

Gentiles and the Law: Vol. II

containing:

Y'shua's Perspective
The Apostle's Perspective
Paul's Perspective:
Paul the Pharisee
The Epistles to the Thessalonians

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

Behold!
My Servant whom I have chosen,
My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased!
I will put My Spirit upon Him,
And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.
Matthew 12:18

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The Scriptures used in this booklet are:

Aramaic English New Testament (AENT)

Andrew Gabriel Roth,
Canada, 2009.

The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)

Oxford University Press
London

The Open Bible

New King James Version (NKJV),
Thomas Nelson, Inc.,
Nashville, 1985.

New American Bible (NAB)

Confraternity of Christian Doctrine
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~ Introduction ~

I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.
Isaiah 42:6-7



When we first began to write the series of articles entitled *Gentiles and the Law* (in 2003) the scope of the project was not apparent. As the project developed it became clear that a good way to address the problem was to survey every book of the Greek Scriptures (New Testament) to see if any of them taught that the "Law" had been done away, as so many claim.

Seven years and twenty-five articles later the project was brought to a conclusion in *Hebrew Roots* Issue 08-3. However, it soon became obvious that it really was not at an end, for people began to express a desire to see all of the articles put into a book. The problem with a book is that *Hebrew Roots* does not have the facilities to publish anything in perfect bound book format and it is quite expensive to have a full book printed. Such a project would necessitate that we charge for the book in order to pay the printing and binding costs, which is against our stated policy that everything we produce will be made available free of charge (based upon the availability of funds) so that all who want copies may obtain them.

Therefore, the decision was made to put the articles into a series booklets which could be printed just like the regular issues. Thus, God willing, over time all of the articles will be made available for order directly from *Hebrew Roots*.

The first volume contains three articles: *Scriptural Background*, *Historical Background*, and *Which Law?* These articles form the background information needed to more fully understand the other books of the New Testament.

This second volume begins with two articles: *Y'shua's Perspective* and *The Apostle's Perspective*, both of which were published in *Hebrew Roots* Issue 03-2. These two articles set the stage for those which followed by surveying what *Y'shua* Himself had to say about the law (*Torah*) and also how the Apostles who wrote the General Epistles viewed the *Torah*. In all cases they came down on the side of obedience to the *Torah* and held to the view that the *Torah* had not been "done away" by the blood offering of *Y'shua* on the crucifixion stake.

Also, included in this booklet are two articles which deal with the Apostle Paul and his perspective of the role which the law (*Torah*) should play in the lives of Gentile Believers in the Messiah *Y'shua*. As the "apostle to the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:8), Paul had plenty to say on this subject. The first article, *Paul the Pharisee*, first appeared in Issue 96-1. It shows that Paul was a Pharisee all of his life and that fact had a direct bearing on his teaching. The last chapter is a survey of *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* from Issue 04-3.

As you read this material, keep in mind that these discourses are not intended to be a comprehensive commentary on everything contained within the Greek Scriptures (NT) for the books being investigated. Only those portions which pertain to the subject of the Law (*Written Torah*) will be examined in any depth.

For an excellent comprehensive Hebraic roots commentary on the entire New Testament, we suggest obtaining a copy of David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, published by Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. of Clarksville, Maryland. ISBN 965-359-008-1 (hardcover).

It is our hope that you will find this booklet helpful in both your individual studies and in your outreach to others.

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom, 2010

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Y'shua's Perspective ~

Therefore,
Whatever you want men to do to you,
Do also to them,
For this is the Law and the Prophets.
Matthew 7:12



Many Christians believe that the "law has been done away" and that Believer's no longer need to observe the *mitzvot* (meets'-vote = commandments of God) found in the *Written Torah* (the first five books of the Bible). Some go so far as to say that Believer's must not even attempt to follow the *Torah* commands, for that would constitute trying to "earn one's salvation;" something that cannot be done. It is perfectly clear from Scripture that no one can earn salvation, for it is a free gift:

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

In this first chapter we wish to establish what *Y'shua* taught concerning the 'law' (*Written Torah*). By examining *Y'shua's* perspective first, you will be better equipped to understand the more difficult passages in Paul's epistles, for *Y'shua's* teachings must be the "cornerstone" of the foundation of our faith. If something in a later writing does not square with what *Y'shua* taught, then either that writing is incorrect or our understanding of that writing (or our understanding of what *Y'shua* really said) is incorrect.

However, once a Believer has been given the free gift of salvation, it behooves them to not deny *Y'shua's* teaching by continuing to live a sinful life:

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.²⁸ Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.²⁹ Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"
(Heb. 10:26-29)

~ Defining Sin ~

Perhaps the differences of opinion concerning 'Law' vs. 'Grace' arise because of a misunderstanding about the proper definition of sin. There are a number of Scriptural definitions of sin, however, given the context of this article, one stands out:

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

The American Heritage Dictionary gives an almost identical definition:

"1. A transgression of a religious or moral law, especially when deliberate. 2. *Theology*. a. Deliberate disobedience to the known will of God. b. A condition of estrangement from God resulting from such disobedience. 3. Something regarded as being shameful, deplorable, or utterly wrong."

If all can agree that sin is the transgression of the law, then the only question remaining is: What Law?

~ Y'shua's Ancestry ~

Before launching into an exposition of *Y'shua's* teachings concerning the 'Law,' we feel it is important to understand His ancestry and training. That way His teachings can be placed in their proper perspective.

To begin with, *Y'shua* was born into a Jewish family descended from King David, and therefore also from the Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This fact is confirmed by two genealogical charts which are found in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38.

The Matthew chart begins by establishing exactly who *Y'shua* was:

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: ..."
(Matt. 1:1)

Matthew makes no bones about who *Y'shua* was; He was the promised Christ [*Messiah*]. The Hebrew term *Mashiach* (Mah-she'-ack = Messiah) literally means "anointed." Since both the *cohanim* (coh-hah-neem' = priests) and the kings of Israel and Judah were 'anointed' as part of their investiture into office, the term *Mashiach*, as applied to *Y'shua*, implies that He was given both kingly and priestly authority.

According to David Stern, in the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, Scripture uses the Hebrew term *ben* (son) in three distinctive ways:

- 1.) The 'son' of a physical father,
- 2.) The descendant of a more distant ancestor,
- 3.) Having the characteristics of someone whether a physical descendant or not.

Y'shua met the qualifications of the latter two. He was a physical descendant of both David and *Avraham* (Ahv'-rah-ham = Abraham) and therefore their 'son.' He also exemplified their best characteristics in His life.

~ The Son of Avraham ~

The fact that *Y'shua* is the 'son of *Avraham*' is important in a number of ways:

- 1.) *Avraham* was the one chosen by God to be the progenitor of the children of Israel:

"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."** (Gen. 12:1-2)

Y'shua came to call *Avraham's* descendants (the children of Israel) to repent of their sins and return to the true worship of God; to become *benei Avraham* (sons of Abraham) spiritually as well as physically.

2.) *Y'shua* was the promised 'seed' of *Avraham* through whom the people of the world were to be blessed:

"Then the Angel of the LORD [YHVH] called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,¹⁶ and said:

"By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD [YHVH], because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son --¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice." (Gen. 22:15-18)

"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]." (Gal. 3:16)

Y'shua is that 'seed' promised to *Avraham*. He is the Messiah.

3.) According to the Apostle Paul, everyone who identifies with *Y'shua*, whether Jew or Gentile, also becomes a part of *Avraham's* seed even if they are not physically descended from *Avraham*:

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

It is our opinion, since those Gentile Believers who have no physical lineage to *Avraham* can be legitimately called his 'seed,' it should not be a stretch to call *Y'shua* *Avraham's* "seed." Even though there is no physical connection to *Avraham* through a physical father, *Y'shua* does have a direct physical connection through His mother and is therefore from the tribe of Judah:

"For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, ..." (Heb. 7:14a)

~ The Son of David ~

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach], the Son of David, ..." (Matt. 1:1)

The literal phrase, "son of David," is not used in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) to describe the Messiah. However, there are several references to the *Mashiach* being a descendant of David. For this reason, the term was in common usage among first century Jews:

"Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, "Thus says the LORD [YHVH] of hosts: ... 'When

your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.'" (II Sam. 7:8, 12-13)

While this verse speaks specifically of David's son Solomon, it also establishes that the royal line which God promised to set up through Solomon would be the very same royal line that will extend *ad olam* (ahd oh-lahm' = forever). In Jewish understanding, this verse clearly indicates that *Mashiach* will be a descendant or 'son' of King David and that is where they continue to look in anticipation of His coming.

The next verse is also understood, in both Jewish and Christian teaching, to mean that the Messiah would descend from Jesse, the father of King David.

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isa. 11:1)

Jeremiah speaks about the Branch of David (or Son of David) becoming the Messiah:

"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD [YHVH], That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.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 [YHVH] OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." (Jer. 23:5-6)

Another confirmation of the Davidic lineage of the Messiah is found in the Psalms:

"I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David:⁴ "Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations." Selah." (Psalm 89:3-4)

~ Yoseif's Genealogy ~

There are two opposing views as to which genealogical list (Matthew's or Luke's) pertains to *Yoseif* (Yoh'-safe = Joseph) and which to *Miriam* (Mere'-ree-ahm = Mary). We will first explore the traditional understanding that the genealogical line found in Matthew is that of *Y'shua's* stepfather *Yoseif* because it seems to say that Jacob begot Joseph (*Yoseif*); a claim not made in the Luke list:

"And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus [Y'shua] who is called Christ [Messiah]." (Matt. 1:16)

The final statement of this verse is important:

"... Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus [Y'shua] who is called Christ [Messiah]." (Matt. 1:16)

Notice this verse does not say that Joseph (*Yoseif*) begot Jesus (*Y'shua*), but rather *Y'shua* was 'born' of Mary (*Miriam*) and that He is the Christ (*Mashiach* or Messiah). This seems to be a clear indication that the Matthew list is that of *Yoseif*, who was not the natural father of *Y'shua*, but was his stepfather and therefore the one responsible for *Y'shua's* upbringing. Yet, in human terms, *Yoseif* was the father of *Y'shua* even though he did not beget *Y'shua*, because *Yoseif* is the one to whom God intrusted the rearing of His Son.

~ Miriam's Genealogy ~

A second (and different) genealogy for *Y'shua* is given in Luke chapter 3:

"Now Jesus [*Y'shua*] Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, ..." (Luke 3:23)

Once again, the text implies that this is a genealogy of *Yoseif* (Joseph), yet he now seems to have a different father. One explanation offered is that *Heli* was *Yoseif's* maternal grandfather. However, since this list clearly shows that *Yoseif* was *Y'shua's* stepfather (the text states "as was supposed") it seems more likely that *Heli* was *Y'shua's* maternal grandfather, the father of *Miriam*.

According to the Scriptures, *Y'shua* was conceived supernaturally by God (through the power of the Holy Spirit) in the womb of *Miriam*. *Y'shua* did not have a physical father as in the manner of the rest of mankind, yet, because He was born in the flesh to *Miriam*, He was fully human and therefore susceptible to physical death:

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 1:18)

Y'shua's physical human connection to King David came through his mother who bore Him. Since *Miriam* (Mary) was a descendant of King David, *Y'shua* was truly David's physical descendant.

Some contend that *Y'shua* did not have a legitimate claim to the kingship since kings can only inherit that position through their father's line. However, *Y'shua* was conceived by the Father in heaven through the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Roo'-ach Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit), and His heavenly Father was the King Maker; the One who established the royal line in the first place. That, coupled with the fact that He was also descended physically from King David through His mother *Miriam*, we believe, qualifies *Y'shua* to be the King of kings:

"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful." (Rev. 17:14)

It is interesting to note that a number of *Miriam's* male ancestors have Levitic names (for example: *Heli*, *Levi*, *Mattathiah*, and *Semei*). This indicates that *Miriam* had ancestors from both the tribe of Judah (the royal line of the Messiah) as well as the tribe of Levi (the Priestly line). This

would account for the fact that *Miriam* and *Elisheva* (Ehl-lee-shee-vah' = Elizabeth) were cousins. *Elisheva* was a daughter of *Ahron* (Ah-rohn' = Aaron) while *Miriam* was genealogically a daughter of Judah:

"... His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth." (Luke 1:5b)

~ An Alternate View ~

The *Aramaic English New Testament*, translated by Andrew Gabriel Roth is a new translation into English of the New Testament from ancient Aramaic texts rather than from the commonly used Greek texts. Roth states in the Introduction to this work:

"It is common knowledge that *Y'shua* and his original followers spoke Hebrew and Aramaic but up until now the vast majority of Bible students have only had access to translations and versions of Greek texts. Within the following pages you will find the most ancient Aramaic texts which were derived from the Khabouris Codex, one of 360 manuscripts that make up the Eastern Peshitta family." (page iv)

Roth translates the text from Luke 3:23 as follows:

"And *Y'shua* was about thirty years old and was thought to be the son of Yosip, the son of Heli, ..." (Luke 3:23 AENT)

The Matthew passage, quoted on page 3, reads as follows in this translation:

"*Ya'akov* fathered *Yosip* [*Joseph*], the guardian of *Maryam* [*Mary*], from whom was born *Y'shua*, who is called the *Mashiyach*." (Matt. 1:16 AENT)

As can be seen, this translation reverses the generally accepted understanding of the genealogy by indicating that the one found in Matthew is that of *Miriam* while Luke contains the genealogy of *Yoseif*. Roth gives the following footnote to the word translated as "guardian" in Matt. 1:16:

"The word *gowra* designates a protector-male or guardian; the context of this verse determines its specific meaning. *Y'shua* elsewhere says 'which one of *gowra*, if he has a son ...,' obviously '*father*' is intended. '*Gowra*' also applies to other forms of protector-male type relationships depending on the context, such as 'husband,' 'son,' and so forth. Ancient Aramaic Matthew ends at verse 17, not verse 25. The text not only establishes the subject, but shifts from 'background history' into the present, from intro to body. This means that the *Yosip* in verse 16 (the guardian or adopted father of *Miriam* (Mary)) is some individual, whereas *gowra* sometimes means 'husband' but can also mean 'father.' The other term *baalah* can only mean 'husband.' On the other hand, there would most definitely be a reason to differentiate two men named *Yosip*, one being the adopted father, the other the husband of *Miriam*. With this differentiation we now have three full sets of 14 generations, which satisfies the demands of verse 17. More detail is presented in *Ruach Qadim*, accessed online at www.ruachqadim.com."

Whatever the case, the one fact that is established is that both *Yoseif* (*Y'shua's* stepfather) and *Miriam* (His physical mother) were both descended from king David.

~ **Observant Jews** ~

God did not intrust the rearing of *Y'shua* to just anyone. He selected two people who would rear His (and their) Son in a manner that would properly prepare Him for His great calling. The Scriptures tell us that *Miriam* was a very special woman:

"And having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!'"
(Luke 1:28)

It is also evident from Scripture that *Yoseif* and *Miriam* were *Torah* observant, because they fulfilled all of the obligations concerning newborn sons after the birth of *Y'shua*. Their first act was to have Him circumcised on the eighth day as prescribed by the *Torah*:

"Then the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, ²'Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. ³ And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.'" (Lev. 12:1-3)

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

Not only did *Y'shua's* parents follow the *Torah* command to circumcise their son on the eighth day, they also followed the custom of the Jews to name Him on that day as well.

Then, at the proper time, *Yoseif* and *Miriam* went to the Temple in Jerusalem so that *Miriam* could perform the ancient purification ritual required by the *Torah*:

"...She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. ... ⁶ When the days of her purification are fulfilled, whether for a son or a daughter, she shall bring to the priest a lamb of the first year as a burnt offering, and a young pigeon or a turtledove as a sin offering, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁷ Then he shall offer it before the LORD [YHVH], and make atonement for her. And she shall be clean from the flow of her blood. This is the law [*Torah or instruction*] for her who has borne a male or a female. ⁸ And if she is not able to bring a lamb, then she may bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons -- one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for her, and she will be clean."
(Lev. 12:4, 6-8)

"Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD [YHVH]'), ²⁴ and to offer a

sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.'" (Luke 2:22-24)

(Luke 2:22-24)

(Notice that the "law of Moses" and the "law of the Lord" are synonymous.)

Yoseif, *Miriam*, and *Y'shua* did not return to their home in Nazareth until all of the ritual purity regulations had been fulfilled:

"So when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their *own* city, Nazareth."
(Luke 2:39)

While it was proper for all women to perform these rituals whenever a child was born, the reality of the time was that many probably did not do so because they were either not observant, they were too poor to make the journey to Jerusalem, or they could not make the journey for health reasons. The fact that Luke is careful to inform us that *Miriam* fulfilled all of these requirements of the *Torah* indicates that she and her husband *Yoseif* were observant Jews.

~ **Love of Torah** ~

The carefulness of *Yoseif* and *Miriam* to observe the *Torah* commands is also evident in the fact that it is recorded they went up to Jerusalem each and every year to celebrate Passover:

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover."
(Luke 2:4)

It is our opinion that *Yoseif* and *Miriam* did not go up to Jerusalem just because it was required. They went because they had a strong love for *Torah* and wished to show their love for God by obeying His commands. This love of *Torah* is also evident from the depth of Scriptural training which *Y'shua* displayed while at the Festival of Passover; training which went far beyond that of the average Galilean boy:

"And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus [*Y'shua*] lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

(Luke 2:42-47)

Not only was *Y'shua* well schooled in the Scriptures at a very young age, He was humble about His accomplishments:

"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus [*Y'shua*] increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."

(Luke 2:51-52)

Thus we see *Y'shua* as a young man who knew the *Torah*, the *Prophets*, and the *Writings* so well that He was able to 'astonish' the leading Rabbis of the day. But He was also a young man who was in proper subjection to His parents. And so He found favor with all who knew Him. Most importantly, He found favor with God in heaven.

~ *Y'shua's Preparation* ~

The Scriptures are silent about *Y'shua* from the age of twelve to thirty. Nevertheless, we believe it can be safely assumed that during those eighteen years *Y'shua* continued to study the *Torah*, *Prophets*, and *Writings* (the Hebrew Scriptures). He must also have felt the pull of the natural human desires of the flesh, but we are told that *Y'shua* did not submit to them, for He was:

"... in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."
(Heb. 4:15)

Y'shua must have also observed how the *Pharisees* taught the people to obey the *Torah* and resist their carnal desires. They did it by building strict fences around the original *mitzvot* (commandments) of the *Torah*. The basis for this approach was the hope that people might stop short of actually breaking a *Written Torah* command once they realized they had already passed through one of the *Oral Torah* fences. At the Jerusalem Council many years later, Peter called these *Oral Torah* commands:

"... a yoke ... which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear ..."
(Acts 15:10)

~ Fences ~

The concept of putting a fence around the law is not, in and of itself, a bad idea. In Judaism this concept is very old, as indicated by this quote from the *Mishnah*:

"Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly. They said three things: 'Be prudent in judgment. Raise up many disciples, Make a fence for the Torah.'" (Avot 1:1)

A modern example of a fence can be found in a zoo. Although the animals are caged for the protection of the people viewing them, an additional fence is usually placed a few feet back from the cage so that people cannot get close to the cage and possibly come within reach of the animal.

The problem *Y'shua* found in the 1st century was not that fences had been erected around the *Torah* to protect people from breaking the *Torah* commands, rather the problem was twofold:

- 1.) Too many unnecessary fences had been erected, and
- 2.) The unclean hearts of those creating the strictest fences (the School of *Shammai*) led some into hypocrisy.

Therefore, it must have become apparent to *Y'shua*, during His early years of manhood, that the *Pharisees'* method of training people to be observant was not what God had intended when the *Torah* was given at Mount Sinai. Once *Y'shua* began His ministry, He instructed the people to be wary of the overly strict teachings of the *Pharisees*. However, *Y'shua* did not

teach the people to completely forsake the Rabbi's teachings. Instead, He taught them to accept the good found in their instruction without emulating the objectionable part of *Pharisaic* behavior:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, ² saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. ³ Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. ⁴ For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.'" (Matt. 23:1-4)

According to *Y'shua*, the *Pharisees* placed heavy burdens on the people through their *Oral Torah* commands and refused to change those oral traditions even when they knew the burden was too great for the average person to bear. The problem with this strict approach to keeping the law was that people could become discouraged because they were not able to live up to the expectations of the men who claimed they had the responsibility of adding to the *mitzvot* given by God. By confusing the oral traditions with God's commands, some people may have found the path, which the *Pharisees* had set for them, too difficult to accomplish and consequently ceased their observance of *Torah* out of sheer weariness.

(Unfortunately, this tendency to add to God's law is still found today in the Believing community and it causes many of the same types of problems in modern fellowships.)

Those *Pharisees* who failed to live up to the standard of their own strict teachings were especially taken to task by *Y'shua*. However, we must be careful not to place all *Pharisees* in the category of hypocrites. In all likelihood, the *Pharisaic* school which received *Y'shua's* most severe condemnation was the ultraconservative School of *Shammai* (see *Gentiles and the Law - Vol. 1* for more detailed information about the various *Pharisaic* schools).

~ Hypocrisy ~

By adding a plethora of *Oral Torah* commands to the *Written Torah*, the School of *Shammai* turned the life of the average Jew into one of following a myriad of rules. Such an approach can cause people to forget the original intent of the *Torah* because they are so bound up in observing the rules. For example, by adding a myriad of rules to Sabbath observance, one can forget the intent of the Sabbath, which is to set it apart (make it holy) from the other days of the week by resting from work. This rule bound approach is why *Y'shua* said:

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

The hypocrisy of the *Pharisees* did not stem from teaching the *Written Torah*. Rather, the hypocrisy of the *Pharisees* was that they added many fences (*Oral Torah*) to the *Written Torah* in order to appear righteous to others and then often failed to carry out the more important matters:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. ²⁶ Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also." (Matt. 23:25-26)

Their lack of love for the widows, orphans, and strangers was especially apparent:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." (Matt. 23:14)

In the final analysis, *Y'shua* declared these overly strict *Pharisees* to be "lawless" because their behavior did not match their teaching:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness." (Matt. 23:27-28)

The lesson here is one that all Believers need to learn: Do not add rules to the clear instructions of God and try to force them upon others, for by doing so you will be judged with the same harsh judgment by which you judge those who do not meet your overly strict standard:

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

~ Righteous Obedience ~

Y'shua taught a different kind of righteous obedience; one whose motivation came from the heart rather than from the necessity of observing a rule bound religion. It is this 'heart response' to the *mitzvot* (commands) of God which, if practiced, causes Believers to be 'more righteous' than the *Pharisees* of the School of *Shammai*:

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

This is exactly what the Apostle Paul was saying when he wrote to Timothy:

"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, ..." (I Tim. 1:5)

For example, it is not proper for a Believer to just refrain from physically committing adultery and incest, he must also (with God's help) train his mind to not even desire such a thing:

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

It is not enough to just refrain from committing physical murder, a Believer must learn to love their enemies so that even the thought of murder will not enter their mind:

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²² But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matt. 5:21-22)

This kind of righteousness can only be accomplished through the power of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Roo-ach' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit). It is not inherent in the heart of carnal man.

~ Y'shua's Law Teaching ~

Y'shua's position concerning the 'law' (*Torah*) is very clear. It is laid out in His very first statement about the *Torah*, which was given in the Sermon on the Mount:

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

Y'shua said not to even think that He was doing away with the *Torah* commands or the *Prophetic* writings. Yet many Believers today think that He did away with the *Torah*, while (at the same time) they cling to the prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

Most people who take this position get hung up on the English word "fulfill." They say that *Y'shua* 'fulfilled' the *Torah* commands (the law) and therefore we do not have to keep them any more. Here is how Strong defines this word:

#4137 πληρώ *pleroo* {play-ro'-o} **Meaning:** "1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full 1a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally 1a1) I abound, I am liberally supplied 2) to render full, i.e. to complete 2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim 2b) to consummate: a number 2b1) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect 2b2) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking) 2c) to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize 2c1) of matters of duty: to perform, execute 2c2) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish 2c3) to fulfill, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment"

Y'shua did not come to destroy the law (*Torah*) He came to complete the law (*Torah*); to fill it to the full. He came to show His disciples how to properly keep or fulfill the *mitzvot* (commands). To "cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be."

Y'shua went on to say:

"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled [*ginomai*]." (Matt. 5:18)

It is now almost two thousand years since *Y'shua* spoke these words and heaven and earth are still here. Thus, it is safe to say that all has not yet been 'fulfilled.' Therefore, according to *Y'shua*, every tiny part of the *Torah* is still in effect, even the jots and tittles.

Notice that the word translated "fulfilled" in verse 18 is an entirely different word from the one used in verse 17:

#1096 γίνομαι ginomai {ghin'-om-ahce} **Meaning:** "1) to become, i.e. to come into existence, begin to be, receive being 2) to become, i.e. to come to pass, happen 2a) of events 3) to arise, appear in history, come upon the stage 3a) of men appearing in public 4) to be made, finished 4a) of miracles, to be performed, wrought 5) to become, be made."

Not only are Believers to learn how to obey the *Torah* as *Y'shua* taught it, we are also to keep even the smallest of the commandments:

"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

(Matt. 5:19)

Y'shua was so emphatic about making the people understand that the *Torah* law was still in effect, and would remain in effect until the end of time, that He said if we would obey and teach our fellow Believers even the 'least' of the commandments we would be called 'great' in the Kingdom of Heaven. According to the Rabbis, there is a command in the *Torah* which is known as the 'least' of the commandments:

"If a bird's nest happens to be before you along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, with the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; ⁷you shall surely let the mother go, and take the young for yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days."

(Deut. 22:6-7)

Clearly, *Y'shua* did not teach lawlessness in the Sermon on the Mount.

~ *Y'shua* Taught Observance ~

During His earthly ministry, *Y'shua* taught that men should repent and return to the true worship of God. He also taught His disciples to teach the same thing:

"So they [the disciples] went out and preached that people should repent."

(Mark 6:12)

Y'shua's teaching concerning repentance was so strong, He said that if people did not repent they would perish:

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

(Luke 13:3)

When *Y'shua* healed people of leprosy, He invariably told them to go to the Priest and perform the required seven day cleansing ritual as commanded in the *Torah*:

"And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus [*Y'shua*]; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' ¹³ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ And He charged him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as a testimony to them, just as Moses commanded.'"

(Luke 5:12-14)

Y'shua recognized that if a person persists in sin, it can become like an addiction which controls a person's life. *Y'shua* said:

"Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

(John 8:34)

Notice what *Y'shua* said when the Scribes and Pharisees (in a failed trap) brought the woman caught in adultery to *Y'shua* to see if He would condemn her. His response was one that speaks clearly concerning where He stood in relationship to the commands of the *Torah*. After the necessary witnesses departed, *Y'shua* said:

"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

(John 8:11b)

It is clear that, in this instance, *Y'shua* taught observance of the *Torah* commands, for without two witnesses a verdict could not be rendered:

"Whoever is deserving of death shall be put to death on the testimony of two or three witnesses; he shall not be put to death on the testimony of one witness" (Deut. 17:6)

~ *Y'shua* Taught the Ten Commandments ~

Additional understanding can be gained about *Y'shua's* attitude towards the 'law' (*Torah* commands) by examining His response to questions posed by those who heard Him teach:

"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' ¹⁷ So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.' ¹⁸ He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus [*Y'shua*] said, '"You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," ¹⁹ "Honor your father and your mother," and, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

(Matt. 19:16-19)

In this interchange, *Y'shua* made it clear that in order to gain eternal life, one must not only believe that He is the Messiah, one must also obey the commandments, including the all inclusive one to "love your neighbor as yourself."

But just keeping the commandments is not enough. One must also have such a great love for *Y'shua* that he is willing to sacrifice all he has (if necessary) in order to follow the Master:

"The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?'"

"²¹ Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'"
(Matt. 19:20-21)

In other words, be willing to give up those things (money, career, family, possessions, etc.) which separate you from God. This is not to say that any of those things are inherently evil, but, if we allow them to take control of our life, they can become obstacles to serving God. If this happens, then we must rid ourselves of those obstacles. The one who asked this question of *Y'shua* was not yet up to the calling:

"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." (Matt. 9:22)

Some teach that because *Y'shua* only mentioned commandments that had to do with how to treat one's neighbor, He was indicating that all of the so-called 'ceremonial' laws were no longer of any importance. However, this position is refuted by an examination of *Y'shua's* teaching about what constituted the 'Great Commandment':

"Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ³⁶ 'Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?' ³⁷ Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, "'You shall love the LORD [*YHVH*] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.'"
(Matt. 22:35-40)

Notice that the first 'Great Commandment' listed is to love God. How does one show his love for God? Every 1st century Jew understood this to mean worshipping God in the manner in which He prescribed in the *Torah*. When the Temple stood that meant performing the *ahvodah* (ah-voh-dah' = service) of worship which God had carefully set down in the *Torah*. Of course those instructions also included not bowing down to idols, not taking God's name in vain, and keeping the Sabbath holy or set apart.

Today, since the Temple no longer exists, animal sacrifice is not allowed. However, there is another way to worship God; it is through prayer, praise, and thanksgiving:

**"O Israel, return to the LORD [*YHVH*] your God,
For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;
²Take words with you,
And return to the LORD [*YHVH*].
Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity;
Receive us graciously,
For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.'"**
(Hosea 14:1-2)

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."
(Heb. 13:15)

"Let the word of Christ [*Messiah*] dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."
(Col. 3:16)

~ Sabbath Observance ~

Some teach that because *Y'shua* did not accept all of the strict fences set down in the *Oral Torah* by the *Pharisees* (in particular those of the School of *Shammai*), that He did away with the command to set apart (make holy) the Sabbath day:

"At that time Jesus [*Y'shua*] went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'"
(Matt. 12:1-2)

Y'shua's response was that it was permissible to do certain things on the Sabbath that pertained to proper worship and to the sustaining of life. It has always been Jewish teaching that one should not fast on the Sabbath because it is to be a day of rejoicing, not a day a mourning. *Y'shua* pointed out that David and his men even went so far as to eat the 'showbread' of the Tabernacle, which was specifically reserved for the Priests, yet they received no condemnation from God because David's men needed the food to sustain life.

Likewise, the disciples of *Y'shua* were in need of food on the Sabbath and legally picked some grain from a farmer's field and ate it in order to satisfy their hunger. No doubt they gave thanks and rejoiced for the food which God provided for them on that Sabbath day. *Y'shua* offered no condemnation of their behavior:

"But He said to them, 'Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?'"
(Matt. 12:3-4)

Y'shua continued His teaching on how to properly interpret the *Torah* commands concerning the Sabbath:

"Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? ⁶ Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. ⁷ But if you had known what this means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless.'"
(Matt. 12:5-7)

God is both loving and merciful. Therefore, *Y'shua* told the *Pharisees* that God did not condemn the disciples for picking, husking, and eating grain on the Sabbath day, for they had a physical need for food. For them to fast that day, because they had no food, would not be right. Therefore, *Y'shua* stated that the disciples were guiltless before God even though they were being condemned by men. Then *Y'shua* made a bold statement:

"For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
(Matt. 12:8)

If there was any doubt about how *Y'shua* viewed His position and authority, this statement should have dispelled it.

Y'shua is Lord of the Sabbath and He is the one who determines the *halachah* (hah-lah-cah' = the rules by which one conducts their life) for the Sabbath. He did not say that the Sabbath had been abolished, or that He was the Lord of Sunday. No, *Y'shua* is the Lord of the Sabbath and it is to be a day of rest and rejoicing.

~ Sabbath Healing ~

After this encounter, *Y'shua* then went on to a Synagogue where He was confronted with another Sabbath question:

"Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. ¹⁰ And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?' -- that they might accuse Him."

(Matt. 12:9-10)

Once again, *Y'shua* was dealing with *Pharisees* from the School of *Shammai*, for the School of *Hillel* taught that it was proper to heal on the Sabbath. However, at that particular time in history, the School of *Shammai* was the predominant *Pharisaic* school in Judea. It was not until after the destruction of the Temple that the School of *Hillel* regained dominance within Judaism. *Y'shua's* response was to place the burden of decision back on those who asked the question:

"Then He said to them, 'What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?'" (Matt. 12:11)

Of course, all present would have to admit they would rescue a sheep on the Sabbath, for it would be cruel to leave an animal in a pit all day without food or water. Having established (in the animal realm) this tendency towards doing good on the Sabbath, *Y'shua* then took them down the road to a proper understanding concerning Sabbath healing:

"Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' ¹³ Then He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other." (Matt. 12:12-13)

These *Pharisees* from the School of *Shammai* did not like being taken down the road of truth, so some of them determined to find a way to rid themselves of this man who so deftly punctured their religious beliefs. *Y'shua* did not let their attitude bother Him, however, for He continued to heal the multitudes (Matt. 12:14-15).

~ Lawlessness ~

In Scripture, the Greek word that is translated 'Law' is *nomos* (Strong's #3551). Like our English word 'law,' it is a poor substitute for the Hebrew word *Torah*. *Torah* means to instruct or show the way. Both law and *nomos* have the implication of rules which, if broken, will break the individual. The connotation of *nomos* is policemen, judges, and punishment, rather than loving instruction which shows people the proper way to live. Laws come from men, while *Torah* (instruction) comes from a loving God who cares about His people.

Nevertheless, failing to live up to the *Torah* instructions does constitute 'sin.' In Hebrew, the root word for 'sin' is *chata* (hah-tah' Strong's #2398) and it literally means "to miss the mark." In other words, when a person sins they miss the target of *Torah* obedience which has been established by God. However, God is merciful and He has always provided a way for sin to be covered or removed. Sin that has not been properly purged, through God's atonement method, continues to be carried by the individual who committed the sin. Sin can be removed only through the shedding of blood:

"And according to the law [*Torah*] almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22)

Once sin has been purged from the sinner, he becomes pure and sinless once more. However, there is a sinful state that can go beyond just "missing the mark" of *Torah*. That is when a person comes into a state of total disregard for the *Torah* commands. In Greek, the word for those who disregard the *Torah* (law) is *anomia*:

#458 ἀνομία *anomia* {an-om-ee'-ah} **Meaning:** "1) the condition of without law 1a) because ignorant of it 1b) because of violating it 2) contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness."

Anomia may result from the individual's ignorance of the law, or from inadvertently slipping up, or (worst of all) from a total disregard of the law altogether. In English translations, *anomia* is usually rendered as "lawlessness," "iniquity," or "evildoers." To this list might be added another rendering: "torahlessness."

Y'shua addressed the problem of *anomia* in a number of His teachings. His prophetic utterances on this matter should cause great concern to Believers who think the law has been "done away:"

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness [*anomia* or *torahlessness*]!'" (Matt. 7:21-23)

This prophetic passage clearly indicates that some who believe *Y'shua* is the Messiah, and who may even be doing a great work in His Name, will not have a place in the Kingdom of God because they practice a lifestyle that is in opposition to *Torah*. This does not necessarily preclude them from having a place in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come), but it can exclude them from a 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, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ [*Messiah*], and shall reign with Him a thousand years." (Rev. 20:6)

~ Forsaking Intimacy ~

Luke records a teaching of *Y'shua's* which also speaks about those who, despite their belief in Him, will not enter into the intimate marriage relationship with *Y'shua* in the Kingdom of God:

"Then one said to Him, 'Lord, are there few who are saved?' And He said to them, ²⁴ 'Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵ When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' ²⁶ then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' ²⁷ But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity [*anomia, torahlessness*].'" ²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. ²⁹ They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. ³⁰ And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last."

(Luke 13:23-30)

The next example addresses those who really have no love for *Y'shua* but are evil people who have crept into the Believing fellowship unnoticed. In one of *Y'shua's* parables they are called the evil fruit ('tares') who dwell among the good fruit ('wheat'):

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.' ³⁷ He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. ³⁹ The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. ⁴⁰ Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness [*anomia*], ⁴² and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!'"

(Matt. 13:36-43)

Y'shua prophesied that in the last days many would fall away into *torahlessness* or lawlessness (*anomia*) because of a lack of real love among the people:

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness [*anomia*] will abound, the love of many will

grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved.'" (Matt. 24:9-13)

It is clear from these teachings by *Y'shua* Himself that, at the end of this age, Believers do not want to be found among those who say "the law has been done away."

Sobering thought!

~ A New Commandment ~

Some say that Believer's no longer have to obey the commands of the *Torah* because *Y'shua* brought a "New Commandment:"

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

However, this is not really a new commandment at all, for after all it says in the *Torah*:

"... you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD [*YHVH*].'" (Lev. 19:18b)

Yet, *Y'shua* called it a new commandment. The thing that is new about this commandment is that *Y'shua* told His disciples to love one another as He has loved them. This new love was not to be just the "brotherly" or *phileo* type of love that is common among people. Here *Y'shua* instructed His disciples to love one another with *agape* or Godly love. *Agape* is a love which pours forth from a pure heart and which does not expect anything in return. This love commandment is the summation of all the 613 commandments found in the *Torah*. However, the Love Commandment does not negate nor replace the 613, rather it summarizes them into one all-encompassing behavioral characteristic.

Y'shua indicated that Believer's would do well to follow all of His commands, just as He had followed all of His Father's commands:

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.'" (John 15:10)

This is how Believer's can express *agape* love -- by following all of *Y'shua's* commands.

Are the commandments of the Father different than those of the Son? Apparently not for *Y'shua* said:

"I and My Father are one.'" (John 10:30)

It makes no sense to claim that *Y'shua* did away with His Father's commandments and then turn around and say that they are one in spirit.

~ *Y'shua* and the Gentiles ~

The earthly ministry of *Y'shua* was specifically centered on one group of people, the children of Israel. While His teachings about the law were not specifically directed towards the Gentiles, nevertheless it was clear, even during *Y'shua's* time, that His ministry would eventually be directed toward the

Gentiles as well. First of all it is interesting to note what happened when *Y'shua* taught in Gentile territory:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon." (Matt. 15:21)

His purpose in going to Tyre and Sidon must have been to teach the Jews who were living in that area, for He made it clear to a Canaanite woman that He had not come there to teach the Gentiles:

"And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, 'Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed.' ²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, 'Send her away, for she cries out after us.' ²⁴ But He answered and said, 'I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.'" (Matt. 15:22-24)

Clearly, this woman was descended from neither the House of Israel or the House of Judah. She was a Gentile, descended from one of the Canaanite tribes who dwelt in the land prior to the arrival of the children of Israel. Nevertheless, this woman had heard about *Y'shua* and desired to have Him heal her demon possessed daughter:

"Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, help me!' ²⁶ But He answered and said, 'It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' ²⁷ And she said, 'Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.'" (Matt. 15:25-27)

The term 'dogs,' when applied to people, was a Hebrew idiom meaning Gentiles.

While *Y'shua's* ministry was directed primarily towards the children of Israel, this story indicates that the Gentiles were not to be completely excluded:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour." (Matt. 15:28)

When *Y'shua* sent His disciples out on a teaching journey He specifically told them not to go to the Samaritans or the Gentiles:

"These twelve Jesus [*Y'shua*] sent out and commanded them, saying: 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.'" (Matt. 10:5)

However, in these same instructions, *Y'shua* clearly indicated that in the future His disciples would be witnesses to the Gentiles as well as to the lost sheep of the House of Israel:

"But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. ¹⁸ You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles.'" (Matt. 10:17-18)

After healing a man in a synagogue, plus a great number of other people, the *Pharisees* began to plot against *Y'shua*:

"Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him. ¹⁵ But when Jesus [*Y'shua*] knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all." (Matt. 12:14-15)

Following directly upon this event, a passage is quoted from the book of Isaiah which indicates that *Y'shua* (*Y'shua* = salvation) would eventually become known to the Gentiles:

"Yet He warned them not to make Him known, ¹⁷ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁸ 'Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.

¹⁹ He will not quarrel nor cry out, Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.

²⁰ A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench, Till He sends forth justice to victory;

²¹ And in His name Gentiles will trust." (Matt. 12:16-21)

When the baby *Y'shua* was presented in the Temple during the time of *Miriam's* purification, a prophecy was spoken concerning Him by a man named Simeon. It included hope for both Israel and the Gentile nations:

"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word;

³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation

³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,

³² A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

It is clear that while *Y'shua's* earthly ministry was directed solely towards the children of Israel, the ultimate goal of that ministry was to include the Gentiles as well. Perhaps the clearest indication *Y'shua* gave that there was to be one and only one teaching for both Jews and Gentiles is found in the Good Shepherd passage:

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ 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 10:14-16)

Y'shua said there were other sheep than those which were among the Jews of that day. This was a direct reference to those Gentiles who would later come to believe that *Y'shua* is the Messiah. Notice carefully that all of them (both Jew and Gentile) were going to be placed in one sheep fold. If all the sheep are to be in one fold, will they not all come under the same rules (*Torah*)? We believe they most definitely will.

~ The Great Commission ~

Y'shua taught that the Law (*Torah*) had not been destroyed (Matt. 5:17) but that it would remain in effect until all things written in the *Torah* and the *Prophets* have been fulfilled. He also taught that:

"... whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother." (Matt. 12:50)

Most Believers would say that the *Torah* was given by the Father, the one God in heaven. Therefore, the *Torah* can be characterized as the "will of My Father." Likewise, *Y'shua* said:

"I and My Father are one." (John 10:30)

If *Y'shua* and the Father are truly one, *Y'shua* would not have "done away" with the *Torah* which His Father called "Truth:"

"Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law [*Torah*] is truth." (Psalm 119:142)

With these teachings in mind, let us look at the 'Great Commission:'

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen." (Matt. 28:19-20)

Y'shua taught His disciples to keep the commandments of God as found in the *Written Torah*. At the very end of His ministry, *Y'shua* told His disciples to teach that same *Torah* standard to "all the nations of the world." In this manner the wonderful gift of the *Torah* was brought to all the peoples of the world.

Did *Y'shua* teach that Gentiles should keep the Law (*Torah*)? While He made no direct statement to that effect, we believe that by examining all of *Y'shua's* statements concerning the "Law," it is clear that, when the Gentiles were brought into the Believing community, they too would be given the gift of the *Written Torah* which had come from the mouth of God at Mount Sinai.

~ Summary ~

Y'shua is said to be the Son of David and the Son of *Avraham*. He is their Son not only because He was physically descended from them, but, more importantly, because He exemplified what they stood for. *Avraham* was the father of the faithful, and David was the righteous king (a type of Messiah).

The genealogies given in Matthew and Luke show clearly that both of *Y'shua's* earthly parents were from the tribe of Judah and the lineage of King David. It was through the line of *Miriam* that *Y'shua* received His physical lineage from King David.

Y'shua said that He did not come to teach the Gentiles directly but, rather, He came to teach the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His ministry and message was to call the children of Israel to repent and return to *Torah* observance and the proper worship of God.

Yet it is also clear, from several passages, that *Y'shua* understood His ministry was not going to be limited to just the children of Israel, but that it would eventually be taken to all the world by His disciples. This commission would be acted upon later by the Apostle Paul, who was given the charge of being the Apostle to the Gentiles. The only distinction Paul made between Jews and Gentiles was that the message of Messiah was to go to the Jew first:

"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)

One thing is abundantly clear from the teachings of *Y'shua*; He taught that the *mitzvot* (commands) of the *Torah* were still in effect and would remain in effect until heaven and earth passed away. He also taught that only those who were willing to keep the *Written Torah* would have a place in the millennial reign of *Y'shua*; that time which would be known as the Kingdom of God. However, exclusion from the Kingdom does not necessarily exclude non-*Torah* observant Believer's from eternal life in the *Olam Haba* (the World to Come after the Millennium). That decision will be God's alone and will be rendered at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment:

"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)

There is no definitive statement *Y'shua* made which specifically states that the Gentiles would be required to keep the *Written Torah* if they wished to attach themselves to Israel through faith in *Y'shua*. However, the Scriptures clearly state that if any Believer (Jew or Gentile) wishes to have a place in the Millennial Kingdom of God, that person needs to become *Written Torah* observant to the best of their ability, just as do the Believers from the House of Judah and the House of Israel.

Finally, *Y'shua* also made it clear that the many fences of the *Oral Torah* (or Oral Traditions) were not incumbent upon the Believer. *Y'shua* came to restore the proper observance of the *Written Torah*, not through a myriad of additional rules, but by setting a right example of how to live a life of love for God and love for one's fellow human beings:

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

Let us all strive to observe the weightier matters of the *Torah* while not neglecting the details.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Apostle's Perspective ~

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law:
For sin is the transgression of the law.
I John 3:4



Continuing the study on *Gentiles and the Law*, we now proceed to a survey of the teaching of the Apostles who wrote the General Epistles. The General Epistles are those letters written by men other than the Apostle Paul. They consist of seven books: *James*, *I and II Peter*, *I, II, and III John*, and *Jude*. Two of the writers (James and Jude) were half-brothers of *Y'shua*.

~ To the Churches ~

The men who wrote the General Epistles were all Jewish by birth. Most of the letters were written to churches in the Diaspora; that is to churches outside of Judea and the Galilee. The General Epistles were not specifically addressed to either the Jewish Believers or the Gentile Believers, but to entire congregations. Two exceptions are the book of *James* which is addressed to:

"... the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad ..."
(James 1:1)

And *III John*, which went to an individual:
"... To the beloved Gaius, ..." (III John 1)

However, both of these books (as well as the other five) were no doubt circulated throughout the various churches of the Diaspora and would have been read to congregations comprised of both Jews and Gentiles.

The book of *II John* seems to have been written to a woman:

"... To the elect lady and her children, ..." (II John 1)

However, in our opinion, John is using an idiomatic expression for the Church when he addresses the "elect lady," and therefore it too is relevant to both Jew and Gentile.

Some teach that *I Peter* was written primarily to the Jewish Believers in the Diaspora because of the salutation:

"... To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ..." (I Peter 1:1)

Also, because of the verse:

"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, ..."
(I Peter 2:11-12a)

However, the thrust of this passage does not require that it refer only to Jewish Believers in order to make sense. In fact, it would be more likely written to Gentile Believers that they

conduct themselves 'honorably' among the Gentiles with whom they formerly had social intercourse. The very fact that Believing Gentiles would have changed both their religious belief and their moral conduct, would have had a much stronger effect on the non-believing Gentile population than learning that some Jews had accepted *Y'shua* as their Messiah but had not perceptibly changed their normal mode of behavior. After all, the Jews, who regularly attended Synagogue, already kept the *Torah* commands, so there would be little noticeable difference in their behavior. In fact, the verses just prior to the above passage strongly indicate that Peter was referring to Gentiles who had forsaken their former idolatrous practices, rather than to Jews:

"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 Peter 2:9-10)

It was Jews and Gentiles worshipping together as equals that made the formerly diverse Believing Community into a unified people. It was the Gentiles grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel who had become a part of the people of God, for Jews were already considered to be the people of God.

Near the end of this letter Peter made it clear that he was including Gentiles in his instructions to the Diaspora churches:

"For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do -- living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. ⁴ They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you."
(I Peter 4:3-4 NIV)

It seems clear to us that the intent of the General Epistles was to provide instruction for all of the members of the Believing Community, both Jew and Gentile.

~ Overview ~

The overall message of the General Epistles can be summed up in the following concepts:

- ◆ Love God and neighbor,
- ◆ Believe that *Y'shua* is Messiah and Savior,
- ◆ Refrain from evil,
- ◆ Do not speak evil of one another,
- ◆ Beware of false teachers and false doctrines,
- ◆ Do good, and
- ◆ Obey the commandments.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to explore all of these themes, but rather to determine what the Apostles taught concerning the Law (*Torah*). To accomplish this task we will briefly explore each of the seven books.

~ James ~

Of all the General Epistles, *Ya'acov* (Yah-ah'-cove = Jacob or James) is the most adamant about the necessity to obey the Law (*Torah*). The main theme of this book is "Faith without works is dead."

According to *Ya'acov*, faith expressed only in words does not suffice to be called real faith, for mental faith is not enough. Faith is an action word. Faith requires that the possessor take action to prove the reality of their faith. In other words, *Ya'acov* taught that faith must produce real changes in the character and behavior of the Believer. Of course, real character change cannot take place without a corresponding change in the mind and heart of the individual.

However, *Ya'acov* does not base his teachings on ideas that merely came out of his own mind. Rather, His teaching is solidly based upon the foundation established by *Y'shua*. According to the commentary found in *The Open Bible*, there are fifteen indirect references to the *Sermon on the Mount* found within the pages of the Epistle of James.

For example, Believers were told to understand that persecution and trials were going to be a natural outcome of faith in *Y'shua*. *Ya'acov* said:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ..." (James 1:2)

Y'shua said:

**"'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

¹¹ **Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**

¹² **Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."** (Matt. 5:10-12)

Another *Sermon on the Mount* parallel deals with merciful judgment. *Ya'acov* said:

"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

(James 2:13)

Y'shua said:

"'For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

(Matt. 6:14-15)

Ya'acov wanted all Believers to be doers of the Word (*Torah*) by putting into action the commands they had been taught:

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. ²⁵ But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." (James 1:22-25)

Ya'acov referred to the *Torah* as the "perfect law of liberty," because, by following its precepts, the individual is kept free from sin. This concept does not imply that the law gives an individual license to do as they please.

Ya'acov followed up with three specific examples about how to be a doer of the word. 1.) Bridle your tongue, 2.) care for the widows and orphans, and 3.) keep yourself pure:

"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)

All three of these concepts come straight out of the Hebrew Scriptures. First of all, David spoke about *Lashon Hara* (Lah-shone' Hah-rah' = the Evil Tongue):

**"Who is the man who desires life,
And loves many days, that he may see good?**

¹³ **Keep your tongue from evil,
And your lips from speaking deceit.**

⁴ **Depart from evil and do good;**

Seek peace and pursue it." (Psalm 32:12-14)

The *Torah* commands in several places that the widows and orphans must receive proper care:

"'For the LORD [YHVH] your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. ¹⁸ He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.'" (Deut. 10:17-18)

The *Torah* also teaches that God's people are to be holy and set apart from society at large:

"'And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD [YHVH] am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine.'" (Lev. 20:26)

Following the example of his brother *Y'shua*, *Ya'acov* summarized obedience to the *Torah* in one word, Love:

"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; ⁹ but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." (James 2:8-9)

Notice how *Ya'acov* held the *Torah* in such high esteem that he called it the "royal law." Then he made a very significant statement about the necessity of following *Torah*:

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all." (James 2:10)

This strict interpretation (by the brother of *Y'shua*) of the need to observe the entire *Torah* law has the effect of putting all Believers in jeopardy of the death penalty, were it not for God's saving grace:

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." (James 4:10)

The central message of *Ya'acov's* Epistle is that faith can only be evident if a person performs works to back it up:

"What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? ¹⁵If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? ¹⁷Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. ...

²⁶For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:14-18, 26)

In this epistle, *Ya'acov* gave the Believer two of the four New Testament definitions of sin. *Ya'acov's* definitions follow along with the theme of being a 'doer' of the law by performing good deeds or works:

"If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well; ⁹but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." (James 2:8-9)

"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Finally, *Ya'acov* taught that active faith (faith with works) can help to overcome sin:

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James (5:19-20))

It is clear that *Ya'acov* believed the *Torah* was still in effect and that obedience to its precepts was a significant way in which a Believer could demonstrate his faith in *Y'shua*.

~ I Peter ~

The book of I Peter deals primarily with the persecution of the Believing Community. However, Peter made it clear that if a person is being persecuted because of their sinful lifestyle (one that does not uphold the *Torah* commands), then they should not expect to receive a reward for their suffering. However, if the persecution comes because of belief in *Y'shua*, then God will reward that person for enduring the trial.

In terms of the *Torah* (law), Peter made it clear that Believers need to learn obedience to the commands of God. Believers are to become like obedient children, conducting their lives in a holy manner.

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your

conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'" (I Peter 1:13-16)

Notice how Peter ties grace and obedience together. It is only through God's grace that Believers are forgiven for those sins which have brought the death penalty upon them. However, having received the free gift of grace, should Believers continue to sin so that grace may abound? The Apostle Paul answers this question directly: **"God forbid!"** (Rom. 6:2) Believers should not commit sin but instead become obedient to God's will (as clearly expressed in the *Torah* commands). To Peter, obedience is not 'earning' one's salvation, rather, obedience is the act of doing one's very best because one loves God and wishes to express that love by obeying His commands.

Peter made it clear that Believers would do well to obey the *Torah* in the more strict manner taught by *Y'shua* not just avoiding the acts of adultery and murder but also by not committing the mental sins of lusting or hating:

"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, ..." (I Peter 2:11)

He also made it clear that the past sins of Believers have been removed by the precious blood of *Y'shua* and that Believer's should want to walk a righteous walk, following the example He set because their sins have been removed:

"For to this you were called, because Christ [*Messiah*] also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

**²²Who committed no sin,
Nor was deceit found in His mouth;"** (cited: Isa. 53:9)

²³who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; ²⁴who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness -- by whose stripes you were healed." (I Peter 2:21-24)

What is righteousness?

**"My tongue shall speak of Your word,
For all Your commandments are righteousness."** (Psalm 119:172)

Peter tells us that God looks favorably upon those who practice righteousness, but He turns His face against those who practice *anomia* (lawlessness or evil):

**"Let him turn away from evil and do good;
Let him seek peace and pursue it.
¹²For the eyes of the LORD [*YHVH*] are on the righteous,
And His ears are open to their prayers;
But the face of the LORD [*YHVH*] is against those who do evil."** (I Peter 3:11-12 cited: Psalm 34:13-17)

Just as the *Torah* says:

"You shall not follow a crowd to do evil; ..." (Ex. 23:2)

Peter wanted all Believers to arm themselves with the mind of *Y'shua*. To have His mind means that Believers must attempt to order their lives in the very same manner in which He ordered His. Since *Y'shua* was without sin, Believers should also strive to live a sin free life:

"Therefore, since Christ [*Messiah*] suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,² that he no longer should live the rest of *his* time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (I Peter 4:1-2)

Peter ended his first epistle with a stark view of how difficult it can be for a sinner to receive salvation. He said that even those who are righteous will barely be able to obtain salvation because, despite their best attempts, Believers still, from time to time, inadvertently commit sin as defined by God. He went on to say that if it is that difficult for a child of God to be saved, think of how those who are living in a state of total lawlessness (torahlessness) have an even smaller chance of being saved:

"For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"¹⁸ Now

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

(cited: Prov. 11:31)

"¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator." (I Peter 4:17-19)

The bottom line is that our salvation is in His righteous hands:

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

~ II Peter ~

The main theme of Peter's second epistle is to warn about teachers who bring false doctrines into the Believing Community. While *I Peter* dealt with persecution coming from the outside, this book warns of the dangers that can come from within. Peter also focused this epistle on the fact that sin still existed within the Believing Community and that all members needed to have their sins purged and their minds and hearts redirected toward loving one another and toward righteous living, so that the Community could be made pure.

Peter began by telling the Believers they should become partakers of the "divine nature:"

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus [*Y'shua*] our Lord,³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is in the world through lust*." (II Peter 1:2-4)

According to Peter, Believers are to become partakers of the "divine nature" through the correct knowledge of God's virtue, glory, and power.

One question needs to be asked: Can the divine nature sin? Our clear answer is no, of course not! If the divine nature cannot sin, and Believers are to be partakers of that nature, then they too must become free of sin. In terms of past sins, that goal is accomplished through the blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach*.

However, what about future sins? Would not all Believers agree that they should refrain from intentional sins? Every person makes behavioral choices on a daily basis. It is possible to make the choice not to commit sin. Of course, because Believers are still in the flesh, they will not always be successful in their attempt to lead a sinless life. So, when sin does occur, the blood of Messiah is still there to take away those sins too, as long as one is truly sorry for them. Peter addressed this very issue:

"For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins."¹⁰ Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ..." (II Peter 1:9-10)

What things is Peter speaking of that will keep Believers from stumbling? He is speaking about eight virtuous character traits:

"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge,⁶ to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness,⁷ to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.⁸ For if these things are yours and abound, *you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]*." (II Peter 1:5-8)

This passage puts Peter in complete accord with *Ya'acov*, for this was Peter's way of saying that Believers need to be doers of the law and not hearers only.

Peter went on in chapter two to discuss the evils of sin at various levels. He wrote about the angels who sinned (v. 4), the unlawful deeds committed at Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 8), and how the false prophet *Balaam* was rebuked for his iniquity (v. 16). In all three cases Peter compared these sinful activities to the false teachers who had gained positions of authority in the church:

"But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction." (II Peter 2:1)

Peter's words against the false teachers are stinging:

"These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (II Peter 2:17)

What is the chief sin which these false teachers proclaim? They have declared a false 'liberty' by turning Believer's away from the holy commandment:

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. ... ²¹ For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them." (II Peter 2:19, 21)

In other words, these false teachers turned God's wonderful gift of grace into license to do whatever they pleased by telling the people; "The law has been done away." In so doing, the people who followed their evil ways acted out the ancient proverb:

"... 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'"

(II Peter 2:22)

Peter, was clear about the need to obey God's commandments. His message was that once Believers had been forgiven of their sins, they should be extremely careful not to fall back into them.

~ I John ~

The Apostle *Yochanan* (Yoh'-cah-nahn = John) is often called the Apostle of Love because the emphasis of his writings is that Believers should love one another. But *Yochanan's* concept of love is not just the warm fuzzy emotion of brotherly love. Rather, it is the *agape*, or higher level love that often requires hard work, because it is based upon how a person lives their life, not just on how they feel about someone.

Yochanan tells the Believer that it is important to walk in God's light and not in the darkness of the world. The darkness that is to be avoided is tied directly to sin:

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] His Son cleanses us from all sin." (I John 1:5-7)

Everyone has sinned in the past, and everyone commits sin from time to time. But our God is a faithful God and He is willing and able to remove sin through a great cleansing process, if only we are humble enough to admit that we have sinned:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (I John 1:8-9)

Just exactly what are the sins which *Yochanan* said will be freely forgiven upon confession? He made it absolutely clear beyond a shadow of a doubt:

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

Sin is the breaking of *Torah* law. When a Believer breaks one of the *Torah* commands, that person has committed a lawless act.

Yochanan (just like *Y'shua*) plainly said that the *Written Torah* was still in place and that Believers should not become lawless. In fact, *Yochanan* was adamant about the connection between sin and the commandments of the *Written Torah* and that keeping the commandments was actually an act of love:

"We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. ⁴ The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: ⁶ Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus [*Y'shua*] did." (I John 2:3-6)

Believers are to walk just as *Y'shua* walked. *Y'shua* kept all of the commandments perfectly, the way God had intended they be kept from the beginning. Believers should do likewise:

"If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him."

(I John 2:29)

After establishing that sin is the transgression of the law (*Torah*), *Yochanan* went on to teach that living a sinful life (disobeying the *Torah* and not loving one's neighbor) is really the devil's way of life:

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (I John 3:8)

Y'shua was sent for the express purpose of qualifying to take away sin through His substitutionary sacrifice:

"And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin." (I John 3:5)

According to *Yochanan*, Believers who are truly born of God will not wantonly break the commands of the *Written Torah*:

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

True love is expressed by following the *Torah* precepts concerning how to treat one's neighbor. Of course, these commands were amplified by *Y'shua's* own teachings. According to *Yochanan*, *Y'shua's* amplification did not negate the original commands, rather they enhanced them and made them even better:

"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another."

(I John 3:10-11)

How does a Believer show love for their brother and for God? According to *Yochanan*, through their righteous deeds:

"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." (I John 3:18)

Yochanan tied *Torah* observance directly to answered prayer:

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (I John 3:22)

This concept comes right out of the *Writings*:

"One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination." (Prov. 28:9)

In keeping with *Y'shua's* teaching, *Yochanan* also taught that the commandments could be summed up in two words: BELIEF and LOVE:

"And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] and love one another, as He gave us commandment." (I John 3:23)

Yochanan summed up his entire epistle by stressing that the highest expression of love was to keep the commandments:

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." (I John 5:2-3)

Through constant repetition, *Yochanan* left no doubt that all Believer's (both Jew and Gentile) need to strive to keep the commandments of the *Torah*. And when they fail to do so, there is the Throne of Grace where forgiveness is always available, but only on the condition that the sinner confess their sins.

~ II and III John ~

The second and third epistles of the Apostle John are very brief and will be taken together for the purpose of this study. A central theme of both *II* and *III John* is that Believers need to be walking in the Truth:

"I rejoiced greatly that I have found *some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.*" (II John 4)

Notice that the truth they are walking in is from the Father, not just from the Son. What is the Father's truth?

¹⁴² **Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And Your law [*Torah*] is truth.**

...

¹⁵¹ **You are near, O LORD [*YHVH*], And all Your commandments are truth.**

...

¹⁶⁰ **The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever."** (Psalm 119:142, 151, 160)

Yochanan not only confirmed King David's rendering in the Psalms that the commandments are truth, but he also taught they are the epitome of love:

"This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it." (II John 6)

Those who transgress the *Torah* commands transgress the doctrine of Messiah:

"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ [*Messiah*] does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ [*Messiah*] has both the Father and the Son." (II John 9)

Since walking in truth means keeping the commandments, when *Yochanan* expressed to *Gaius* his pleasure in hearing that he (*Gaius*) was walking in truth, it can be understood to mean that *Gaius* was keeping the commandments:

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

Once again, the last two epistles of the Apostle *Yochanan* confirm exactly what *Y'shua* taught; that Believers are to:

"... keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]." (Rev. 12:17b)

~ Jude ~

Jude is the other writer of a General Epistle who is believed to have been a half-brother of *Y'shua*. Like Peter, in his second epistle, *Jude* was greatly concerned about reports that false teachers had wormed their way into the body of Messiah and were teaching false doctrine. Jude's response to this peril was to exhort the Believer's to fight them tooth and nail.

What exactly were these ungodly men teaching? That God's grace gave them license to do whatever they pleased. In other words, that the commands found in the *Written Torah* had been "done away:"

"For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*]." (Jude 4)

This problem led Jude to lament that the faith which the Apostles had delivered to the Saints had been perverted and needed defenders to restore it:

"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." (Jude 3)

Jude accused them of following their own imaginations when it came to how they would 'serve' God:

"These are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage." (Jude 16)

Because of their pernicious teaching, these men caused division within the church. Jude went so far as to say they did not have the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-ahch' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit):

"These are sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit." (Jude 19)

While the men who were causing this particular problem in Jude's day were those who taught that the law had been "done away," let us remember that, on the other side of the coin, were those who said that in order to be saved, the Gentiles had to become Jewish proselytes and undergo circumcision and follow every precept of the *Oral Torah*. Error can come from both the right and the left, so let us always strive to find the balance that our Father in heaven wishes us to have.

~ Summary ~

The General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude are seven rather brief books which originally were intended to set the tone for the teaching of all the Apostles. This was originally done by placing the books immediately following the book of Acts, and before Paul's fourteen epistles. However, since Paul's first epistle was addressed to the church in Rome, the Roman Church later changed the order of the New Testament and put Paul's writings ahead of the General Epistles so that the book of *Romans* would have the premier position among the letters.

This manipulation of the order of the books has caused theological inconsistencies to develop in the Church, by de-emphasizing the General Epistles in favor of Paul's writings, which, as Peter said, are often difficult to understand and, therefore, are misused by many:

"... 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 Peter 3:15-16)

It is through a misreading and twisting of Paul's writings that church theologians claim to find a Scriptural basis for doing away with the law, turning God's beautiful grace into a license to pick and choose what commandments they wish to observe. Certainly, as we have just seen, it would be very difficult to get that impression from the General Epistles.

If Believer's were to begin their study of the letters with the General Epistles, they would first obtain a firm foundation concerning the necessity of keep the *Torah* commandments of God. This concept would then become the basis of their understanding before proceeding to Paul's writings.

Although Believers cannot earn their salvation by keeping the commandments of the *Torah*, they can earn death by breaking the commandments:

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

(Rom. 6:23)

When we sin (sin is the transgression of the Law), we need to do *teshuvah* (teh-shoe'-vah = repentance and return to God) by asking God for forgiveness and then turning around and going the other way; returning to His way of life. Winston Churchill once said: "Every man, at sometime in his life, stumbles across truth. Most pick themselves up and go on as though nothing ever happened." However:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (I John 1:8)

Jude ended his epistle with a beautiful doxology which reminds us that we can only learn to live a sinless life through the grace of God and the power of His *Ruach HaKodesh*:

**"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
²⁵ To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen."**

(Jude 24-25)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ Paul's Perspective ~

~ Paul the Pharisee ~

But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees
And the other Pharisees,
He cried out in the council,
"Men *and* brethren,
I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee;
Concerning the hope
And resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"
Act 23:6

It is time to take a closer look at *Sha'ul* (Shaw-ool' = Paul) the: **"...apostle of the Gentiles..."** (Rom. 11:13).

A careful study of the scriptures reveals that *Sha'ul* (Paul) was a lifelong *Torah* observant Jew of the sect of the Pharisees. Before plunging headlong into this subject let us define some terms.

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

The Hebrew word *Torah* appears hundreds of times in the OT and is almost always translated into our English word 'law'. This is a poor translation mainly because of our Western concepts of law. When we think of the word 'law' we probably visualize policeman, tickets, judges, courts, fines and jail sentences.

The word *Torah* implies none of these things. *Torah* is derived from the root word *yarah* which literally means 'to flow as water'. Figuratively it means 'to point out', to *teach*, inform, instruct, show. *Torah* could best be defined in English as 'instruction', that is God's instruction to man. Once one gets a grasp of this concept (that the first five books of the Bible are not meant to threaten but rather to instruct in righteous living) one can begin to relax a little bit. Now instead of seeing God as a policeman waiting for a Believer to break one of His laws, we have the picture of a loving Father instructing His children in how to live a life that will be both a blessing to His children and an honor to our Father in heaven.

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

First of all, *Sha'ul* belonged to one of the strictest sects of the Jews:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sha'ul attended synagogue.

"... came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ..."
(Acts 17:1-2)

It was the habit of Paul (as it was of Y'shua) to attend synagogue every Sabbath. He also upheld Jewish circumcision:

"... behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. ... ³ Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek."
(Acts 16:1, 3)

Paul observed the custom of the Jews, which was that all Jewish males had to be physically circumcised. This despite the fact that he was the primary one who taught that Gentiles need not be circumcised in order to fellowship with Believing Jews in the Body of Messiah. There is no contradiction here at all. Paul was a *Torah* observant Jew. If he had not circumcised Timothy he would have stood in direct conflict both with the *Torah* and with Jewish tradition because Timothy, being a Jew, needed to observe the customs of the Jews.

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

"...for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost."
(Acts 20:16)

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

Now we get into some really heavy-duty stuff.

"And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria ... having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow."
(Acts 18:18)

Why on earth would Paul, after being an apostle to the Gentiles for all these years, have decided to take a "Jewish" vow? It is probable that the vow Paul (*Sha'ul*) took was that of a Nazarite:

"When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD [YHVH],³ he shall separate himself from wine and similar drink; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins.⁴ All the days of his separation he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin.⁵ All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD [YHVH], he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.⁶ All the days that he separates himself to the LORD [YHVH] he shall not go near a dead body. ...

"¹³Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting.¹⁴ And he shall present his offering to the LORD [YHVH]: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering,¹⁵ a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

"¹⁶ Then the priest shall bring them before the LORD [YHVH] and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering;¹⁷ and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of peace offering to the LORD [YHVH], with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering.¹⁸ Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering."

(Num. 6:2-6,13-18)

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

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

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

(Act 21:20)

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

However, there was a problem. False rumors had been spread about *Sha'ul*. The non-believing Jews were saying that

Sha'ul was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children. This was a false charge. In truth, he was teaching Gentile Believers that they did not have to be circumcised to become part of the Messianic Community. The Jews were required by both the *Torah* and their traditions to continue circumcision. But people love to believe a lie, and so *Sha'ul* became trapped by the lie. But let us continue the story as it is recorded in Acts.

"And they said to him, 'You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;²¹ but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. [Remember this word 'customs'; it becomes important in the next section.]²² What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.²³ Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.²⁴ Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law [Torah].'"

(Act 21:20-24)

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

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

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.²⁷ Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,²⁸ crying out, 'Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place.'" (Act 21:26-28)

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

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

"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."

(Acts 23:1)

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

In other words, Paul claimed that he had always lived by the commandments of the *Torah*. Now there are said to be 613 commandments in the *Torah* which include both positive commandments (those which require one to do something) and negative commandments (those which require one to avoid something). Paul is saying that he never intentionally broke any of those 613 commandments. He further states that he never defiled the Temple in any way by entering in an unclean state or bringing an inappropriate sacrifice.

Again, we ask, was Paul a liar?

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

The key word in this passage is 'customs'. It is the Greek word *ethos* (Strong's #1485). It is defined as;

"a *usage* (prescribed by habit or law): -custom, manner, be wont."

Since Paul specifically mentions the "customs of our fathers" he is including not just the *Written Torah* but the *Oral Torah* as well. These include the well known 'traditions' of the Jews, some of which *Y'shua* Himself said were inappropriate.

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

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~ Paul's Perspective ~

~ The Epistles to the Thessalonians ~

But we command you, brethren,
In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*],
That you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly
And not according to the tradition which he received from us.
II *Thessalonians* 3:6



As has been established in the previous chapter, the Apostle Paul (*Shaul*) was a Jew who belonged to the sect of the *Pharisees*. He received his training from *Gamaliel*, one of the finest teachers from the School of *Hillel*:

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today." (Acts 22:3)

Because Paul was a *Pharisee*, his emphasis tended to dwell more on behavior rather than on doctrine. This is not to say that Paul was not concerned about doctrine, it is merely an observation that the majority of his teaching centered around how the Gentile Messianic Believers should behave once they had been brought into the Family of God through the shed blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'-ach = Jesus the Messiah).

Although Paul never taught the Gentile Messianic Believers to disobey the *Written Torah*, a careful analysis of his teachings concerning behavior, reveals that he did teach that some aspects of the *Oral Torah* were optional. This is an important distinction, for many times when it appears that Paul is teaching against the *Torah*, he is, in fact, not teaching against the written portion that we have in our Bibles, but against some of the fences* that had been added over the centuries by the Rabbis.

~ Thessalonica ~

This study begins with Paul's two letters to the Church at Thessalonica, the capitol of the Roman province of Macedonia. Thessalonica was a well established seaport city which was believed to have had a first century population of about 200,000 people, including a sizable Jewish contingent. This meant that the local Jewish synagogues would have had a number of Gentile *God Fearers* (those Gentiles who had forsaken pagan worship and were in the process of becoming *Proselytes* to Judaism -- see *Gentiles and the Law - Vol. 1* for more information about the *God Fearers* and *Proselytes*).

* A fence around the law is a more stringent command which the Rabbis have added to the *Written Torah* command. Fences were added so that a person would be in less danger of breaking the *Written Torah* commands.

It was on Paul's "Second Missionary Journey" when he first visited *Thessalonica* and established a congregation there. However, once the *synagogue* leadership learned he was teaching that the Messiah had come in the person of *Y'shua*, Paul experienced a rather violent rejection:

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ² Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and demonstrating that the Christ [*Messiah*] had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus [*Y'shua*] whom I preach to you is the Christ [*Messiah*].'

⁴ And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks [*probably Hellenistic Jews*], and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas. ⁵ But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, 'These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. ⁷ Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king -- Jesus [*Y'shua*].'

⁸ And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things. ⁹ So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go. ¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews." (Acts 17:1-10)

Exactly how long Paul spent in Thessalonica is debated. Some feel (based upon the above passage) that he was only there for three Sabbaths before being asked to leave. Others disagree, pointing out that while he was in Thessalonica, Paul received two separate offerings from the Messianic Community at Phillipi, which must have taken considerable time to arrive there due to the slowness of travel in those days:

¹⁵ Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." (Phil. 4:15-16)

In addition, it is pointed out that most of the Messianic Believers at Thessalonica were Gentiles who had come out of paganism, while most of the Jewish people would not have been serving idols, even if they were not observant:

"For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, ..."

(1 Thess. 1:9)

It would have taken considerably longer than three Sabbaths to properly teach those Gentiles who had converted

from paganism, unless, of course, they were already well grounded as *God Fearers*, which is a distinct possibility.

~ I Thessalonians ~

Most biblical scholars identify the letter of *I Thessalonians* as the earliest of Paul's letters, being written about 51 CE (common era). It is also generally agreed that it was written from the city of Corinth, since that is where Paul was residing when Timothy brought his report from Thessalonica:

"After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. ... ⁴ And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. ⁵ When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus [*Y'shua*] is the Christ [*Messiah*]." (Acts 18:1, 4-5)

The first epistle to the *Thessalonians* is divided into two basic parts. The first three chapters reflect back on the founding, growth, and strengthening of the Messianic congregation, while the last two chapters contain instructions to the Believers, including a discourse on the return of Messiah. Since the purpose of the *Gentiles and the Law* series is to trace Paul's teaching concerning the Gentile Messianic Believer's relationship to the *Written Torah*, we will pass quickly over those verses which do not directly address that issue.

There are no direct references to either the "Law" (Gk. *nomos*), nor to "iniquity" or "lawlessness" (Gk. *anomia*), to be found in *I Thessalonians*. This letter merely addressed behavior in a general way. Paul praised the *Thessalonians* for the faithful example they were setting for other Messianic Believers in their area, despite rather intense persecution:

⁶ And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, ⁷ so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe." (I Thess. 1:6-7)

Paul went on to remind them of the worthy manner in which he and his companions conducted themselves in *Thessalonica*, so the Messianic Believers would have a good example to follow:

"You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; ¹¹ as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, ¹² that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."

(I Thess. 2:10-12)

While the above passage specifically targeted Paul's reaction to the persecution he and his companions received by being thrust out of *Thessalonica*, it would be incongruous to imagine that the persecution *Shaul the Pharisee* received was in any way due to the breaking of *Written Torah* commands. Please note that Paul complimented the *Thessalonians* for bearing up righteously under the same type of persecution. Perhaps the persecution he received was the result of the Jewish leaders aversion to his teaching about the Messiah *Y'shua*, feeling it was a threat to their positions of leadership:

"For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ [Messiah] crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [Messiah] the power of God and the wisdom of God."

(I Cor. 1:21-24)

In chapter 3, Paul complimented the *Thessalonians* for their faith (confidence and trust) in *Y'shua* and their displays of love for one another. He then inserted a brief prayer on behalf of the *Thessalonians* in which he exhorted them to become well established in the faith:

"¹² And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, ¹³ so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] with all His saints." (I Thess. 3:12-13)

The phrase **"blameless in holiness"** refers to being morally pure in every way, including worship of God. Certainly, this is one of the primary objectives of the *Written Torah*. In addition to the following verses, Chapter 19 of Leviticus contains a number of other ways in which the children of Israel were commanded to be "holy" and set-apart from the peoples of the other nations:

"And the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, ² Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD [YHVH] your God *am* holy. ³ Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths: I *am* the LORD [YHVH] your God. ⁴ Do not turn to idols, nor make for yourselves molded gods: I *am* the LORD [YHVH] your God.'" (Lev. 19:1-4)

Paul gave support for following the precepts of the *Written Torah* when he exhorted the *Thessalonians* to follow the commandments which he had taught them when he was with them:

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus [Y'shua] that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; ² for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus [Y'shua]." (I Thess. 4:1-2)

Some might argue that the "commandments" which Paul gave them was simply to "love" one another. However, Paul spoke of our "sanctification," and then went on to mention one specific problem which was typical of pagan worship:

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ... ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness." (I Thess. 4:3-4, 7)

While Paul did not directly reference the *Torah* in this passage, the principle of sexual purity was certainly a major theme of that body of law (see Lev. 18).

After some instruction about what would happen (upon Messiah's return) to those who had previously died, plus some

commentary on the Day of the Lord, Paul ended this Epistle with additional instructions for holy living. They are best summed up in this verse:

"²² Abstain from every form of evil." (I Thess. 5:22)

We are sanctified (set apart) when we **"Abstain from every form of evil."** The *Written Torah* defines what is evil and what is good. Therefore, in our opinion, it is not possible that the *Torah* definitions of evil changed with the coming of *Y'shua*, or the teaching of Paul.

The *Torah* includes a number of cases where a person who breaks even one of the *Torah* commands is to be put to death. This death sentence was imposed to deter others from committing the same type of evil acts, thus purifying the children of Israel:

"So you shall put away the evil from your midst."

(Deut. 13:5)

In the book of Ecclesiastes, we are told why evil abounds:

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

After careful examination, we can find nothing in the book of *I Thessalonians* which could even remotely be considered an abrogation of the *Written Torah*.

~ II Thessalonians ~

It is generally believed that the letter of *II Thessalonians* was written only a few months after *I Thessalonians*. This would place its dating either in late 51 or early 52 CE. Like its predecessor, this letter was written from Corinth.

In the introduction, Paul spoke eloquently about how faithfully the *Thessalonians* had been holding up under the intense persecution they had been receiving. Paul comforted them with the knowledge with which they would be richly rewarded for maintaining their steadfast faith in the face of such intense persecution. Not only that, they would one day see those evil people face God's vengeance for the suffering they had caused His children:

"... ⁵ which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; ⁶ since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus [Y'shua] is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach]." (II Thess. 1:5-8)

It is interesting to note that *Y'shua* will take **"vengeance on those who do not obey the gospel."** If the gospel is merely believing on what *Y'shua HaMashiach* did and not on His teaching of obedience to the *Written Torah*, there would have been no need to use the word "obey;" rather, the word "believe" would have been more appropriate. However, while the gospel certainly does include the works of *Y'shua* (His miraculous

birth and works, His obedience, death, and resurrection), *Y'shua* Himself pointed out that the gospel has other facets:

"Now after John was put in prison, Jesus [*Y'shua*] came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,¹⁵ and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.'"

(Mark 1:14-15)

The gospel (good news) which *Y'shua* proclaimed was that the Kingdom of God was at hand and that the Kingdom would be ruled by *Y'shua*, who will govern the Kingdom according to the precepts set forth in the *Written Torah*.

During the times of the Kings of Israel and Judah, a *Torah* command was in effect which required the King to make a personal copy of the *Torah* (some say just the book of Deuteronomy) so that he would become familiar with all of its precepts:

"Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites.¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD [*YHVH*] his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."

(Deut. 17:18-20)

By making a personal copy of the *Torah*, the King was expected to learn its precepts and thus be able to govern the nation of Israel according to all of God's commands.

All of the Kings of Israel and Judah were considered to be a type of Messiah because they were all anointed with oil when their investiture took place. (The Hebrew word for anoint is *Mashiach* which means anointed one.) However, The Messiah is considered to be the ultimate "Anointed One."

The Kings of Israel and Judah needed to know the *Written Torah* so they could govern effectively, even as the Ultimate King of kings (the originator of the *Torah*) who will effectively govern the entirety of the earth using God's Word (instruction in righteousness) to judge both society (in general) as well as personal behavior.

A second major theme of this letter has to do with understanding the Day of the Lord; when and how Messiah *Y'shua* is to return to this earth to set up the *Malchut Shamayim* (Mahl-coot' Sha-mah'-yeem = Kingdom of Heaven). Because some of the *Thessalonians* thought the Day of the Lord was eminent (or already past), they apparently had quit their jobs and were waiting upon *Y'shua's* appearance. (This has been a recurring phenomenon down through the ages.) Paul exhorted them to get back to work and support themselves.

Paul then went on to point out that a certain event must happen prior to the return of Messiah and that it had not yet occurred. Most Bible interpreters say this event will be a great "falling away" from the Faith, while others believe it speaks of a "catching away" to the *Chuppah* (Who-pah' = marriage chamber):

"Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,² not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ [*Messiah*] had come.³ Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,*⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."

(II Thess. 2:1-4)

The outcome of this event (whether it is a "falling away" or a "catching away") is that a certain individual will be revealed who totally opposes God the Father and His Son *Y'shua*. The chief characteristic of this person is that he is a **"man of sin."**

What is sin?

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness [*anomia*], and sin is lawlessness [*anomia*]." (I John 3:4 NAB)

This **"son of perdition"** is a man who totally disregards the Law of God, the *Written Torah*. A few verses later he is characterized as being **"the lawless one:"**

"For the mystery of lawlessness [*anomia*] is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way.⁸ And then the lawless [*anomia*] one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."

(II Thess. 2:7-8)

Who is this **"lawless one?"** Apparently he is a man who has total disregard for the *Torah* (Law of God). He will tell the world that God's Law has been "done away," that it has been "nailed to the cross."

There is nothing new under the sun, for that **"mystery of lawlessness"** was already at work during the first century. There were already those who were teaching that Messianic Believers in *Y'shua HaMashiach* were excused from obeying the *Written Torah*. After all, they probably reasoned: "No one can keep it perfectly anyway, so why bother trying. Just believe that *Y'shua* is the promised Messiah and you can do anything you want."

Another way of expressing this belief is: "Once saved, always saved." If this were true, *Ya'acov* would not have written:

"Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back,²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins."

(James 5:19-20)

So, where will this **"lawless one"** get his power?

"The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved."

(II Thess. 2:9-10)

As *Y'shua* Himself said:

"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 [*anomia*]!""

(Matt. 7:22-23)

According to Paul, some people will prefer to believe Satan's lie, that the *Torah* has been done away, rather than believe that God and His Son *Y'shua* do not change. The Scripture says:

"... I am the LORD [*YHVH*], I do not change;

Therefore you are not consumed,

O sons of Jacob."

(Mal. 3:6)

"Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

(Heb. 13:8)

Paul exhorted the *Thessalonians* to remain diligent in their observance of the truths they had been taught:

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle."

(II Thess. 2:15)

It is our opinion that the "traditions" which the *Thessalonians* had been taught (to learn and observe as best they were able), were the *Written Torah* commands which applied to them. In addition, they were to separate themselves from those who did not walk according to this "tradition:"

"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], that you withdraw

from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us."

(II Thess. 3:6)

Paul specifically admonished those who were not working, telling them to find jobs and support themselves:

"For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹² Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. ¹³ But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good. ¹⁴ And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. ¹⁵ Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

(II Thess. 3:11-15)

Once again, there is no evidence in *II Thessalonians* that the *Written Torah* had been abolished for Messianic Believers, whether Jew or Gentile. In fact, quite the contrary, for the *Written Torah* is supported by the statement that the **"man of sin,"** (the **"son of perdition,"**) will have one chief characteristic; he will be the **"lawless one."** In other words, he will have no regard for the *Torah* at all. In addition, he will set himself up in direct opposition to God.

Our conclusion: Paul has upheld the teachings of the *Written Torah* in both of his letters to the *Thessalonians*.

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