

Gentiles and the Law

Vol. VI - The Book of Galatians

containing:

Background to Galatians
Salvation Through Faith
Freed for Freedom

by

Dean & Susan Wheelock

For all the law is fulfilled in one word,

Even in this:

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians 5:14

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~ Table of Contents ~

<i>Introduction.</i>	1
<i>Background to Galatians</i>	2
<i>Salvation Through Faith.</i>	9
<i>Freed for Freedom</i>	18
<i>Sources.</i>	26

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~ Introduction ~

I, the LORD [YHVH], 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 have claimed.

Six 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 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.

The second volume begins with two articles: *Y'shua's Perspective* and *The Apostle's Perspective*. In addition there are two articles which focus on the Apostle Paul (the "apostle to the Gentiles") and his perspective of the role which the law (*Torah*) should play in the lives of Gentile Messianic Believers. They are *Paul the Pharisee*, and a survey of *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* from Issue 04-3. Volume three is dedicated entirely to Paul's epistle to the Romans. Volume four continues with the epistles of Paul and includes *First & Second Corinthians*, *Ephesians*, and a single chapter which covers both *Colossians* and *Philemon*. Volume five contains Paul's epistle to the *Philippians* and his three *Pastoral Epistles* -- *I & II Timothy* and *Titus*. This booklet (Volume VI) contains Paul's epistle to the *Galatians* -- an often misunderstood book.

As you read this material, keep in mind that these discourses are not intended to be comprehensive commentaries on everything contained within the book of *Galatians*. 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, 2014

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**fathers nor we were able to bear? <sup>11</sup> But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] we shall be saved in the same manner as they."**  
(Acts 15:7-11)

## ~ Background to Galatians ~

Is the law then against the promises of God?  
Certainly not!  
For if there had been a law given which could have given life,  
Truly righteousness would have been by the law.  
*Galatians 3:21*

**C**ertain ambiguities (both real and imagined) are inherent in nearly all English translations of the book of *Galatians*. For this reason, many Christians have misinterpreted the book of *Galatians* and have consequently used these misinterpretations as the primary source for an unscriptural doctrine which states that the "law has been done away." However, with a proper understanding of the culture, it becomes clear that Paul consistently upheld the *Written Torah*, even from his first letter; the letter he wrote to the *Galatians*.

### ~ An Early Letter ~

*Galatians* was an early epistle, most likely the first one Paul wrote which found its way into the New Testament canon. The fact that *Galatians* was an early work could account for some of the seeming ambiguities found within it concerning the "law." Nevertheless, when properly understood, this epistle, like all of Paul's writings, supports the fact that Paul believed the *Written Torah* was (and still is) in effect for all Messianic Believers, whether Jew or Gentile. His later Epistles more clearly illuminate Paul's position concerning the central role of the *Written Torah* (law) in the lives of Messianic Believers. It is for this reason that we chose to build a firm foundation of Paul's teachings by beginning our examination of the Epistles of Paul with his letter to the *Messianic Community* in Rome, followed by an examination of his other Epistles.

What we found in the previous letters was that Paul was steadfast in his position concerning the need for all *Messianic Believers* to follow the *Written Torah* commands. He was also steadfast in his position that Gentile *Messianic Believers* in *Y'shua* (Yeh-shoe'-ah = Jesus) did not have to convert to Judaism, be circumcised, and keep all of the *Oral Torah* traditions and customs which were taught by Rabbinic Judaism in the 1st century CE. In fact, as we will see, even Messianic Jewish Believers in *Y'shua* were freed from the "Yoke" of the *Oral Torah* when they came under the New Covenant:

**"And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. <sup>8</sup>So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, <sup>9</sup> and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our**

### ~ Two Laws ~

Readers who have read the previous booklets in this series, should remember there were two distinct laws followed by *Pharisaic Judaism* during the first century:

- ◆ *Torah she bi khetav* - the *Written Torah*.
- ◆ *Torah she be al peh* - the *Oral Torah*.

According to Rabbinic Judaism, both the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah* were given by God to *Moshe* מֹשֶׁה (Mow'-shay = Moses) at Mount Sinai. The Rabbis base this conclusion on the following verse:

**"Then the LORD [YHVH] said to Moses, 'Write [khetav] these words, for according to the tenor [al pi] of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.'"**  
(Ex. 34:27)

According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica CD-Rom Version*:

"... Exodus 34:27 ... can be translated literally as 'Write thou these words for by the mouth of these words I have made a covenant.' The word 'write' (*ketav*) was regarded as the authority for the Written Law (hence *Torah she-bi-khetav*, i.e., the Torah included in the word *ketav*) while 'by the mouth' (*al pi*) was taken to refer to the Torah *she-be-al peh* (i.e., the Torah referred to in the phrase *al pi* ...)"

It is true that the word *peh* פֶּה (Strong's #6310) is most often translated as "mouth." However, none of the Jewish translations which we possess render this passage in that way, not even the Orthodox Jewish *Stone Chumash*:

**"Hashem said to Moses, 'Write these words [devar] for yourself, for according [al pi] to these words [devar] have I sealed a covenant with you and Israel.'"**  
(Ex. 34:27 *Stone Chumash*)

It seems that all of the translators, both Jewish and Christian, agree that the true sense of the Hebrew in this verse indicates that the two usage's of *devar* (translated "words" in English) refer to the covenant found only in the *Written Torah*.

### ~ The True Oral Teachings ~

In our opinion, a better case can be made for the existence of certain "oral" traditions, which came from Mount Sinai, relative to the design and building of the *Mishkan* מִשְׁכָּן (Meesh'-kahn = Tabernacle) and its utensils:

**"And you shall raise up the tabernacle according to its pattern which you were shown on the mountain."**  
(Ex. 26:30)

Anyone who has ever tried to build a model of the *Mishkan* (tabernacle), based only upon the information given in

the *Written Torah*, knows that the construction specifications are difficult to comprehend at best. Therefore, it is believed (and we concur) that Moshe actually saw what the *Mishkan* and the various utensils looked like and verbalized that information to those who were doing the construction work:

**""And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. <sup>9</sup> Exactly as I show you -- the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings -- so shall you make it.""** (Ex. 25:8-9)

The two primary artisans were Bezalel בְּצַלְאֵל (B' zahl-ahl') and Aholiab אֲהִיאֵב (Ah-hah'-lee-ahv) whom God blessed with **"wisdom and understanding"** concerning how to properly construct the utensils of the *Mishkan*:

**""And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every gifted artisan in whom the LORD [YHVH] has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, shall do according to all that the LORD [YHVH] has commanded.""** (Ex. 36:1)

In addition, certain oral interpretations of the *Written Torah* would have resulted from the judgments rendered by *Moshe* and the system of judges which was established while the children of Israel were in the wilderness. Today we would call these types of precedent setting Judgments *Case Law*:

**"And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. <sup>26</sup> So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves."** (Ex. 18:25-26)

### ~ Oral Torah Components ~

The *Oral Torah* that existed in the 1st century CE (as well as the one which exists today) contained far more than construction blueprints for the *Mishkan* or *Case Law* passed down from the time of *Moshe* and later. In fact, by the 1st century CE, *Oral Torah* had a number of components; *Oral Traditions*, *Case Law*, *Customs*, and *Rabbinic Interpretations*:

- ◆ *Oral Traditions* passed down by word of mouth from ancient times which clarified some of the *Written Torah* commands that were open to interpretation because of their wording.
- ◆ *Case Law* that resulted from rulings on *Written Torah* commands which had, over the centuries, been decided in religious courts of law. **""You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, ...""** (Deut. 16:18)
- ◆ *Customs* of the people that had developed over the centuries.
- ◆ *Rabbinic Interpretations* of the *Written Torah* commands.

The latter three components of *Oral Torah* can be referenced, as a body, by the term *dogma*. *Dogma* in English is defined as:

*"1. A doctrine or a corpus of doctrines relating to matters such as morality and faith, set forth in an authoritative manner by a church. 2. An authoritative principle, belief, or statement of ideas or opinion, especially one considered to be absolutely true."*

The majority of *Oral Torah* which clearly fits this description of *dogma*, was part of the "doctrine" of first century *Pharisaic Judaism*, just as it is today in *Rabbinic Judaism*. While *Oral Torah* usually supports the precepts of the *Written Torah*, occasionally it contradicts the *Written*, in which case the *Rabbinic* practice is to give precedence to the *Oral* over the *Written*. Even when *Oral Torah* does not contradict *Written Torah*, when its rules and practices are added to the basic *Torah* commands, it can constitute a "yoke." This was the "yoke" which evoked Peter's complaint quoted earlier (Acts 15:10).

The *Written Torah* is clear, there were not to be any additions to, or subtractions from the *Torah* as given by God at Mount Sinai:

**""Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. <sup>2</sup> You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] your God which I command you.""** (Deut. 4:1-2)

By the 1st century CE, the *Oral Torah* had become so integrated into the *Halakah* (Hah'-lah-kah = the rules by which an observant Jew was expected to walk) that the average Jew (who did not own a personal *Torah* scroll) could not distinguish between what was *Written Torah* and what was *Oral Torah*. On *Shabbat* the *Written Torah* portion would be read and then the *Rabbis* would expound on how the commandments found in that portion were to be observed, thus adding rules of *Oral Torah* to the *Written Torah* portion.

Tim Hegg, in his book *The Letter Writer* states:

"... the Apostles ... were confronting the manner in which the man-made rules of the *Oral Torah* had been so interwoven with the interpretation and application of the *Written Torah* that in many cases the two had become indistinguishable." (p. 258)

### ~ The Cause of Division ~

The addition of man-made rules to the *Written Torah* created division within the first century synagogues. Serious problems arose between the *Pharisaic* Jews and those Gentiles who were leaving paganism and beginning to attend synagogue. One such problem centered around the *Pharisaic* practice concerning ritual purity and the food laws contained within the *Torah*. The problem was not with the *Written Torah* commands on these matters, but with the *Oral Torah* "fences" (*dogma*) which the *Pharisees* had erected in order to guard the religious Jews from even getting close to breaking the *Written Torah* commands.

For example, the *Written Torah* clearly states that the children of Israel were not to eat meat classified as "unclean" or

which had not been properly bled when it was slaughtered. (Those *Written Torah* laws are found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.) Subsequently, *Pharisaic* "fences" were built around the *Written Torah's* straightforward commands. One *Oral Torah* "fence" (*dogma*) forbade Jews from eating anything "common." Common foods included all food (clean meats, grains, fruits, vegetables, etc.) which had not had the Levitical tithe paid upon it. Thus, the food sold in the regular markets was forbidden by *Oral Torah*, because it was possible that the proper tithes had not been paid.

In addition, the *Oral Torah* had numerous rules concerning ritual purity, which included the washing of vessels and ritual hand washing prior to eating:

**"For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their hands* in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches."**

(Mark 7:3-4)

Due to the *Oral Torah* rules pertaining to food and ritual purity, a 1st century Observant Jew dared not eat a meal in a Gentile home because it was possible that it had not been prepared according to strict Rabbinic customs. In all probability such food was "common," and therefore not permitted by *Oral Torah*.

Another *Oral Torah* "fence" (*dogma*) which had been erected, forbade a Jew from keeping company with a Gentile, because if the Gentile physically touched him, the Jew might contract, what is called, *Secondary Ritual Impurity*. This status occurred when someone, who was ritually unclean, came into physical contact with a ritually clean person, thereby transferring the "ritual impurity" of the first (unclean) individual to the "ritually clean" individual. (This is a somewhat simplified example. The purity laws are actually quite complex.)

It was these types of "**traditions of men**" that Peter made mention of when he was commanded, by God, to go to the house of Cornelius, the Gentile centurion:

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

(Acts 10:28)

Peter's *Messianic Jewish* brethren back in Jerusalem expressed the same concern when he returned:

**"And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, <sup>3</sup> saying, 'You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!'"**

(Acts 11:2-3)

The command to not have physical, or even social, contact with Gentiles (to which both Peter and his brethren referred) is not found in the *Written Torah*, rather it was one of the "fences," which had been erected within the *Oral Torah*.

~ The Mystery of Galatians ~

Reading Paul's letters is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. If only we could hear the other side; if only we could read (or hear) the report which had been brought to Paul that caused him to react so vociferously.

As a result of this one-sidedness, there is a sense of mystery surrounding the book of *Galatians*. There are a number of questions presented which, if known, would help our understanding of exactly why Paul wrote what he did, and, in some cases, what he actually meant, for Paul's intent is often clouded in our English translations.

Some of the questions we will address include: To whom in *Galatia* was Paul writing? (*Galatia* was a region which contained many cities and numerous congregations.) Who were the people Paul refers to as teaching "another gospel"? Why does Paul seem to teach against the Law of Moses in some passages and yet support that same Law in others? What are the real issues behind this letter?

As we work to decipher the issues by reading Paul's response to the *Galatians*, we need to understand Paul's position about the *Written Torah* and its purpose from his other writings. This is the approach we have taken, thus presenting *Galatians* as the last of Paul's epistles to be analyzed. If you have not read the other articles in this series, we encourage you to write for them, for it is only by studying the other epistles of Paul that one can gain the understanding needed to make a proper assessment of this book.

~ Galatia ~

Let us journey now to the area of Asia Minor called *Galatia*, to see who the *Galatian* people were and why their origins might have a bearing on the problem Paul was facing.

All of Paul's other "Church" Epistles were written to individual congregations, although they were often expected to be shared with other congregations in nearby cities. However, the book of *Galatians* was written to a number of congregations located in the region of *Galatia*.

The region called *Galatia* was a part of Asia Minor, the area which is known today as the nation of Turkey. The name *Galatia* comes from the word *Galatae* which was the Greek word for *Gaul* (the ancient name for France). The *Gauls* were a *Celtic* people (related no doubt to other *Celts* of Ireland and Wales) who invaded Asia Minor from France in 278-277 BCE, having originally come as marauding conquerors, but eventually settling in this area with their wives and children.

The *Gauls* initially settled in north eastern *Phrygia* (the north central part of Asia Minor), where they ruled, even though they were outnumbered by the native *Phrygians*. However, in 160 BCE the *Gauls* acquired a portion of the region of *Lycaonia* to the south. This area included the cities of *Pisidian Antioch*, *Iconium*, and *Lystra* which Paul visited on his 1st Missionary Journey (c. 46-48 CE).

Beginning in 64 BCE, *Galatia* became a client state of Rome and in 25 BCE, under the Emperor Augustus, it became a Roman province.

Biblical scholars hold two different theories about the actual boundaries of *Galatia*. The first is the *North Galatian Theory* which proposes that *Galatia* was only the north central portion of Asia Minor and did not include the entire Roman

province by that name. If this theory is correct, the three cities visited by Paul on his 1st Missionary Journey should not be included as part of the *Galatian* region addressed by Paul.

The *South Galatian Theory* proposes that the entire central section of Asia Minor, from near the Black Sea in the north to near the Mediterranean Sea in the south, constituted the *Galatia* addressed by Paul. Thus, if this theory is correct, when Paul spoke of *Galatia* he was referencing all of the *Messianic Communities* found within the Roman province of that name.

This controversy is only important in terms of trying to properly date when, and from what city, this letter was written. The *North Galatian Theory* dates the letter sometime between 53 - 57 CE and picks *Ephesus* or *Macedonia* as being the place from which it was sent. However, the *South Galatian Theory* dates the letter much earlier, usually around 49 CE, and the place from which it was sent would probably have been *Syrian Antioch*.

It is our opinion that, since Paul was a Roman citizen, he would have called the entire Roman province *Galatia*. Therefore, we believe this letter was written from *Syrian Antioch* in approximately 49 CE, as the *South Galatian Theory* proposes, thus placing its writing prior to the *Jerusalem Council* meeting discussed in Acts 15, thus identifying it as the first epistle written by Paul which found its way into the Biblical canon.

#### ~ Who Were the Gauls? ~

As already mentioned, the people called the *Gauls* (from whence came the name *Galatia*) were a branch of a much larger group of *Celtic* people located in Europe. A branch of these Asia Minor *Gauls* resettled in north central Asia Minor taking control of the indigenous people then living in that area. It is generally believed this group of *Gauls* came from the area of modern day France. But where did the French *Gauls* originate?

Historians, who have studied the movements of the so-called "Lost Tribes of Israel," trace the *Gauls* (as well as all of the *Celts*) back to a race of people called the *Cimmerians*. Late 20th century researchers have connected the *Cimmerians*, along with a companion people called the *Scythians*, with descendants from those people of the northern kingdom of Israel who were taken captive in the 8th century BCE by the *Assyrians* and transported to various locations in areas near the Black and Caspian seas.

What this means is that, in all probability, many (but certainly not all) of the "Gentile" people living in *Galatia*, to whom Paul addressed his epistle, may well have been physical descendants of *Avraham*, *Yitzchak*, and *Ya'acov* (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), whom God had banished from the Promised Land because of their pagan practices (spiritual adultery/idolatry):

**"Ephraim is joined to idols,**

**Let him alone.**

**<sup>18</sup> Their drink is rebellion,**

**They commit harlotry continually.**

**Her rulers dearly love dishonor.**

**<sup>19</sup> The wind has wrapped her up in its wings,**

**And they shall be ashamed because of their [pagan]**

**sacrifices."**

(Hosea 4:17-19)

The book of *Hosea* not only condemns the Lost Tribes of the House of Israel (Ephraim or Joseph) because of their idolatry, it also speaks of a future time when God would call them back to an intimate relationship with Him:

**"O Israel, return to the LORD [YHVH] your God,**

**For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;**

**<sup>2</sup> Take 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.'**

...

**<sup>4</sup> 'I will heal their backsliding,**

**I will love them freely,**

**For My anger has turned away from him.**

**<sup>5</sup> I will be like the dew to Israel;**

**He shall grow like the lily,**

**And lengthen his roots like Lebanon.**

**<sup>6</sup> His branches shall spread;**

**His beauty shall be like an olive tree,**

**And his fragrance like Lebanon.**

**<sup>7</sup> Those who dwell under his shadow shall return;**

**They shall be revived like grain,**

**And grow like a vine.**

**Their scent shall be like the wine of Lebanon.'**

**<sup>8</sup> 'Ephraim shall say,**

**"What have I to do anymore with idols?"**

**I have heard and observed him.**

**I am like a green cypress tree;**

**Your fruit is found in Me.'**

**<sup>9</sup> Who is wise?**

**Let him understand these things.**

**Who is prudent?**

**Let him know them.**

**For the ways of the LORD [YHVH] are right;**

**The righteous walk in them,**

**But transgressors stumble in them."**

(Hosea 14:1-2, 4-9)

If many of the *Galatian* Gentiles who became Believers in *Y'shua* are indeed descendants of the banished House of Israel, then truly chapter 14 of *Hosea* began its fulfillment at that time.

#### ~ The Cities of Galatia ~

The book of *Acts* mentions three cities of *Galatia* which were visited by Paul on his 1st Missionary Journey. They are *Pisidian Antioch*, *Iconium*, and *Lystra*. Another city close by was *Derbe*, which was just across the border in the province of *Cilicia*. Paul's initial introduction to this area was anything but cordial, as he expressed years later in a letter to Timothy:

**"But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 'persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me."**

(II Tim. 3:10-11)

It all began quite well in *Pisidian Antioch*, where Paul was invited to speak to the members of the local synagogue. His witness concerning *Y'shua HaMashiach* is recorded in Acts 13:15-41. Paul ended his talk with a most important point, one which would be reiterated over and over in his later letter to the *Galatians*:

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

Here is the crux of the gospel message which Paul brought to both the Jews and Gentiles in the Diaspora of that time -- that only through faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Messiah *Y'shua* could a sinner be justified and made right with God. Justification was something the Law of Moses could not provide; neither through the Written Torah nor the added Oral Torah.

Paul's testimony had a great impact on a number of those present that day. Specifically mentioned were all three of the general categories of synagogue attendees (Jews, Gentiles, and Proselytes):

**"So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. <sup>43</sup> Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God."**

(Acts 13:42-43)

Paul's initial message had been so powerful that the very next Sabbath the synagogue was filled to overflowing:

**"On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God."** (Acts 13:44)

Since *Pisidian Antioch* was primarily a pagan Gentile city, we believe that it was most of the regular attendees (both Jew and Gentile) of the other synagogues in the city who came to hear Paul preach. In any case, because of the great interest in Paul's message, the Jewish leadership, by and large, became jealous and began to take a stand against his message about Messiah *Y'shua*:

**"But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul."** (Acts 13:45)

This conflict did not intimidate Paul and Barnabas, rather it made them bold in speaking directly to the unconverted Gentiles who were present:

**"Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you [Jews] first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. <sup>47</sup> For so the Lord has commanded us:**

**'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"** (cited from Isa. 49:6)

**<sup>48</sup> Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. <sup>49</sup> And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region."**

(Acts 13:46-49)

Thus began a great awakening among the Gentile population of *Galatia*. However, the synagogue leadership was now even more upset, and they had Paul and his entourage run out of town:

**"But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region."** (Acts 13:50)

### ~ Moving On ~

From *Pisidian Antioch* Paul and Barnabas moved on to *Iconium*, another city of *Galatia*, where a similar scene was played out with one difference -- this time the Jews managed to stir up many of the Gentiles against them:

**"Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. <sup>2</sup> But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren."** (Acts 14:1-2)

Nevertheless, the Apostles stayed for quite some time and gained a respectable following. Eventually, they were threatened with stoning and moved on to two other cities of the *Galatian* province:

**"But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. <sup>5</sup> And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, <sup>6</sup> they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region."** (Acts 14:4-6)

Things took a bizarre turn in *Lystra*. When Paul healed a man who had been crippled from birth, the pagan Gentiles decided that Paul and Barnabas were the pagan gods *Hermes* and *Zeus*. This greatly distressed Paul and Barnabas who were barely successful in restraining the people from offering sacrifice to them.

Afterwards, things once again took a turn for the worse when non-Messianic Jews from *Pisidian Antioch* and *Iconium* persuaded the people against the Apostles:

**"Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. <sup>20</sup> However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."** (Acts 14:19-20)

Most men, having survived a stoning that was intended to kill them, would have probably left the region and moved on to safer territory. Not Paul:

**"And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium,**



and Antioch, <sup>22</sup> strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'  
<sup>23</sup> So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." (Acts 14:21-23)

In this manner, Paul established a strong Messianic presence in the province of *Galatia*. The foundational message to these new *Messianic Believers* was that, because of their faith in *Y'shua*, they had been forgiven of all their past sins and had become grafted into what he later referred to as the *Olive Tree of Israel* (Rom 11):

"For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. <sup>17</sup> And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, <sup>18</sup> do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. <sup>19</sup> You will say then, 'Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in.' <sup>20</sup> Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear." (Rom. 11:16-20)

Thus the *Galatian* churches were established by faith.

#### ~ The Gospel ~

The *Galatians* (both Jew and Gentile) heard Paul's message concerning the gospel, and because they believed that the Father accepted the death of the righteous One, *Messiah Y'shua*, as full payment for the death penalty they had incurred for their sins, they had therefore been accepted into the commonwealth of Israel and sealed with the *Ruach HaKodesh* רֹחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ (Rue'-ack Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit). This sealing was the guarantee (earnest payment) of their place in the *Malchut Shamayin* מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִן (Mahl-koot' Shah-my'-een = Kingdom of Heaven):

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." (Eph. 1:13-14)

All of this had been accomplished not because the Messianic Believers had earned it through the performance of certain "works," but because they, like Abraham, had heard God's message and had believed it.

However, it was expected that those who were grafted into the *Olive Tree of Israel* would be taught what manner of people they should be by the Elders whom Paul and Barnabas had appointed before they left the area (Acts 14:23), for the *Messianic Believers* met together on the Sabbath day to hear the words of *Moshe* (the *Written Torah*) read and expounded by those who were their teachers. This was the pattern which was later confirmed by the *Jerusalem Council* (the *Sanhedrin* of the

*Messianic Community*) when the issue of Gentile circumcision came before them for an authoritative decision:

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

What would these new *Gentile Messianic Believers* learn as they heard *Moshe* read in the synagogue every Sabbath? They would learn the commandments of the *Written Torah*, for the *Written Torah* (which was always upheld by Paul) was to be followed by all *Messianic Believers* (both Jew and Gentile). This is supported in Paul's epistle to the *Messianic Community* in Rome:

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

#### ~ A New Doctrine Appears ~

Something happened after Paul and Barnabas left *Galatia*. Apparently the new *Gentile Messianic Believers* were told that they also had to do certain "works of the law" in order to receive the salvation which Paul had told them they already possessed as a free gift. These "works of the law" all come under the general heading of circumcision; the idiom (code word) used to describe what was being required, which was strict adherence to both the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah*:

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ [*Messiah*] will profit you nothing." (Gal. 5:2)

Because we do not have the report which had been sent to Paul concerning this *Galatian* problem, we do not know exactly who these people were or exactly what they were teaching. However, we do know that Paul was livid about the matter.

Our opinion that the *Jerusalem Council* had not yet taken place is substantiated by the fact that Paul constructed his arguments against this heretical teaching from scratch. For if the book of *Galatians* had been written after the *Jerusalem Council* meeting, Paul would have been able to simply point to their decision and say, "See, the Pillars (Apostles) of the Faith agree that you do not have to be circumcised or take on the 'yoke' of the *Oral Torah* in order to be saved."

#### ~ The Influencers ~

A question which has puzzled scholars for centuries is exactly who were the people bringing pressure to bear on the Messianic Gentiles to be circumcised. There are three possibilities: *Natural Born Messianic Jews*, *Proselytes*, or *Non-Messianic Jews*:

- ◆ *Natural Born Messianic Jews* who had spent a lifetime under *Oral Torah* and believed that only through circumcision could the *Messianic Gentiles* truly receive salvation. Those who held this position apparently did not believe that Messiah's blood was sufficient.
- ◆ *Proselytes* (both *Messianic* and *non-Messianic*) who had already undergone circumcision and did not want these new *Messianic Gentiles* to be allowed to take the

"easy road" to full fellowship by avoiding circumcision.

- ◆ Non-Messianic Jews who most likely still ran the synagogues. Since they did not accept the blood of *Y'shua* as payment for their sins, nor did they believe He was the promised Messiah, their position would have been that only through the full conversion process (which included circumcision) could Gentiles obtain full fellowship in the synagogue.

Most scholars believe that the *Natural Born Messianic Jews* were the source of this problem, primarily because of Paul's remarks about Peter and the "James faction" as related in Gal. 2:11-21 (see the following chapter).

However, Mark Nanos, in his book *The Irony of Galatians*, makes a strong case in favor of the last group for the following reason. If, in fact, the *Non-Messianic Jews* controlled the synagogue (which in all likelihood they did), they were in a precarious position with the Romans, because only the Jews were allowed to avoid all of the pagan sacrifices which were required of all other people living under Roman rule. (This ruling was made by Julius Caesar because of Jewish support for him.)

If the leaders of the synagogue (who did not accept *Y'shua*) were to allow Gentiles to become members of the synagogue without going through all of the normal initiation rites (which included circumcision for males), they risked having the Roman officials take away their exemption from the otherwise required pagan sacrifices. Such a turn of events could cost thousands of Jewish lives, for they would refuse such sacrilege even if it meant their death.

For this reason, we believe that the *Non-Messianic Jewish* leaders were pressuring the *Gentile Messianic Believers* to be circumcised and observe the *Oral Torah*. After all, this is how the Gentiles had traditionally become full partners with the

Jews as God's Chosen People prior to the death of Messiah *Y'shua*.

### ~ Background for Galatians ~

All of the above information is important if one is to understand the book of *Galatians* correctly. As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, when Paul appears to speak against the *Torah*, the question must be asked: Which Torah is being referenced? Is it the *Written Torah* or the *Oral Torah*? If Paul had indeed spoken against the *Written Torah*, he would have violated the command which says one is not to add or take away from the *Written Torah*:

**"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] your God which I command you."**

(Deut. 4:2)

While being freed from *Oral Torah* was an important part of Paul's message to the *Galatians*, it must be remembered that the real issue in this epistle is that salvation does not come from keeping the Law of Moses (*Written* or *Oral*), but only through faith in the shed blood of Messiah *Y'shua*. It also must be understood that Paul does not teach that the *Written Torah* had been nullified, rather, it was the *Oral Traditions* which were no longer binding, for they constituted a burdensome "yoke," which God never intended, as evidenced by the words of *Y'shua*:

**"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

(Matt. 11:29-30)

With that in mind we will begin our journey into the Book of *Galatians*.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

## ~ Salvation Through Faith ~

O foolish Galatians  
Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth,  
Before whose eyes *Y'shua HaMashiach*  
Was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?  
*Galatians 3:1*

**I**t is now time to turn to specific commentary on the book of *Galatians* for an examination of what Paul said about the *Written Torah*. This commentary does not address every single verse in depth. That task has already been undertaken by a myriad of writers and would require a book of many pages. The purpose of this article is to examine those passages which refer to the "law," in order to reveal what Paul really taught about the *Written Torah*. For this reason, we primarily address those verses which allude to the status of the *Written Torah*.

### ~ Chapters One and Two ~

#### ~ Another Gospel ~

It is obvious from the salutation of this letter that Paul is upset, for it was common courtesy, in that era, to write a rather flowery opening to a letter in order to establish a good rapport with those who would be reading it and hearing it read. While Paul does make a gesture in that direction, his *Galatian* salutation does not have the warmth of affection found in his other letters. In fact, the main point of this salutation seems to be to remind the *Galatians* of his Apostleship and the fact that *Y'shua* is responsible for their sins being forgiven. Thus, one of Paul's key points is set forth right from the beginning:

**"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*] and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), <sup>2</sup> and all the brethren who are with me,**

**"To the churches of Galatia:**

**<sup>3</sup> "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], <sup>4</sup> who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."**

(Gal. 1:1-5)

Immediately following this brief salutation, Paul jumped right into the problem that had been reported to him:

**"I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ [*Messiah*], to a different gospel, <sup>7</sup> which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ [*Messiah*]."**

(Gal. 1:6-7)

The message which Paul had preached to the new Messianic Believers in *Galatia*, was that their sins had been

forgiven because they had (by faith) accepted the shed blood of *Y'shua* as being sufficient to pay the penalty for their sins:

**"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; <sup>39</sup> and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."**

(Acts 13:38-39)

Paul's second point was that the "**law of Moses**" could not be used as a means of justification. Rather, justification requires Faith (trusting belief) in the fact that *Y'shua* has taken the individual and corporate death penalty for sin upon Himself, even as the atonement goat pictured:

**"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. <sup>21</sup> Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man."**

(Lev. 16:20-21)

Because of *Y'shua's* selfless act, everyone (both Jew and Gentile) who believes has, through the Grace (favor) of God, obtained forgiveness for their sins.

Somehow, it had been reported to Paul that someone was teaching the new converts that, in addition to their trusting belief in God's provision of redemption through *Y'shua*, something else was needed in order for them to receive salvation. Paul identified this teaching as a "perversion" of the true gospel he had preached to them. Paul was so upset, that he went to the extreme of calling a curse (stated twice for emphasis) upon those who were now teaching them this "**different gospel:**"

**"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed [see Acts 13:16-41 for the gospel message Paul had preached to them]. <sup>9</sup> As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."**

(Gal. 1:8-9)

Apparently, someone (or some group of people) was now telling the Gentile Messianic Believers that faith was not sufficient for salvation. Instead, they were told that they also had to perform some kind of special "works" in order to be saved. At this point in the letter, it was not yet apparent what those "works" consisted of, but obviously, at the time the letter was written, both parties knew what was being referenced. Consequently, later generations were left to speculation.

#### ~ Paul's Credentials ~

Paul then laid out his Apostolic credentials in order to counteract any claim these "perverters of the gospel" might have given as to their authority. Paul reminded them that the "real gospel" had been first given to him by divine revelation; the implication being that the "perverted gospel" came not from God but from men:

**"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup> For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach]."** (Gal. 1:11-12)

From here on, it almost sounds like Paul was applying for a job. The important point about his "resume" was that Paul had been fully accepted by the Apostolic leadership of the Messianic Movement (Peter, James, and John), all of whom were steadfast in their teaching that the *Written Torah* was still in effect (as we have shown in numerous previous booklets), and all of whom taught that salvation was received by Faith in Y'shua ("Not by works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2:9):

**"But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter <sup>8</sup> (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup> and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."** (Gal. 2:7-9)

This important division of labor, concerning Paul's mission to the Gentiles, was made known to Ananias by Y'shua:

**"But the Lord said to him [Ananias], 'Go, for he [Paul] is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.'" (Acts 9:15)**

In addition Paul, who had been personally commissioned by Y'shua HaMashiach on the road to Damascus, was received by the three "Pillars" (Peter, James, and John), and was spoken of with affection by Peter:

**"... as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ..." (II Peter 3:15)**

These men were working together to promote the true Gospel; **"the gospel of Christ [Messiah]" (Gal. 1:7).**

#### ~ Early Hints of the Problem ~

Another clue, concerning the subject of this letter, is found when Paul made a special point of explaining that Titus, because he was Greek (and not Jewish), had not been compelled to be physically circumcised:

**"Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. <sup>4</sup> And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua], that they might bring us into bondage), <sup>5</sup> to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."** (Gal. 2:3-5)

Here Paul made a point of saying that those who wanted Titus to be circumcised had the goal of bringing them into

**"bondage."** In making this statement, Paul gave a strong indication that a central part of the **"other gospel"** being preached to the *Galatians* by the "gospel perverters," had to do with some type of **"bondage,"** which adult Gentile converts would experience if they accepted physical circumcision as they were being pressured to do.

This is where the first problem in interpretation arises, for most Christian teachers consider the uncircumcision of Titus to be an indication that the Messianic Gentiles were no longer required to follow the instructions found in the *Written Torah*. Perhaps the reason so many succumb to this erroneous teaching, is due to the fact that they are unaware of the real implications which physical circumcision had in those days.

#### ~ Circumcision ~

In the first century, the act of circumcision implied much more than the physical removal of the male foreskin. In addition to the procedure itself, it carried with it the understanding that once a man had subjected himself to circumcision, he was then obligated to conduct his life as though he were a Jew in every way. In fact, a *Proselyte* to Judaism was no longer considered to be a Gentile. Living a Jewish lifestyle meant keeping both the commands of the *Written Torah* and all of the added requirements of the Oral Torah as taught by the *Pharisees*. Remember the quote from Tim Hegg's book, *The Letter Writer*, in the previous chapter:

"... the Apostles ... were confronting the manner in which the man-made rules of the Oral Torah had been so interwoven with the interpretation and application of the Written Torah that in many cases the two had become indistinguishable." (p. 258)

Thus, the basic issue of the *Galatian* Controversy was not simply the physical removal of the foreskin during the rite of circumcision, rather it more importantly signified the complete adoption of the Jewish way of life, including all of their customs and traditions, whether those customs and traditions were in accord with the *Written Torah* or not.

#### ~ Adding Traditions ~

Y'shua addressed this general problem of adding traditions to the *Written Torah* when He showed how one specific tradition found in *Oral Torah*, if practiced as taught, actually nullified one of the Ten Commandments:

**"He answered and said to them, 'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:**

**"This people honors Me with their lips,  
But their heart is far from Me.**

**<sup>7</sup> And in vain they worship Me,  
Teaching as doctrines the  
commandments of men."** [from Isa. 29:13]

**<sup>8</sup> "For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.'**

**<sup>9</sup> "He said to them, 'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.  
<sup>10</sup>For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother;"**

and, "He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death." <sup>11</sup> But you say, "If a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban'" -- (that is, a gift to God), <sup>12</sup> then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, <sup>13</sup> making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."

(Mark 7:6-13)

A careful analysis of *Y'shua's* conflicts with the Scribes and Pharisees, reveals that His primary opposition to them had to do with their application of *Oral Traditions* which contradicted the instruction of the pure *Written Torah*. This does not mean that *Y'shua* opposed all *Oral Tradition*, for He only spoke against traditions which conflicted with the correct application of the *Written Torah*.

Please understand, there is nothing wrong with becoming Jewish and accepting Jewish *Traditions* which do not conflict with *Written Torah*, unless one is forced to deny *Y'shua*, in which case it would result in the sin of blasphemy.

On the other hand, there is everything wrong with becoming Jewish if one thinks that correct observance of the law will earn a ticket to salvation (the Kingdom of God). Salvation comes through the Messiah's trusting faithfulness. In fact, Paul indicated that if one thought they could be justified by keeping the law, what that person really had was a ticket to destruction (eternal death in the Lake of Fire), for it meant the new Proselyte had denied the efficacy of Messiah *Y'shua's* shed blood. Later in the letter Paul wrote:

**"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ [Messiah] has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. <sup>2</sup> Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ [Messiah] will profit you nothing. <sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law [both *Written and Oral*]. <sup>4</sup> You have become estranged from Christ [Messiah], you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus [Messiah *Y'shua*] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love."**

(Gal. 5:1-6)

According to Paul, by converting to Judaism in the hope that it would secure their salvation, the *Messianic Believers* were putting on a "yoke of bondage." This "yoke of bondage" was the adoption of the *Pharisaic* lifestyle, whereby a convert came under the full authority of the *Oral Torah's* additions and fences. By taking this action, a person demonstrated that he did not believe that the shed blood of Messiah *Y'shua* was sufficient for their salvation. Paul assured them that Gentile circumcision was a legalistic perversion of *Torah*, for those who submitted to circumcision obligated themselves to keeping the entire *Oral Torah* as well as the *Written Torah* (Gal. 5:3). A Proselyte could not pick and choose which *Oral Torah* laws to follow and which to ignore. It came as an entire package.

In the first century, being circumcised signified to the world that the *Proselyte* was agreeing to place himself under

the authority of men rather than the authority of God. As Paul said, if one had to come under the authority of men in order to be saved -- then indeed **"Messiah will profit you nothing"** (Gal. 5:2), because he would be trying to justify himself through the legalistic observance of the "whole" *Torah*, both *Written* and *Oral*.

So, it appears that the question Paul was answering for the *Galatians* was the same one asked by the *Thyatiran* jailer:

**"And he brought them [Paul and Silas] out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' <sup>31</sup> So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], and you will be saved, you and your household.'"**

(Acts 16:30-31)

~ Peter and Paul ~

Returning now to chapter two, we find Paul citing an example of how Messianic fellowship can be destroyed when certain strictures of *Oral Torah* (under the code name of circumcision) are observed. The scenario was that Peter had come to *Syrian Antioch* where Paul was staying. There was no problem at first, for Peter joined in the communal meals which the Jewish and Gentile brethren enjoyed together, just as he had with the household of Cornelius in Caesarea some years before:

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

(Acts 10:28)

However, a group of strict *Messianic Jews*, who still observed the *Halakah* of the *Oral Torah*, arrived from Jerusalem. Due to their observance of the *Oral Torah* traditions, they could not accept the fact that table fellowship with Gentiles was being permitted under the New Covenant. (Apparently, they did not understand that it had never been forbidden by *Written Torah*.) In order not to offend the *Messianic Jews* from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew himself from eating with the *Messianic Gentiles* and thereafter would eat only with the Jewish brethren. His example caused other *Messianic Jews* in the congregation to do likewise, including Barnabas. This type of practice is devastating to fellowship, for it can only lead to a two-tiered society within the *Messianic Community*, where Gentiles are considered to be second-class citizens:

**"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; <sup>12</sup> for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. <sup>13</sup> And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."**

<sup>14</sup> **"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? <sup>15</sup> We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ [*Y'shua HaMashiach*], even we have believed in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*], that**

**we might be justified by faith in Christ [Messiah] and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."** (Gal. 2:11-16)

Some Christians have confused matters by claiming that the Gentiles (spoken of in this passage) were eating meat which the *Written Torah* identifies as unclean, saying that is why the *Messianic Jews* would not eat with them. This was clearly not the issue. The issue concerning *Oral Traditions*, not the clean and unclean meats of the *Written Torah* (which is covered in the booklet *To Eat or Not to Eat*). The real issue was that the New Covenant permitted table fellowship with Gentiles, whereas the *Oral Torah* tradition forbade it.

To clarify matters, David Stern, in his translation of the Scriptures called the *Complete Jewish Bible*, used a phrase which was not available in the Greek language of Paul's day, but which Stern believes is what Paul was driving at. That phrase, in English, is **"legalistic observance of Torah commands."** We believe this phrase aptly describes how strictly some Jews held to the *Oral Torah* traditions. He renders this passage as follows:

**"We are Jews by birth, not so-called 'Goyishe sinners';<sup>16</sup> even so, we have come to realize that a person is not declared righteous by God on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Yeshua's trusting faithfulness. Therefore, we too have put our trust in Messiah Yeshua and become faithful to him, in order that we might be declared righteous on the ground of the Messiah's trusting faithfulness and not on the ground of our legalistic observance of Torah commands. For on the ground of legalistic observance of Torah commands, no one will be declared righteous."** (Gal. 2:15-16 CJB)

Paul followed his speech to Peter with some observations about what it means to be **"declared righteous."** Again, we quote from the *Complete Jewish Bible*:

**"But if, in seeking to be declared righteous by God through our union with the Messiah, we ourselves are indeed found to be sinners, then is the Messiah an aider and abettor of sin? Heaven forbid!"** (Gal. 2:17 CJB)

This verse demonstrates Paul's strong support for the *Written Torah*, because Paul intentionally brought up the subject of sin in a passage that some consider to be a section where he is "doing away" with certain laws of the *Written Torah*. This, of course, is not the case, for the primary Biblical definition of sin is:

**"Everyone who keeps sinning is violating Torah -- indeed, sin is violation of Torah."** (I John 3:4 CJB)

If the *Written Torah* commands were nullified, then there could no longer be any sin, and if that were the case, then what Paul just said (v. 17) would not make any sense, for one could no longer be classified as a "sinner." Yet Paul clearly indicated that it was still possible for a *Messianic Believer* to commit sin.

Not only did Paul indicate that the *Messianic Believer* was to make every effort not to commit sin, he expressed that thought in a most emphatic manner (in Gal. 2:17) in the phrase

translated by Stern as **"Heaven forbid!"** which means: **"May it never be so!"**

Paul then went on to equate the "legalistic bondage" of *Oral Torah* with sin, because, as he had just related, Peter sinned when he followed the traditions of the *Oral Torah* by withdrawing himself from table fellowship with the Gentile Believers, treating them as though they were not worthy to be considered his brethren:

**"Indeed, if I build up again the legalistic bondage which I destroyed, I really do make myself a transgressor.<sup>19</sup> For it was through letting the [Written] Torah speak for itself that I died to its traditional legalistic misinterpretation [Oral Traditions], so that I might live in direct relationship with God."** (Gal. 2:18-19 CJB)

How then did Paul live in a **"direct relationship with God?"** By keeping the precepts of the Written Torah. This is a most important verse. Paul is saying that *Messianic Believers* must turn to the pure word of God, the *Written Torah* (the first five books of the Scriptures) as their basis for proper behavior. Paul's support of the *Written Torah* is further evident from his Temple worship in Jerusalem, where he went with four other *Messianic Jews* to have his *Nazarite* vow lifted (see Numbers 6):

**"Take them [four Messianic Jews] 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 [Paul] yourself also walk orderly and keep the law [Torah]."** (Acts 21:24)

According to Paul, he at one time had a **"proud ego"** presumably resulting from his observance of the *Oral Torah* traditions, for when a person has been successful in keeping a whole bunch of difficult rules, it is easy for them to become proud. The implication, of course, is that some of those who were badgering the *Galatian* Gentile Believers to accept the *Oral Torah* may also have had large egos:

**"When the Messiah was executed on the stake as a criminal, I was too; so that my proud ego no longer lives. But the Messiah lives in me, and the life I now live in my body I live by the same trusting faithfulness that the Son of God had, who loved me and gave himself up for me.<sup>21</sup> I do not reject God's gracious gift; for if the way in which one attains righteousness is through legalism, then the Messiah's death was pointless."** (Gal. 2:20-21 CJB)

In other words, if one could be declared righteous through the keeping of all the commands of the *Written Torah*, then it would not have been necessary for *Y'shua* to suffer death for sin. What the *Written Torah* provided was a means by which we can see and understand when sin has been committed:

**"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."** (Rom. 3:20)

Even as a physical mirror tells us when our face is dirty and needs to be cleansed with soap and water, so the *Written Torah* tells us when our spiritual life is dirty and needs to be

cleansed by repentance; turning away from sin and returning to Godly living ("**And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD [YHVH] am holy.**" Lev. 20:26):

**"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."**  
(I John 1:9)

The main point in these first two chapters of *Galatians*, is that a *Messianic Believer* cannot be saved by the "works of the Law." We may only be declared worthy of salvation on the grounds of Messiah's trusting faithfulness, through our faith in the efficacy of the shed blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, because *Y'shua* was faithful to go to the stake. We put our faith in God's provision of redemption, however, this does not negate the command to be holy:

**"The LORD [YHVH] will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] your God and walk in His ways."**  
(Deut. 28:9)

### ~ Chapter Three ~

#### ~ Foolish Galatians ~

Chapter Three of *Galatians* delves into the depths of the controversy about whether Messianic Believers are justified by Faith or by legalistic Works (for which the code word "circumcision" was sometimes used). It is important to note that Paul did not make a distinction between the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah* in this section. He wanted the *Galatians* to understand that even keeping the righteous law of God as found in the *Written Torah* would not provide salvation, for only faithfully trusting in the crucified and resurrected Messiah could accomplish that:

**"O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?"**  
(Gal. 3:1)

David Stern uses even stronger language:

**"You stupid Galatians! Who has put you under a spell? Before your very eyes Yeshua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as having been put to death as a criminal!"**  
(Gal. 3:1 CJB)

#### ~ Tough Questions ~

At this point, Paul posed a series of questions, all related to the method by which a Messianic Believer receives the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit); the down payment (earnest) of our salvation.

First Question:

**"I want to know from you just this one thing: did you receive the Spirit by legalistic observance of Torah commands or by trusting in what you heard and being faithful to it?"**  
(Gal. 3:2 CJB)

Apparently, from the wording of this question, some of the Messianic Gentiles of *Galatia* were now convinced they had to

become circumcised and obey all of the legalistic *Torah* commands (*Oral Traditions*) in order to receive the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit). The obvious answer to Paul's question (which hopefully they all realized) is that they had already received the *Ruach* through faithfully trusting that *Y'shua's* blood was efficacious in atoning for their sins.

Second question:

**"Are you that stupid?"**  
(Gal. 3:3a CJB)

If they were not observing the legalistic *Torah* commands (*Oral Traditions*) when they were called by God, and nevertheless received the *Ruach HaKodesh*, they had no reason to say they received the *Ruach* through **"legalistic observance."**

Third question:

**"Having begun with the Spirit's power, do you think you can reach the goal under your own power?"**  
(Gal. 3:3b CJB)

By embracing the false idea that they must now be circumcised and keep the legalistic *Torah* commands (*Oral Traditions*) as a vehicle to carry them to salvation, the Messianic Gentiles were, in effect, denying the efficacy of *Y'shua's* shed blood and claiming they could earn their Salvation through their own efforts.

Fourth question:

**"Have you suffered so much for nothing?"**  
(Gal. 3:4a CJB)

In order to understand this question, one must go back and read from the book of *Acts* all of the problems the Messianic Believers faced in the province of *Galatia*. (See Acts 13:14 - 14:25)

At this point Paul paused his questioning and made a comment:

**"If that's the way you think, your suffering certainly will have been for nothing!"**  
(Gal. 3:4b CJB)

Paul's final question to the Messianic Gentiles of *Galatia* was:

**"What about God, who supplies you with the Spirit and works miracles among you -- does he do it because of your legalistic observance of Torah commands or because you trust in what you heard and are faithful to it?"**  
(Gal. 3:5 CJB)

This concept of faithfully trusting in God did not originate with Paul. It is clearly a Jewish concept found in the *Tanakh* (Old Testament):

**"Behold the proud,  
His soul is not upright in him;  
But the just [tzadik = righteous] shall live by his faith."**  
(Habakkuk 2:4)

Keeping the legalistic *Torah* commands (*Oral Traditions*) could certainly lead a person to become proud. However,

legalistic observances are not sufficient to earn salvation, which is a 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)

Another aspect of Habakkuk 2:4 is the message that a person who lives by faith is a *tzadik* צַדִּיק (tzah-deek' = a just or righteous person), for you cannot have one without the other.

Students of Scripture must be careful readers. It is sometimes as important to understand what a passage does not say as it is to understand what it does say. Nowhere in the above passages of *Galatians* did Paul say that the *Written Torah* commands were nullified. What it does say is that salvation cannot be achieved through the **"legalistic observance of Torah commands."**

#### ~ Abraham's Example ~

Because the *Galatian* Gentiles were putting their faith in **"works of the law"** rather than in God, Paul, in this letter, placed great emphasis on their need for faith in God. The *Galatian* Gentiles needed to hear strong words about faith to counteract the idea that Salvation comes through an individual's own works. To emphasize his point concerning the importance of "Faith," Paul used the example of Father *Avraham*, who obtained the Promise of God not through his Works (Work's Righteousness) but through his Faith (Faith Righteousness\*):

**"It was the same with Avraham: 'He trusted in God and was faithful to him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness.' <sup>7</sup> Be assured, then, that it is those who live by trusting and being faithful who are really children of Avraham. <sup>8</sup> Also the Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Avraham in advance by saying, 'In connection with you, all the Goyim [nations] will be blessed.' <sup>9</sup> So then, those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Avraham, who trusted and was faithful."** (Gal. 3:6-9 CJB)

The prophet Isaiah spoke about the blessing which was to fall upon those Gentiles who looked with trusting faithfulness to the **"Root of Jesse"** (the Messiah) for their salvation:

**""And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,  
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;  
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,  
And His resting place shall be glorious.""** (Isa. 11:10)

**""Behold! My Servant whom I uphold,  
My Elect One in whom My soul delights!  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.**

...

**<sup>6</sup> I, the LORD [YHVH], have called You  
[My Servant] 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,  
<sup>7</sup> To open blind eyes,  
To bring out prisoners from the prison,  
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.""**  
(Isa. 42:1, 6-7)

#### ~ The Curse of the Law ~

In order to further drive home his point that salvation comes through faith, and not through **"legalistic observance of Torah commands,"** Paul emphasized the ultimate fate of the person who believes they can earn their salvation:

**"For everyone who depends on legalistic observance of Torah commands lives under a curse, since it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not keep on doing everything written in the Scroll of the Torah.'" (cited from Deut. 27:26)**  
(Gal. 3:10 CJB)

It must be remembered that the *Written Torah* defines sin. If one cannot keep the *Torah* perfectly they come under the **"curse"** of the *Torah* whether they know it or not. Paul chose to cite the *Written Torah* (Deut. 27:26) to prove his point. This would not have been the case if he thought it had been "done away."

The next question to be raised was: What is that curse?

**"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD [YHVH] your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."**  
(Deut. 28:15)

The blessings and cursings of Deuteronomy 28 are written as though they were to be applied corporately. In other words, they were directed toward Israel as a nation. However, because every corporate sin consists of individual sins, the blessings and curses affect both the nation as a whole and each individual who is a member of that nation. The ultimate curse for disobedience (sinning against the precepts of God's *Written Torah* instructions) is death:

**"Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life."**  
(Deut. 28:66)

Paul used this solemn teaching as a backdrop to his main theme; that only through trusting faithfulness in Messiah Y'shua can an individual be declared fully Righteous:

**"Now it is evident that no one comes to be declared righteous by God through legalism, since 'The person who is righteous will attain life by trusting and being faithful.'" (Gal. 3:11 CJB)**

This time Paul cited one of the Prophets (Habakkuk 2:4 -- see page 13) to show that faith has always been the key to a right relationship with God. However, this sword is double edged. A *Messianic Believer* is justified and "attains life" by Faith, and because of that Faith lives a righteous life.

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\* For a study on the differences between Faith Righteousness and Work's Righteousness -- and why the Messianic Believer needs both -- please write for our booklet *A Believer's Guide to Complete Righteousness*.



Therefore, Faith Righteousness goes hand in hand with Work's Righteousness.

*Y'shua's* half-brother *Ya'acov* (Jacob or James the leader of the *Messianic Believers* in Jerusalem), emphasized the Work's Righteousness side of the equation:

**"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? <sup>22</sup> Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? <sup>23</sup> And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."** (James 2:21-24)

(Remember, *Ya'acov* (James) had also given Paul his support as the Apostle to the Gentiles.)

Again, in the next verse, Paul cited a passage from the *Written Torah* (Lev. 18:5). However, he said that those who misuse this verse to claim they can be justified by keeping the *Torah* commands are mistaken. In this case we quote both the *New King James Version* and the *Complete Jewish Bible*:

**"Yet the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.'"** (Gal. 3:12 NKJV)

**"Furthermore, legalism is not based on trusting and being faithful, but on a misuse of the text that says, 'Anyone who does these things will attain life through them.'"** (Gal. 3:12 CJB)

The *Torah* passage Paul quoted was from the book of Leviticus:

**"'You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD [YHVH].'"** (Lev. 18:5)

Paul went on to show, in the next verse, that it is not the keeping of the *Torah* which redeems us from the "curse of the law" (eternal death), rather it is Messiah, who redeems us from the death penalty curse:

**"The Messiah redeemed us from the curse pronounced in the *Torah* by becoming cursed on our behalf; for the *Tanakh* says, 'Everyone who hangs from a stake comes under a curse.' [from Deut. 21:23] <sup>14</sup> Yeshua the Messiah did this so that in union with him the Gentiles might receive the blessing announced to Avraham, so that through trusting and being faithful, we might receive what was promised, namely, the Spirit."** (Gal. 3:13-14 CJB)

Once again, Paul emphasized that the *Written Torah* had not been canceled, for he used passages from the *Written Torah* to prove his point that salvation (eternal life in the Kingdom of God) and the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the earnest payment or guarantee of salvation) are both received **"through trusting and being faithful."**

## ~ The Abrahamic Covenant ~

In the next few verses, Paul taught that the *Mosaic Covenant* (the giving of the *Written Torah*) did not negate the covenant which God made four centuries earlier with *Avraham*:

**"Brothers, let me make an analogy from everyday life: when someone swears an oath, no one else can set it aside or add to it. <sup>16</sup> Now the promises were made to Avraham and to his seed. It doesn't say, 'and to seeds,' as if to many; on the contrary, it speaks of one -- 'and to your seed' -- and this 'one' is the Messiah. <sup>17</sup> Here is what I am saying: the legal part of the *Torah*, which came into being 430 years later, does not nullify an oath sworn by God, so as to abolish the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance comes from the legal part of the *Torah*, it no longer comes from a promise. But God gave it to Avraham through a promise."** (Gal. 3:15-18 CJB)

Note: Neither does the giving of the *Abrahamic Covenant* (Promise) negate the giving of the *Mosaic Covenant* (*Torah*). It cannot do so because the *Mosaic Covenant* was given 430 years later. A previous covenant can never nullify a later covenant, although a later covenant could nullify a previous one. However, in this instance, Paul says that is not the case.

One might ask: If the promises were in effect some 430 years prior to the giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai, then why did God give the *Written Torah* at all? Why not just accept those descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who exhibited faith in God? Why bother with the rest? This is exactly what Paul asked in the next verse:

**"So then, why the legal part of the *Torah*?"**

(Gal. 3:19 CJB)

## ~ Creating Transgressions? ~

In most translations, the answer given to this question is similar to the one found in the NKJV:

**"It was added [*prostithemi* #4369] because [*charin* #5484] of transgressions [*parabasis* #3847], ..."**

(Gal. 3:19 NKJV)

This interpretation of the Greek text has led to lengthy musings, by Biblical teachers, over "which" laws were "added" because of transgressions. Some teach the "added" laws were the sacrificial laws which were not given until after the Sin of the Golden Calf. Others say it was all of the "Ceremonial Laws" including the Festivals. Some say it was all of the law except for the Ten Commandments. These teachers then usually take the next fatal step and say those "laws" (whichever ones they have identified as being "added") are the ones which were "done away" by Paul.

In our opinion, this practice (of destroying part of the *Written Torah*) is nearly as bad as destroying the entire *Written Torah*, for it is written:

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

**I do not change;**

**Therefore you are not consumed,**

**O sons of Jacob.'"**

(Malachi 3:6)

We can all take solace in the fact that God does not change, for if He did change, and abandon His promises to the fathers, we would all be lost.

David Stern, in *The Complete Jewish Bible*, rendered the this verse differently:

**"It was added [prostithemi #4369] in order to [charin #5484] create transgressions [parabasis #3847], ..."**  
(Gal. 3:19a CJB)

The Greek word *parabasis* (#3847) is used seven times in the New Testament and is translated in the Authorized Version as "transgression" six times and as "breaking" one time. The Greek word *ktizo* (#2936), (English = "created") is not used in this phrase.

So, which is it -- "because of transgressions" or "in order to create transgressions?"

Both Strong's *Dictionary* and Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* say this about the word *parabasis*:

1) a going over 2) metaph. a disregarding, violating 2a) of the Mosaic law 2b) the breach of a definite, promulgated, ratified law 2c) to create transgressions, i.e. that sins might take on the character of transgressions, and thereby the consciousness of sin be intensified and the desire for redemption be aroused.

Here is David Stern's comment in the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*:

"The *Torah* 'creates' transgressions by containing commandments which people break, indeed, which rebellious human nature perversely wants to break. But at least in some cases the guilt they feel causes them to despair of ever earning God's praise by their own works, so that they come to God in all humility to repent, seek his forgiveness, and trust him." (p. 550)

Remember what Paul said about the "law:"

**"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."**  
(Rom. 3:20)

The *Written Torah* does "create transgressions" by defining sin. Without the *Written Torah* we might assume it was acceptable to marry one's sister (something the Roman emperors did on a fairly regular basis). However, the *Written Torah* tells us that it is a forbidden relationship:

**"The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, whether born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover."**  
(Lev. 18:9)

In the book of Romans, Paul talked a lot about the law and how it defined sin:

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

Getting back to Gal. 3:19, the rest of the verse explains that those **"created transgressions"** would stay with mankind until the coming of the "Seed:"

**"It was added [prostithemi #4369] in order to [charin #5484] create transgressions [parabasis #3847], until the coming of the seed about whom the promise had been made. Moreover, it was handed down through angels and a mediator. <sup>20</sup> Now a mediator implies more than one, but God is one."**  
(Gal. 3:19-20 CJB)

Does this mean that once the "seed" appeared the first time there suddenly were no more transgressions in the world because the *Written Torah* had been abolished? Certainly not! What it means is that only those who faithfully trust in the "Seed" (Messiah *Y'shua* who gave His life as a ransom) will have their sins (transgressions) forgiven and removed. However, the *Written Torah* is still with us and it is still a mirror to help us see the reality of our spiritual condition, for even as the Apostle John said, it is possible for a *Messianic Believer* to sin:

**"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] the righteous."**  
(I John 2:1)

**"If we claim not to have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us."**  
(I John 1:8)

**"[However] If we acknowledge our sins, then, since he is trustworthy and just, he will forgive them and purify us from all wrongdoing."**  
(I John 1:9)

While all of the above is an interesting exercise into theological question, we have come to believe that the mainstream texts really do translate this verse more correctly than does Dr. Stern:

**"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made ..."**  
(Gal 3:19 NKJV)

There is clear evidence in the *Torah* to indicate that every time the children of Israel committed a major sin, God, in His mercy, gave them some additional Sacrificial Commandments by which the sin could be "covered." Through the many Sacrificial laws, the children of Israel were expected to come to understand the enormity of some of these sins. (For a full explanation of this concept please see the two *Temple Studies* articles in *Hebrew Roots*® Issue 13-2: *Adding to the Law* and *The Added Laws*.) The following is a quote from *The Added Laws* article:

For example, the first added law came after the *Sin of the Golden Calf*, when new instructions were given concerning offerings which were to be brought to the *Tabernacle* as an added part of worship. This revelation contains many new instructions pertaining specifically to the offerings now required as a result of the sin of idolatry; not merely physical ritual impurity as before. These two "additions" include a new role for the *Chatat* (Sin

Offering) and a totally new type of sin offering -- the *Asham* (Trespass Offering.) (p 13)

~ Written Torah Not Abolished ~

After all this talk about the *Torah* not being a vehicle for salvation, Paul wanted to make sure the *Galatians* understood that he was not saying that the *Torah* had been nullified:

**"Does this mean that the legal part of the *Torah* stands in opposition to God's promises? Heaven forbid! For if the legal part of the *Torah* which God gave had had in itself the power to give life, then righteousness really would have come by legalistically following such a *Torah*.<sup>22</sup> But instead, the *Tanakh* shuts up everything under sin; ..."**

(Gal. 3:21-22a CJB)

Why has God allowed this to happen?

**"... so that what had been promised [*the Spirit*] might be given, on the basis of Yeshua the Messiah's trusting faithfulness, to those who continue to be trustingly faithful."**

(Gal. 3:22b CJB)

**"For God has shut up all mankind together in disobedience, in order that he might show mercy to all."**

(Rom. 11:32 CJB)

The *Written Torah* continues to stand as our beacon, making the path of the righteous like radiant sunlight:

**"Your word is a lamp to my feet**

**And a light to my path."**

(Psalm 119:105)

**"The path of the righteous is like radiant sunlight,**

**Ever brightening until noon."**

(Prov. 4:18)

~ Tutor/Custodian ~

The *Torah* (law) is our Tutor/Custodian:

**"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.<sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ [*Messiah*], that we might be justified by faith.<sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."**

(Gal. 3:23-25 NKJV)

David Stern translates this passage as follows:

**"Now before the time for this trusting faithfulness came, we were imprisoned in subjection to the system which results from perverting the *Torah* into legalism [*added rules or dogmas*], kept under guard until this yet-to-come trusting faithfulness would be revealed.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the *Torah* functioned as a custodian until the Messiah came, so that we might be declared righteous on the ground of trusting and being faithful.<sup>25</sup> But now that the time for this trusting faithfulness has come, we are no longer under a custodian [*Oral Torah*]."** (Gal. 3:23-25 CJB)

Stern translates this passage to say that it was the "legalism" of the *Torah* which was being spoken of here, saying the Jews were "imprisoned in subjection" to the system which results from "perverting the *Torah* into

**legalism."** Meanwhile, the translators of the NKJV seem to be saying that it was the *Written Torah* (the Law) which kept the people under "**guard.**"

We believe what is being spoken of here includes both the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah*. After all, the main tutor of the children of Israel (after the death of *Moshe*) was the *Written Torah* and its application. Of course, over time, that application led to the many rules, traditions, and customs of the *Oral Torah*, but, nevertheless, the primary "**tutor**" was the *Written Torah*.

Paul said the purpose of this "**tutor**" was to bring us to Messiah. Certainly, the Rabbis would not disagree, for they have always taught that the purpose of the *Torah* (including the sacrifices and offerings) were to point the people towards the coming of the Messiah. But what about verse 25?

**"But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."**

(Gal. 3:25 NKJV)

As translated, this verse seems conclusive; that the *Written Torah* and the *Oral Torah* are no longer necessary because now *Messianic Believer's* have faith. However, to say that "**After faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor**" does not agree with the rest of the passage. For this reason, we believe the NKJV to be a mistranslation of the text.

In one of the oldest English translations, this verse was posed not as a declaration but as a question:

**"But after that fayth is come now are we no lenger vnder a scolemaster."**

(Gal. 3:25 TNT)

This quote is from the 1534 version of *Tyndale's New Testament*. That text predates the *King James Version* (1611) by some 77 years.

By phrasing the *Tyndale* translation into more modern English, it could be read:

**"But after that faith is come, now are we no longer under a schoolmaster?"**

(Gal. 3:25)

In other words, verse 25 could be a question not a statement, and the answer to that question is found in the next verse:

**"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus [*Messiah Y'shua*].<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ [*Messiah*] have put on Christ [*Messiah*]."**

(Gal. 3:26-27 NKJV)

Yes, as Believers we are all sons. However, we have not yet achieved full spiritual maturity, nor have we yet inherited the Kingdom of God. That will not happen until we are changed from flesh to spirit:

**"As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.<sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.<sup>50</sup> Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption."**

(I Cor. 15:48-50)

Here Paul described the Messianic Believers "**image of the heavenly**" (eternal life) as being in the future, occurring at

the time of the resurrection. Since we are all still physical (albeit having received the "earnest" of the Holy Spirit) we have not yet been given our spiritual bodies and therefore we still need the schoolmaster of Written Torah (whether a tutor or a custodian) to be a "**lamp to our feet and a light to our path.**" The pure word of God, the *Written Torah*, has been interpreted by the Prophets, Writings and, of course, the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Hah-dah-shah' = The New Testament) all of which help us to understand God's plan of salvation.

As our relationship with Messiah *Y'shua* develops and we learn to walk the walk, we progress spiritually to the degree that we do not need *Oral Torah* fences to guide our lives. Then, as we develop even further spiritually, we should come to the point where we keep the commandments of God without even thinking about it. At that point, our spiritual walk becomes second nature and we should find ourselves truly walking in the Spirit, not in the flesh. That is why Paul said:

**"I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please him; it is the logical 'Temple worship' for you. <sup>2</sup> In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the 'olam hazeh [this present world]. Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds; so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what he wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed."**

(Rom. 12:1-2)

### ~ Equals Before God ~

Chapter three ends with Paul's statement that Messianic Believers are not to be in an organization which places them on different levels. In a spiritual sense, Jews are not better than Gentiles, men are not better than women, and masters are not better than slaves. When Messianic Believers come before God, they all stand as equals. That does not mean there are not differences in the flesh, as any Slave will tell you. Even if he is working for a Master who is a brother in Messiah, he is still a Slave:

**"[Before God] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus [Messiah *Y'shua*]. <sup>29</sup> And if you are Christ's [Messiah's], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."** (Gal. 3:28-29 NKJV)

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~ Freed for Freedom ~

O foolish Galatians!

Tell me,

You who desire to be under the law,

Do you not hear the law?

Galatians 4:21



The end of Chapter Three pivots the reader right into

Chapter Four where Paul addressed what it meant to be an heir in the Kingdom of God as opposed to being a household slave who had no part in the family. As Paul pointed out, when an heir is young (even though he stands to inherit everything at some time in the future) he is treated much like a slave, for he must obey all of his father's prescribed rules which are intended to train him up into full maturity:

"Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ²but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father."

(Gal. 4:1-2)

Paul used this common understanding about childhood as an analogy to introduce the situation in which both Jews and Gentiles found themselves prior to their acceptance of *Y'shua*:

"Even so we, when we were children [*nepios* #3516], were in bondage under the elements [*stoicheion* #4747] of the world [*kosmos* #2889]."

(Gal. 4:3)

In using the personal pronoun "we," Paul included himself (with all of his Jewish and Gentile brothers) as being in "**bondage, as "children," "under the elements of the world."** This is one of those places where we wish we could sit down and talk to Paul personally in order to understand exactly what he meant by this phrase. However, there is a good explanation found within the definition of the Greek word *nepios* (children):

1) an infant, little child 2) a minor, not of age 3) metaph. childish, untaught, unskilled

Notice that, in a metaphorical sense, *nepios* can mean childish, untaught, or unskilled. In fact, it is translated as "childish things" in another one of Paul's writings:

"When I was a child [*nepios*], I spoke as a child [*nepios*], I understood as a child [*nepios*], I thought as a child [*nepios*]; but when I became a man, I put away childish things [*nepios*]."

(1 Cor. 13:11)

In other words, when Paul was a mere child, he was "**untaught**" and "**unskilled**" in the ways of God. Therefore, as with all young children, Paul responded only to his physical needs, the "**elements of the world.**" These "**elements**" are defined as:

1) any first thing, from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise, an element, first

principal ... the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe.

We believe that what Paul is speaking of here are the **"first things"** (or "elements") of our carnal human nature which all people receive as a result of being born human.

~ The Lusts of the Flesh ~

There is a traditional Jewish teaching that mankind has been given two distinct and opposing natures: the *Yetzer ha ra* (Yeht-zehr' hah rah) and the *Yetzer ha tov* (Yeht-zehr' hah tohv). The *Yetzer ha ra* is our *Evil Inclination* and the *Yetzer ha tov* is our *Good Inclination*. It is taught that from birth until maturity begins to dawn, a person is internally controlled by their *Evil Inclination* (*Yetzer ha ra*).

By teaching our children what is right and what is wrong, we help them develop their *Good Inclination* (*Yetzer ha tov*) as they mature:

**"Train up a child in the way he should go,
And when he is old he will not depart from it."**

(Prov. 22:6)

In his letter to the *Ephesians*, Paul gave specific instruction:

"Fathers, don't irritate your children and make them resentful; instead, raise them with the Lord's kind of discipline and guidance."

(Eph. 6:4 CJB)

Despite training in righteousness, most people still go through periods of rebellion as they mature. It is at such times when sin most easily finds an entrance. In fact, Paul wrote that all have experienced the **"lusts of the flesh"** and have need of repentance, whether Jew or Gentile:

"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ² in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³ among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

(Eph. 2:1-3)

"... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ..."

(Rom. 3:23)

~ The Advantage of the Jew ~

Paul grew up in a *Pharisaic* Jewish home, was trained up in the way in which he should walk (in his case according to both *Written Torah* and *Oral Torah*) and, as a result, Paul eventually **"put away [his] childish things [untaught and unskilled ways]."** Therefore, Gal. 4:3 could easily (and we believe more correctly) be translated as follows:

"Even so we, when we were untaught and unskilled, we were in bondage [through our carnal nature] under the elements of the world."

(Gal. 4:3 modified)

All people, when they are **"untaught and unskilled"** are subject to **"bondage"** (slavery) because of their carnal

inclination (*Yetzer ha ra*). Those who were raised according to *Torah* (within the Jewish lifestyle) had the advantage of receiving early training in righteousness. This, however, was not the case with the Gentiles:

"But then, indeed, when you [Gentiles] did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods [idols]."

(Gal. 4:8)

Paul said that, as a Jew, he was given the advantage of escaping the **"bondage"** of the **"elements of the world"** because of his early training in the *Torah* of God. He wrote of this advantage in his later letter to the *Messianic Community* in Rome. The Gentiles (to whom this epistle was written) did not have the advantage of early *Torah* training. In fact, many were subject to the **"bondage"** of the **"elements of the world"** well into adulthood. For them, it was a more difficult road, as Paul stated in his letter:

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

(Rom. 3:1-2)

Truly, the Jews have a great advantage over the Gentiles in all of this, because they know the *Written Torah*, even if it has been "perverted" to some degree by certain *Oral Traditions*. Certainly, the Jews were looking for the Messiah, and those who recognized Him were greatly blessed:

"So Yeshua said to the Judeans who had trusted him, 'If you obey what I say, then you are really my talmidim [disciples], ³² you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'"

(John 8:31-32 CJB)

~ The Answer to the Problem ~

Paul wanted all to know that they could be redeemed from the sins they had committed, whether Jews (like himself) who had become aware that they had "missed the mark" of the *Written Torah*, or Gentiles who had been brought up as pagans, not even knowing they were leading a life of sin. They ALL needed to hear the **"good news"** and embrace *Y'shua*:

"For ... the gospel of Christ [Messiah], ... is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

(Rom. 1:16-17)

David Stern illuminates this passage with his translation:

"For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God's powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who keeps on trusting, to the Jew especially, but equally to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is through trust -- as the *Tanakh* puts it, 'But the person who is righteous will live his life by trust.'"

(Rom. 1:16-17 CJB)

Paul told the *Galatians* how *Y'shua* was uniquely qualified to redeem His Jewish brethren:

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to

redeem those who were under the law [*Torah observant Jews*], that we might receive the adoption as sons."
(Gal. 4:4-5 NKJV)

Here again, David Stern sheds light on the true meaning of this verse:

"... ⁴ but when the appointed time arrived, God sent forth his Son. He was born from a woman, born into a culture in which legalistic perversion of the *Torah* was the norm, ⁵ so that he might redeem those in subjection to this legalism and thus enable us to be made God's sons."
(Gal. 4:4-5 CJB)

Y'shua came as a *Torah* observant Jew to redeem his fellow Jews. He was not observant of those *Oral Traditions* which contradicted the *Written Torah*. Rather He lived the kind of observant life which God had intended from the very beginning, and was able to keep the *Written Torah* perfectly: "... He did not sin." (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, He was qualified to be the Savior, the One who was able to take the sins of all mankind on His shoulders and pay the full price (the death penalty) for them. Now, mankind has the opportunity to obtain, through Him, eternal life as God's sons and receive the down payment (earnest) of the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of His Son:"

"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ [*Messiah*]."
(Gal. 4:6-7)

As "sons," *Messianic Believers* have both the privilege and the obligation to uphold the *Written Torah* commandments of their "Father:"

"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)

Y'shua's commandments and the Father's commandments are one and the same, because He and the Father are one with each other:

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

The Apostle John testified to this when he wrote:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ... ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. ... ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ¹¹ He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
(John 1:1-5, 14, 10-13)

~ Backsliding ~

At this point in his letter, Paul addressed another problem. This problem centered around the Gentiles former practices in the pagan world:

"But then, indeed, when you [*Gentiles*] did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods [*idols*]. ⁹ But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements [*stoicheion* #4747], to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."
(Gal. 4:8-11)

We first encountered the Greek word *stoicheion* (elements) in Gal. 4:3, where it spoke about the Jews who -- like young children -- were under the influence of their physical desires (old nature) without the curbs which are placed on those desires once they began to learn and exercise God's law in their lives. In other words, when they were still under the influence of their *Yetzer ha ra* (*Evil Inclination*).

Next Paul took up this same issue with the *Gentile Believers*, by chastising them for turning back to their pagan practices (childish ways):

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements [*stoicheion* #4747], to which you desire again to be in bondage?"
(Gal. 4:9)

What Paul is speaking about here cannot be a return to the *Written* or *Oral Torah* as some claim, for the Gentiles did not observe the *Torah* when they were pagans. Rather, it appears that some among the *Messianic Gentiles* were starting to go back to a type of idolatry which was similar, in some respects, to what they practiced as pagans, when they were still under the influence of their *Yetzer ha ra* (*Evil Inclination*).

What, exactly, were the Gentiles returning too? If they were returning to actual paganism they would no doubt have been thrown out of the synagogue without a second thought. Yet these Gentiles were still in synagogue fellowship.

We believe the answer to this question has something to do with the fact that, in many areas of the Jewish Diaspora of that time, a form of *Mysticism* (or *Gnosticism*) was being taught which (much later -- in the Middle Ages) led to the development of *Kabbalah*, for:

"The development of the Kabbalah has its sources in the esoteric and theosophical currents existing among the Jews of Palestine and Egypt in the era which saw the birth of Christianity. These currents are linked with the history of Hellenistic and syncretistic religion at the close of antiquity. ... That there was an extensive degree of Greek influence on these currents is maintained by a number of scholars, ... Many specialists in the Gnosticism of the first three centuries of the common era see it as basically a Greek or Hellenistic phenomenon, certain aspects of which appeared in Jewish circles, ...

"Chronologically speaking, it is in apocalyptic literature that we find the first appearance of ideas of a

specifically mystical character, reserved for the elect. Scholars do not agree on whether the origins of this literature are to be found among the Pharisees and their disciples or among the Essenes, and it is quite possible that apocalyptic tendencies appeared in both. It is known from Josephus that the Essenes possessed literature which was both magical and angelological in content." (Article: *The Historical Development of the Kabbalah*, from the *Encyclopedia Judaica* CD-Rom Version.)

The children of Israel have a long history of idolatrous tendencies against which they were warned repeatedly by God. That was the main reason why God sent the House of Israel into captivity under the hand of the Assyrians:

"When the LORD [YHVH] your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, ³⁰ take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' ³¹ You shall not worship the LORD [YHVH] your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD [YHVH] which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. ³² Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it." (Deut. 12:29-32)

Those same tendencies toward idolatry most likely existed within at least some of the Jewish synagogues in *Galatia*, for they lived in the middle of a pagan world and the pulls of paganism were very strong. In addition, the Gentiles (who had come from pagan backgrounds) most likely found Jewish *Mysticism* quite appealing for Paul wrote:

"You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." (Gal. 4:10-11)

This verse has been used by the *antinomians* (teachers against *Torah*) who claim that the Gentiles were being chastised for observing the so-called "Jewish" Sabbath and Festivals. However, in pagan worship there are myriads of "special" days, months, and even years. (i.e. the different years of Chinese astrology), while Scripture makes it clear that the Sabbath and Festivals of the "Jews" are the "Feasts of the LORD (YHVH):"

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD [YHVH], which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts'"

(Lev. 23:2)

We believe that Paul could only be referring to pagan (non-*Torah*) holidays in verse 10 because, the Feasts of YHVH (including the weekly Sabbath) are commanded (not optional) Festivals. Therefore, Paul, who called the *Torah* "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:7) would not have referred to the Festivals as "beggarly elements."

~ A Pause ~

At this point, Paul paused in his harsh approach and spent the next few verses appealing to the good will of the *Messianic Gentiles of Galatia*.

However, Paul took the opportunity, in this brief section, to state what he believed were the motives of some who were trying to influence the *Messianic Gentiles* to accept a "different gospel:"

"They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them."

(Gal. 4:17)

In other words, until the *Gentile Messianic Believers* submitted to circumcision, the *non-Messianic Jews* wanted to exclude them from fellowship. In this way, they would win converts to their sect of Judaism.

~ An Allegory ~

It is clear from the book of *Galatians* that Paul, like any good teacher, was trying to approach the core of his message from as many different angles as possible, in the hope that at least one of his many examples would find fertile ground in each individual. In that way, every *Messianic Gentile* in *Galatia* would come to understand the error being promoted.

Once again, the core principle Paul addressed was: Salvation cannot be earned through the works of the law. It can only be obtained through faithfully trusting in the efficacy of the shed blood of Messiah *Y'shua*. This time, Paul used an allegory, which is:

"a symbolic ... narrative that conveys a secondary meaning not explicitly set forth in the literal narrative." (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 2000 - CD-Rom Version.)

The narrative Paul chose was a comparison between *Hagar* (the maid servant of *Sarah* who gave birth to *Avraham's* firstborn son *Ishmael*) and *Sarah* (who later gave birth to *Yitzchak* {Isaac}, the son born as a result of God's promise):

"Tell me, you who want to be in subjection to the system that results from perverting the *Torah* into legalism, don't you hear what the *Torah* itself says? ²² It says that Avraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and one by the free woman. ²³ The one by the slave woman was born according to the limited capabilities of human beings, but the one by the free woman was born through the miracle-working power of God fulfilling his promise."

²⁴Now, to make a *midrash* [an allegory] on these things: ..."

(Gal. 4:21-24a CJB)

Remember, Paul was using the allegorical or *midrashic* technique to explain that salvation comes through Faith in Messiah *Y'shua* and not through the legalistic observance of the *Oral Torah*. To view this passage in any other way misses the point:

"Now, to make a *midrash* on these things: the two women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai and bears children for slavery -- this is *Hagar*. ²⁵ *Hagar* is

Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Yerushalayim, for she serves as a slave along with her children. ²⁶ But the Yerushalayim above is free, and she is our mother; ²⁷ for the *Tanakh* says, 'Rejoice, you barren woman who does not bear children! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the deserted wife will have more children than the one whose husband is with her!'" [from Isa. 54:1] (Gal. 4:24-27 CJB)

Remember, this is an allegory. One is not to take the story literally even though it has certain literally true statements in it. The chief point in this section is that before *Y'shua* came to remove the "curse" of sin (which is separation from God through eternal death), the Jews were slaves under the "yoke" of the *Oral Torah* which added traditions to the *Written Torah* (the pure *Torah*) thereby "**perverting the Torah into legalism.**" *Y'shua* came from the Father and, in the allegory, His work represented the heavenly Jerusalem. Therefore, in the end, Heavenly Jerusalem will have "**more children**" (*Torah* observant *Messianic Believers* -- both Jew and Gentile) than Mt. Sinai, whose *Torah* observant children keep all of the additional *Oral Traditions*. As Paul wrote:

"You, brothers, like Yitz'chak, are children referred to in a promise of God." (Gal. 4:28 CJB)

Just as *Yitzchak* (Isaac) was born as the result of the "promise" God had made to *Avraham*, so the *Messianic Gentile Believers* in *Y'shua* have been Born Again as a result of God's promise and are thereby grafted into the *Olive Tree of Israel* (Rom. 11). Therefore, in this allegory, the *Messianic Believers* (both Jew and Gentile) are compared to *Yitzchak*, the son of promise:

"But just as then the one born according to limited human capability persecuted the one born through the Spirit's supernatural power, so it is now." (Ga. 4:29 CJB)

The way Paul phrased this statement supports our belief that the *Non-Messianic Jews* were the primary ones who were putting pressure on the *Messianic Gentiles* to be circumcised and follow the *Oral Torah*. They had seen the *Gentile Messianic Believers* pour into their synagogues as a result of Paul's teaching (thus coming under the protection of the Roman decree which excused them from pagan worship), and had a vested interest in turning them into Jewish Proselytes. However, their required legalistic observance of *Oral Torah* turned their converts into slaves:

"Nevertheless, what does the *Tanakh* say? 'Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for by no means will the son of the slave woman inherit along with the son of the free woman!'" ³¹ So, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman, but of the free woman." (Gal. 4:30-31 CJB)

Paul concluded this allegory (*Midrash*) with a plea for the *Gentile Messianic Believers* to continue serving God as they had been doing, and not fall into the trap of believing that they had to be "circumcised" (become Proselyte Jews) for Salvation. Therefore, they were instructed not to follow the *Oral Torah* under the guidance of the *Non-Messianic Jews*, for their

Salvation came from above, through their trusting faithfulness in the efficacy of the shed blood of Messiah *Y'shua*.

~ Chapter Five ~

~ Freedom ~

Chapter five begins with a positive declaration that because of what Messiah *Y'shua* did for us, we no longer need to fear the "**curse of the law**" which is separation from God through eternal death. Messiah, by overcoming the world and the adversary has set us free:

"What the Messiah has freed us for is freedom! Therefore, stand firm, and don't let yourselves be tied up again to a yoke of slavery. ² Mark my words -- I, Sha'ul, tell you that if you undergo *b'rit-milah* [*circumcision* = *conversion*] the Messiah will be of no advantage to you at all! ³ Again, I warn you: any man who undergoes *b'rit-milah* is obligated to observe the entire Torah! ⁴ You who are trying to be declared righteous by God through legalism have severed yourselves from the Messiah! You have fallen away from God's grace! ⁵ For it is by the power of the Spirit, who works in us because we trust and are faithful, that we confidently expect our hope of attaining righteousness to be fulfilled. ⁶ When we are united with the Messiah *Yeshua*, neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is trusting faithfulness expressing itself through love." (Gal. 5:1-6 CJB)

This passage was covered previously, so we will not go into detail here. However, one of the key points which bears repeating is that if a *Messianic Gentile* goes through the rite of circumcision and becomes a Jewish Proselyte, he is then obligated to "**observe the entire Torah.**" This means that he is obligating himself to keep both the *Written Torah* commands and the *Oral Torah* as taught by that particular branch of Rabbis. Paul said this was not necessary:

"For, brothers, you were called to be free. Only do not let that freedom become an excuse for allowing your old nature to have its way. Instead, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ For the whole of the Torah is summed up in this one sentence: 'Love your neighbor as yourself;' ¹⁵ but if you go on snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other!." (Gal. 5:13-15 CJB)

It is significant that Paul quoted from the *Torah*:

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD [*YHVH*]." (Lev. 19:18)

Y'shua quoted the *Torah* on this point as well:

"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. 22:37-40)

~ Led By the Spirit ~

Paul continued:

"What I am saying is this: run your lives by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your old nature wants. ¹⁷ For the old nature wants what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is contrary to the old nature. These oppose each other, so that you find yourselves unable to carry out your good intentions. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, then you are not in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism."

(Gal. 5:16-18 CJB)

The classic battle that every *Messianic Believer* faces on a day to day basis is the war between one's desire to do good versus the fleshly desire to do what is wrong. Both of these desires, when acted upon, bear fruit:

"And it is perfectly evident what the old nature does. It expresses itself in sexual immorality, impurity and indecency; ²⁰ involvement with the occult and with drugs; in feuding, fighting, becoming jealous and getting angry; in selfish ambition, factionalism, intrigue ²¹ and envy; in drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you now as I have warned you before: those who do such things will have no share in the Kingdom of God!" (Gal. 5:19-21 CJB)

While identifying these actions as sins is definitely a first step to getting one's life cleaned up, one can never be rid of the penalty for having done such things in the past merely by following the *Torah* commands from that point forward. What is needed is for the slate to be wiped clean, and that can happen only through our repentance and God's acceptance of the shed blood of *Y'shua* as payment for the penalty of those sins. Then what is needed is for the *Messianic Believer* to "walk in the Spirit" so that the good fruits of the Spirit are exemplified in their lives:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ humility, self control. Nothing in the Torah stands against such things."

(Gal. 5:22-23 CJB)

To paraphrase what Paul said, *Messianic Believers* should live their lives in the fullness of *Torah* "by [the power of] the [Holy] Spirit" (*Ruach HaKodesh*). In this way, they would not be following their old nature, the *Yetzer ha ra* (*Evil Inclination*). Walking "in the Spirit" enables us to fully obey the *Written Torah* by observing it on a higher level.

Paul closed this chapter with an admonition for *Messianic Believers* to "order our lives day by day" by letting go of their old nature, nailing it to the execution stake of Messiah *Y'shua*:

"Moreover, those who belong to the Messiah Yeshua have put their old nature to death on the stake, along with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since it is through the Spirit that we have Life, let it also be through the Spirit that we order our lives day by day. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Gal. 5:24-26 CJB)

When *Messianic Believers* follow the *Ruach HaKodesh*, they are led to the *Instruction Book of God*, the *Written Torah*, which contains the instructions on how to please God:

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort [you] 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]." (1 Thess. 4:1-2)

~ Chapter Six ~

~ Helping One Another ~

Chapter Six begins with a clear reference to the *Written Torah*, as Paul writes about helping those who have fallen into sin:

"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ [Messiah]." (Gal. 6:1-2 NKJV)

It is rarely the place of the *Messianic Believer* to stand up and publicly proclaim that someone else has sinned. Instead, it is an act of loving our neighbor to go to that person privately and help them repent and return to God's Standard (the *Written Torah*). We must also keep examining ourselves against God's Standards (the *Written Torah*) to make sure we are not slacking off in some area:

"For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. ⁵ For each one shall bear his own load." (Gal. 6:3-5 NKJV)

The bottom line is that each *Messianic Believer* must stand before the Judgment Seat alone:

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ [Messiah], that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (II Cor. 5:10)

Paul begins to wind his letter down by pointing out that all people eventually "reap what they sow":

"Don't delude yourselves: no one makes a fool of God! A person reaps what he sows. ⁸ Those who keep sowing in the field of their old nature, in order to meet its demands, will eventually reap ruin; but those who keep sowing in the field of the Spirit will reap from the Spirit everlasting life. ⁹ So let us not grow weary of doing what is good; for if we don't give up, we will in due time reap the harvest."

(Gal. 6:7-9 CJB)

Messianic Believers should take every opportunity that avails itself to do good:

"Therefore, as the opportunity arises, let us do what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful." (Gal. 6:10 CJB)

~ The Motivating Factor ~

Paul concluded his letter by pointing out what he believed was the motivating factor for those who wanted the *Messianic Gentiles* to be circumcised and become full Jewish Proselytes:

"It is those who want to look good outwardly who are trying to get you to be circumcised. The only reason they are doing it is to escape persecution for preaching about the Messiah's execution-stake." (Gal. 6:12 CJB)

In this verse, it looks as though some of the men who were pressuring the *Messianic Gentiles* to be circumcised were other *Messianic Gentiles* who had already been circumcised and who wanted to "escape persecution" from the *Non-Messianic Jews* for their preaching about Messiah *Y'shua*, for Paul went on to point out that even those who had undergone circumcision, did not "keep the law:"

"For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh." (Gal. 6:13 NKJV)

It appears there was a high degree of hypocrisy floating around *Galatia* at that time.

~ Finally ~

Paul ended his epistle to the *Galatians* with one final plea against falling into the trap of trying to obtain Salvation through the observance of *Torah* commands:

"But as for me, Heaven forbid that I should boast about anything except the execution-stake of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! Through him, as far as I am concerned, the world has been put to death on the stake; and through him, as far as the world is concerned, I have been put to death on the stake. ¹⁵ For neither being circumcised nor being uncircumcised matters; what matters is being a new creation." (Gal. 6:14-15 CJB)

The bottom line is that all *Messianic Believers* (both Jew and Gentile) become a "new creation" in *Y'shua* when they accept Him as their Savior. By nailing their old carnal nature (*Yetzer ha ra*) to the stake, and allowing the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) to lead them, they "walk in newness of life," and gain favor with God:

"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ [*Messiah*] was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4)

Life is not like a giant scale where, if we can only do more good deeds (righteous acts) than bad deeds (sin) in our lifetime, then we will be accepted into the Kingdom of God upon our physical death. Nothing could be further from the truth! That is not how it works, and Paul made every effort to show the *Messianic Believers* of *Galatia* (both Jew and Gentile) that the Holy Spirit is the earnest payment of our salvation; the entrance ticket into the Kingdom of God. We receive the Holy Spirit when we accept *Y'shua* as our Savior. It is acquired only by faithfully trusting that God the Father has accepted the shed

blood of His Son, Messiah *Y'shua* as full payment for our redemption from the curse of the law.

~ Summary ~

While the book of *Galatians* was written primarily to the *Messianic Gentiles* in that area at that time, it is really a universal book for all *Messianic Believers*. Unfortunately, many have used the book of *Galatians* in an attempt to do away with the "law of God," rather than viewing it as a treatise on how to obtain Salvation.

~ Surface Reading ~

On the surface the epistle of Paul to the *Galatians* may seem to indicate that *Messianic Believers* no longer need to follow the commandments found in the *Written Torah*. However, a careful examination shows that such is not the case. What some see as "proof" that Paul has abolished the *Written Torah*, is really a case of reading the words but not understanding the message.

Let us not forget that the Apostle Peter called Paul's writing "hard to understand." Peter also said that many "untaught and unstable" people twist what Paul wrote "to their own destruction:"

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

The real message Paul sent to the *Galatians* was that Salvation, and the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit), could only be obtained through faithfully trusting in the efficacy of the crucifixion of Messiah *Y'shua* whose shed blood was accepted by the Father for all the sins that have ever been committed in the world.

~ The Purpose of the Torah ~

The purpose of the *Written Torah*, which was given some 430 years after God's promise to Abraham, is that the *Written Torah* defines both Sin and Righteousness. It was never intended (by Paul or any of the other New Testament writers) that the *Written Torah* should be abolished:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." (Rom. 3:31)

What muddies the water of our understanding in the 21st century, is a general lack of understanding about the difference between the pure *Written Torah* given as an integral part of the Word of God, and the added fences (traditions and customs of the *Oral Torah*). In the commentary, we have used the analogy that the *Written Torah* is like a spiritual mirror which reflects our Spiritual Condition. If we are living within the framework of the *Written Torah* commands, our spiritual reflection will come back clean, and we will rejoice as we live within the physical, moral, and spiritual parameters established by God.

However, if our spiritual reflection comes back sullied by sin, then the spiritual mirror (the *Written Torah*) will reflect where we need to make changes in our life. Any lifestyle changes the *Written Torah* (instructions) cause us to make stand as a testimony to the fact that we are doing our best to live in the center of God's will.

~ A Good Teacher ~

Being a good teacher, Paul approached this great spiritual truth from several directions. While his letter was primarily directed to the *Messianic Gentiles* of *Galatia* who were being troubled by others who were teaching "**another gospel**," his message is for all Believers everywhere at all times.

Here is a summary of some of the main points Paul made in the book of *Galatians*:

- ◆ Paul listed his Apostolic Credentials.
- ◆ Paul told the *Gentile Messianic Believers* that if they became circumcised and adopted all the *Oral Traditions* of the *Pharisees*, they were subjecting themselves to a legalistic perversion of the *Torah*.
- ◆ Paul called the *Oral Torah* a "**yoke of bondage**," and upheld the fact that the truth of *Y'shua's* sacrifice made them free from this yoke of bondage.
- ◆ Paul showed how observance of the *Oral Torah* divided the *Messianic Believers* into factions by causing the *Messianic Jews* to withdraw from table fellowship with the *Messianic Gentiles*.
- ◆ Paul taught that keeping all of the *Oral Torah* precepts might actually cause one to commit sin as defined by the *Written Torah*.
- ◆ Paul called the *Messianic Gentiles* of *Galatia* "foolish" or "stupid" for believing they could earn the free gift of Salvation.
- ◆ Paul used Father Abraham as an example of how Righteousness is achieved by Trusting Faithfulness in the Promises of God, which does not negate the fact that Righteous living results from obeying God's Instructions (*Written Torah*).
- ◆ Paul taught that the real purpose of the *Written Torah* was to define both sin and righteousness, and thereby identify transgressions.
- ◆ Paul showed them how *Y'shua* had saved them from the "**curse of the law**" (which is eternal death), by giving them eternal life.
- ◆ Paul showed them how the *Written Torah* was a tutor or custodian to lead them to faith in *Messiah Y'shua*, and how it continues to function in that capacity today -- because none of us are yet fully mature in a spiritual sense.
- ◆ Paul showed how every person has two natures -- one evil and one good -- and how those natures operate in the life of the *Messianic Believer*.
- ◆ Paul taught them not to take up with any kind of *Mysticism*, as that was really just a falling back into pagan practices.

- ◆ Paul used an allegory based upon *Hagar* and *Sarah* to show them how it is only through living in the fullness of the *Torah* by the power of the Holy Spirit that one can properly keep the *Written Torah* commandments and thereby please God.
- ◆ Paul cautioned them not to let their new found freedom from the legalistic perversion of the *Torah* propel them back into sinful ways.
- ◆ Paul taught them to direct their lives by the power of the Spirit and not by the weakness of the flesh.
- ◆ And finally, Paul taught them to love and help one another, for those activities result in keeping the commandments of God.

~ Finally ~

The book of *Galatians* is a message of great hope. It teaches all of us that our sins have been forgiven when we accept the promise of God that the blood of *Y'shua* is sufficient as full payment for our sins. It shows us that we do not need to follow the many fences, traditions, and customs of Orthodox Judaism in order to be saved. The yoke of *Y'shua* is the only yoke we need to wear:

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. ²⁸ Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:27-30)

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