as somehow connected with Judaism. Early in the revolt, the Messianic Believers, residing in Jerusalem, had been able to escape the destruction of that city because they had been warned by *Y'shua* to flee when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her."
(Luke 21:20-21)

Tradition has it that the Messianic Believers fled to the city of *Pella* across the Jordan River to the northeast. As a result, relations between non-Messianic Jews and Messianic Believers deteriorated even further.

The final and complete break between mainstream Judaism and the Messianic Believers took place during the *Bar Kokhba* Revolt (132-135 CE), when Rabbi Akiva declared *Bar Kokhba* to be the Messiah. Messianic Believers in *Y'shua* refused to fight under the banner of a False Messiah, so they were totally ostracized from that point on by the non-Messianic Jews. During this final revolt, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews were forbidden to enter the city for many years. It was Rabbi Akiva's successors who then finished the job of reconstituting Judaism into what has today become Rabbinic Judaism.

~ The Great Divide ~

Once this final break between mainstream Judaism and the Messianic Believers had taken place, the Gentile Messianic Believers of Rome wanted a complete separation from any doctrines or practices that smacked of Judaism. It was at Rome where the Gentile Messianic Believers developed the strongest anti-Judaic feelings, although there were some anti-Jewish rumblings in other predominantly Gentile congregations as well.

The Church leadership in Rome believed they needed to find a way to become considered a separate religion from Judaism. What better way than to abandon the Sabbath, Festivals, and food laws? -- all of the outward signs that people could see and observe which had, for years, made the Messianic Believers look like a sect of Judaism. To make their break with Judaism even more obvious, the Church leadership at Rome embraced what was originally a derogatory term -- "Christian" -- as a name for their "new" religion. To assist in accomplishing their task, church leaders attempted to find Scriptures to support their new views. This was done, in part, by reinterpreting some of the difficult to understand passages found in the epistles of the Apostle Paul:

" ... and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation -- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." (II Pet. 3:15-16)

Another move was to discredit the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) by teaching that it was little more than a history book and that the laws contained therein had been "done away." Those Messianic Believers who insisted on following the ancient paths of *Torah* observance were given a derogatory label -- "Judaizers."

Over time a total change took place in the makeup and practices of the early church. In place of local control of congregations, a centralized church government was developed patterned after the government of the Roman Empire. Thus, Roman Church government eventually took to itself the responsibility of making all of the doctrinal decisions for what they now call the "universal" or "catholic" church.

However, for decades, these attempts at divorcing themselves from Judaism did not prevent them from also suffering heavy persecution (even unto death) at the hands of the Roman Empire. Rather than being persecuted as Jews, this

new "Christian" church suffered persecution on their own. Nevertheless, as new converts to "Christianity" increased, they eventually found themselves gaining in a certain amount of political power merely because of their growing numbers.

~ Enter Constantine ~

Eventually, this numerical power of the Roman Church translated into political power when, early in the 4th century, the Emperor Constantine recognized Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine is an enigmatic figure in the Roman Church. Some believe he was a saint (because he made the Roman Church the state religion of the Roman Empire and put an end to its persecution) -- others believe that he was the devil incarnate because he led the church away from the Hebrew Scriptures and their Hebrew heritage and turned the Church into a pagan influenced organization that was totally against the Jewish people.

The story of Constantine is most interesting, however space permits only a concise telling of the tale here. A key element in the story involves the year 312 CE when Constantine and his army met Maxentius and his army at the Milvian Bridge over the Tiber River to determine who would be the sole emperor in the western half of the empire.

The night before the battle, Constantine claimed to have seen a cross in the sky accompanied by the words *In Hoc Signo Vincas* (In This Sign Conquer). This was interpreted to be a signal that Constantine would win his big battle for sole control of the western Roman Empire if he would favor the "Christian" God. This despite the fact that the cross was an ancient and venerable pagan symbol that was already part of the insignia worn by certain members of Constantine's army.

Constantine won the battle and subsequently threw Maxentius off the bridge into the Tiber where he drowned. Thus, the Emperor Constantine became a "Christian," as did his army and eventually the entire empire. Most who know the story are not aware that Constantine was not baptized until several years later on his deathbed.

James Carroll, in his *National Book Award* winning volume *Constantine's Sword*, has this to say about Constantine conquering the empire under the banner of the Roman Church:

"In a way, this is the second-greatest story ever told, at least concerning what we think of as Western civilization. After the death and Resurrection of Jesus, the conversion of Constantine may have been the most implication-laden event in Western history. If we rarely think so, that is because we take utterly for granted the structures of culture, mind, politics, spirituality, and even calendar (Sunday as holiday) to which it led. None of those structures was foreordained ... When the power of the empire became joined to the ideology of the Church, the empire was immediately recast and re-energized, and the Church became an entity so different from what had preceded it as to be almost unrecognizable. It goes without saying that the conversion of Constantine, for Church and empire both, led to consequences better and worse -- although not for Jews, for whom, from this, nothing good would come." (p 171 underlining ours)

Neither would any good come to the Messianic Believers who were attempting to follow:

"... the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."
(Jude 1:3)

As a result of joining church and state under the banner of combining the Roman Empire with the Roman Catholic Church (creating the "Holy" Roman Empire), it became a monolithic power unequalled, at that time, anywhere else in the world. Those who held to the true faith of *Y'shua* found themselves persecuted and pilloried unto the ends of the earth. Consequently, only a small remnant of Messianic Believers (who kept Sabbath and Festivals) have ever existed at any one time down through the ensuing centuries. Their story is almost totally hidden from history and can be found chiefly in Roman Catholic accounts which describe persecution against sects which the Church characterizes as "Judaizers:"

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

~ Hatred Grows ~

Following the above events, hatred against the Jewish people, and the Messianic "Judaizers," began to grow. An early indication of this hatred came out of the *Council of Nicea* called by Constantine in 325 CE in order to bring unity to the "Catholic" or so-called "universal faith." At this time, there was no strict division between the Roman Church of the western empire and those of the east (which eventually split off and became the Orthodox churches). However, there were a number of doctrinal issues which risked serious divisions. As a result, there was much trouble and name calling. Constantine was apparently not too concerned about which doctrines would prevail -- only that unity should prevail so that the Empire not be divided by the new "State Religion."

The main issue which the *Council of Nicea* addressed was the "heresy" of *Arius* (*Arianism*) who believed that Jesus was a created being and not coequal with God, but rather that He was a finite being. His main opponent was bishop Alexander of Egypt. After much dispute, during which Constantine mediated and kept tempers in check, an agreement was reached and a "Profession of Faith" was issued:

"We believe in one God the Father all powerful, maker of all things both seen and unseen. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten from the Father, that is from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial [*of the same substance*] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, both those in heaven and those in earth; for us humans and for our salvation he came down and became incarnate, became human, suffered and rose up on the third day, went up into the heavens, is coming to judge the living and the dead. And in the holy Spirit."

(ed. by Norman P. Tanner)
(www.piar.hu/councils/ecum01.html)

A letter was also issued from the *Synod in Nicea* to the Egyptians, summarizing the decisions which had been made.

According to Norman P. Tanner, two versions of this letter exist today, one in Greek the other in Latin. The Greek letter contains the following passage (but it is not found in the Latin version):

"We also send you the good news of the settlement concerning the holy pasch [*Passover*], namely that in answer to your prayers this question also has been resolved. All the brethren in the East who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you. Rejoicing then in these successes and in the common peace and harmony and in the cutting off of all heresy, welcome our fellow minister, your bishop Alexander, with all the greater honour and love. He has made us happy by his presence and despite his advanced age has undertaken such great labour in order that you too may enjoy peace.

"Pray for us all that our decisions may remain secure through almighty God and our lord Jesus Christ in the holy Spirit, to whom is the glory for ever and ever. Amen. (ibid., underlining ours.)

Apparently, in addition to the "official" "Profession of Faith" of the Synod of Nicea and this "official" letter to the Egyptians, Constantine wrote at least two additional letters which were designed to make a clear division between the new Roman Catholic Church and those Messianic Believers who still held to the observance of the Festivals of God and the observance of Passover. The following quote is from Samuele Bacchiocchi's book *Sabbath to Sunday* (highly recommended) -- he is quoting from Eusebius', *Life of Constantine*, in which Easter is spoken of as a replacement for the Jewish celebration of Passover:

"It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast [*Easter*] we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are, therefore, deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul ... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd: for we have received from our Saviour a different way ... Strive and pray continually that the purity of your souls may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men ... All should unite in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews." (p. 206, underlining ours)

Thus, the Council of Nicea forced a major "church" break over doctrine with those Messianic Believers who wished to follow the *Torah* and the traditions of the Apostles. This break was the direct result of the Emperor Constantine taking the side of the Roman Church against many of the practices found, at that time, among the Eastern churches. This, despite the fact that Constantine was not even baptized as a follower of Christ for yet several more years.

This particular argument (over the nature of God) is still going on and will never be satisfactorily resolved until Messiah *Y'shua* returns to earth and reveals Himself to all as the Son of God and as King of kings and Lord of lords:

"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. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." (I John 3:2-3)

Instead of arguing over the nature of God, it would be better if we all busied ourselves in the practice of "pure religion:"

"If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion is useless. ²⁷ 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 1:26-27)

~ Increased Persecution ~

A natural outcome of the nationalization of the Roman Church as the "church of the Roman Empire" was an increased persecution of those considered spiritual enemies. This included three primary groups:

- ◆ The Messianic "Judaizers" who wanted to continue following the *Torah* and the traditions established by the Apostles. These were described by *Jude* as those who wished to continue in the true faith rather than follow those who would pervert the original teachings of the apostles:

"Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. ⁴ For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness [*unbridled lust (for power?)*] and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]." (Jude 1:3-4)

- ◆ The non-Messianic Jews who were now considered to be enemies of the state because of their various revolts against the Roman government. Since the Roman Catholic Church was now the "official" church of the empire, they did not want to seem to be "soft" on the empires "enemies."
- ◆ Those within the Roman Catholic Church who came up with doctrines considered to be heretical by the leadership of the church.

From an historical standpoint, it is far easier to trace church persecution of the non-Messianic Jews and the internal "heretics" than it is to trace the persecution against the Messianic "Judaizers." This is because whatever historical writings might have been developed by the "Judaizers" were, no doubt, destroyed by the church as they rooted them out and drove them into caves in the mountains and into far-off lands. The only way one can trace some of those sects is to find references to "heretics" described as "Judaizers" in ancient church documents.

~ Persecution Against the Jews ~

Persecution against the Jewish people by the Roman Church was extensive and is well documented, primarily because the Jewish people were, by and large, better educated than the average Christian of those times, so that many of the offenses against them were recorded and retained. Space does not permit a comprehensive survey of Christian persecution of the Jews (that would require a lengthy book). However, a very short list includes:

- ◆ The Crusades - eight major expeditions between 1095 and 1291. While the expressed purpose of the Crusades was to expel the "infidel" (i.e. Muslims) from the Holy Land, thousands of Jews lost their lives as the Crusaders, seeking blood, marched through Europe on their way to Palestine.
- ◆ The Spanish Inquisition - followed the banishment of the all Jews from Spain in 1492. Those that remained, along with other "heretics," were often tortured until they died or converted to Catholicism. They became known as *Conversos* and many tried to retain their former religious practices in secret. Those suspected of such acts came under the Inquisitors. Many died, while others went into exile, first to Portugal and later to other parts of Europe.
- ◆ The Expelling of Jews from various European countries. The story of the Jewish people in Europe is very complex. They would be accepted -- even welcomed for a time and then, decades or centuries later would be expelled from a country and would have to move on. The 19th and early 20th century pogroms in Russia are a prime example.

~ 20th Century Anti-Semitism ~

Prior to W.W.II, both Europe and the United States saw a significant rise in anti-Semitism primarily due to the suffering caused by the Great Depression and the resulting blame on the "Jewish Bankers." As usual, the Jews became the convenient scapegoats even though there were many Gentile Bankers at that time as well.

Of course, it was the Jews who were blamed for the Depression -- therefore many people took up an offense against all Jews whether they were involved in finance or not. The worst persecution took place in Germany, especially after the rise of Hitler, but other European countries were also involved. Anti-Semitism ran high in the United States as well.

Then came the Holocaust. It is estimated that during WWII approximately 6 million Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, and other "undesirables" were murdered. By far the largest group was from among the Jews, resulting in nearly one-third of all Jews in the world losing their lives in the death camps.

Today there is a growing group of people called "Holocaust Deniers." They claim the Holocaust never happened and that it is all part of a great Jewish plot to take over the world and subject everyone to Judaism. General Eisenhower, when he visited the death camps, asked that many

photos be taken, because he knew that someday there would be wicked people who would claim it never happened.

Several years ago I (Dean) had the opportunity to hear a talk by a gentile European who was sent to prison in the early days of WWII because he was dating a girl that a Nazi German soldier wanted. He was then sent on a work detail to help bury the Jews who were being slaughtered. At that time, early in the war (before the ovens), they would bulldoze a large pit, bring the Jews to the edge of the pit and shoot them so they would fall into the pit. This man's job was to bulldoze dirt over the bodies after they had finished, even though he could still hear the moans and screams of some who had not yet died from the gunshot wounds.

After the world learned about the Holocaust, a wave of collective guilt swept the world which was instrumental in bringing the United Nations to a point where they were willing to establish a Jewish homeland in the Middle East. Interestingly enough, this homeland was prophesied to be established in the very location which God had given to the children of Israel some 3500 years ago:

"For behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD [YHVH], 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the LORD [YHVH]. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'" (Jer .30:3)

~ Persecution of the Christians ~

The Jewish people are not the only ones who have suffered religious persecution, imprisonment, and death. In many countries, especially where the Jewish population is low, *HaSatan's* wrath of religious hatred often falls on Christians. This is going on today as catalogued by a well known organization called *Voice of the Martyrs*. According to their website page *PrisonerAlert.com*, Christians face persecution in more that 40 nations around the world:

"In some of these nations it is illegal to own a Bible, to share your faith in Christ, change your faith or teach your children about Jesus. Those who boldly follow Christ -- in spite of government edict or radical opposition -- can face harassment, arrest, torture and even death. Yet Christians continue to meet for worship and to witness for Christ, and the church in restricted nations is growing."

Most of these persecuted Believers in Messiah have not been taught about the Sabbath and Festivals of God, so they are not being persecuted because their faith resembles that of the Jews. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, that because of their strong faith in Messiah, they are our Brethren and deserve our prayers. The Father knows His own children and where they currently reside in their spiritual walk:

"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)

Do not think for a minute that *Hebrew Roots*® is taking a soft stand on false doctrine. Just remember, that the people of God (*YHVH*) are being called, from the four corners of the earth, to return to Him. He will lead them and they will return.

In the meantime there are still Believers in Messiah *Y'shua* that do not yet know Him by His real (Hebrew) name or follow His *Torah*.

~ Summary ~

Hatred is a terrible emotion and causes untold amounts of sorrow and suffering for all people (even those who do the hating). Its origin is religious in nature and stems directly from the hatred which *HaSatan* has for the Creator of the Universe. *HaSatan* hates every man, woman, and child on earth, because he knows that God's ultimate plan is to turn rulership of the earth over to resurrected mankind, under the Kingship of His Son Messiah *Y'shua*.

When looking at hatred patterns it is important to recognize that all of it comes from *HaSatan* and is designed to eliminate mankind through murder and warfare. At this point in history that scenario is not inconceivable, since there are enough weapons of mass destruction today to destroy all life from off the face of the earth -- returning it to the chaos which existed at the beginning:

"The earth was without form [*tohu* תהוּ = emptiness, and void [*bohu* בְּהוּ = waste]; and darkness was on the face of the deep." (Gen. 1:2)

HaSatan's primary hatred is toward those people who are God's Chosen ones. This includes Believers in Messiah *Y'shua* and also those who are descended from the Patriarchs -- *Avraham*, *Yitz'chak* and *Ya'acov*. This accounts for his hatred for the Jewish people even though the majority of them have not accepted *Y'shua* as their Messiah.

Because the Jews are a very small minority (back up to about 18 million at this time in a world of 8 billion), they appear to be the easiest group to eliminate first. However, God still fights their battles and therefore they will never be totally destroyed:

**"For God will save Zion
And build the cities of Judah,
That they may dwell there and possess it."** (Psalm 69:35)

Eventually those of Judah, along with the House of Israel (*Ephraim*), will be joined together as one people in the land we know today as Israel:

**"He will set up a banner for the nations,
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,
And gather together the dispersed of Judah
From the four corners of the earth."** (Isa. 11:12)

One of the saddest chapters in the story about the hatred against the Jews is the number of Christians (and even some Messianics) who have been caught up in that hatred. In the end, such people make themselves tools of the devil. We need to pray that God will rescue them from their Jew hatred:

"And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, ²⁵ in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, ²⁶ and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the

devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

(II Tim. 2:24-26)

In the end both Judah and Ephraim will prevail and peace will come to the earth when *Y'shua* reigns:

**"For I have bent Judah, My bow,
Fitted the bow with Ephraim,
And raised up your sons, O Zion,
Against your sons, O Greece,
And made you like the sword of a mighty man.'
"14 Then the LORD [YHVH] will be seen over them,
And His arrow will go forth like lightning.
The Lord GOD [YHVH] will blow the trumpet,
And go with whirlwinds from the south."**

(Zech. 9:13-14)

**"For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me," says
the LORD [YHVH],**

"So shall your descendants and your name remain.

²³ **And it shall come to pass**

That from one New Moon to another,

And from one Sabbath to another,

All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says

the LORD [YHVH]."

(Isa. 66:22-23)

Shalom!

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