

Torah Basics

containing:

The Torah of Truth
The Torah of Grace
The Shema
A Covenant of Salt

by
Dean & Susan Wheelock

For this commandment
Which I command you today
Is not too mysterious for you,
Nor *is* it far off.
Deuteronomy 30:11

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- The Complete Jewish Bible (CJB)*
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- The Holy Bible - King James Version (KJV)*
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London
- The Open Bible*
New King James Version (NKJV),
Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, 1985.
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~ Introduction ~

What shall we say then?
Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?
Certainly not!
How shall we who died to sin
Live any longer in it?
Romans 6:1-2



Perhaps the main difference which separates Messianic Believers from Mainstream Christianity is the Messianic understanding that the advent of our Savior *Y'shua* (Jesus) did not abrogate the commandments found in the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible). Not only has the *Torah* not been "done away," nor was it "nailed to the cross," it still stands firm and resolute as the Standard by which God defines sin:

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

Over and over, in the New Testament, there are statements which confirm the continued validity of the *Torah* (law) as the Instruction Book which God has given to mankind for their (mankind's) benefit. The most direct of these statements comes from *Y'shua* Himself:

"Don't think that I have come to abolish the *Torah* or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete." (Matt. 5:17 CJB)

Another comes from the Apostle Paul, whom many believe taught that the law had been abolished:

"So the *Torah* is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good." (Rom. 7:12 CJB)

It is not a set of impossible to keep rules (although no one has ever kept it perfectly except *Y'shua*), but rather a set of guidelines for a way of life that gives the one who practices it a more abundant life:

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."

(John 10:10-11)

The abundant life promised by *Y'shua* does not necessarily mean one of material riches. Instead, it is a life of spiritual richness -- the end of which is eternal life in the *Olam Haba* (Oh-lahm' Hah-bah' = the World to Come):

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

(John 3:14-15)

The articles contained in this booklet were written over a period of years and published in the *Hebrew Roots* periodical. They represent a variety of thoughts with the unifying thread that all righteousness is based upon concepts and/or commandments which are found in the *Written Torah*. They are being collected here in order to make them available when the last stock of the issues in which they originally appeared have been exhausted.

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

Shalom!

Dean & Susan Wheelock

Beit Shalom,
March, 2010

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Torah of Truth ~

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

The Holy Bible is divided into two major divisions, commonly called the Old Testament and the New Testament. Many people refer to the two divisions as the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. This nomenclature, while not incorrect, is unfortunate as it has caused some people to take sides claiming that one or the other is superior in content, when in actual fact they represent two aspects of a single covenant. Even worse, some have erroneously said that the 'New Testament' does away with the 'Old Testament' and therefore they no longer need to study the 'Old Testament' except as an historical document. Nothing could be further from the truth:

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

(II Tim. 3:16-17)

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

(Rom. 15:4)

Which set of scriptures was Paul referring to in the above passages, the 'New Testament' or the 'Old Testament?' Since most of the 'New Testament' had not yet been written, much less canonized, (accepted as scripture by the Apostles), and since Paul repeatedly quoted from the Hebrew Scriptures in his letters, it is obvious that Paul was referring to the 'Old Testament' in these verses.

Both the 'Old' and 'New' Testament are Holy Scriptures. It might be better if the terms 'old' and 'new' were dropped, and in their place the terms 'Hebrew Scriptures' and 'Greek Scriptures' were substituted. It must be remembered that *Y'shua* and the first century apostles all used the 'Hebrew Scriptures' as their bible. A friend of ours likes to use the term "*Y'shua's Bible*" when referring to the 'Old Testament,' because that is the 'Bible' which He used when He walked the earth.

The word 'scripture' (*graphe* in Greek) is used fifty-two times in the Greek Scriptures and always refers directly to the Hebrew Scriptures. *Y'shua* is quoted as using this word thirteen times. Another phrase that is often used in the Greek Scriptures to denote a passage from the Hebrew Scriptures is "It is written," followed directly by a quote from the Hebrew Scriptures. Sometimes the quote is directly from the Hebrew Scriptures, or it may be from the Septuagint version (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, commonly designated by the Roman numeral LXX) and other times the quote may be from a translation called the *Targum*. (The *Targumim* (plural

form) were popular first century Scriptures translated into the Aramaic language.)

Another name for the Hebrew Scriptures is the one the Jewish people use. That name is *Tanakh* (Tah-nahkh'). It is a composite word that was created out of the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures; the *Torah* (law or instruction), the *Nevi'im* (Neh-vee eem' = the Prophets), and the *Kethuvim* (Keh-too-veem' = the Writings). The remainder of this article will refer to the Hebrew Scriptures as the *Tanakh* and the Greek Scriptures as the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Ha-dah-shah') which is Hebrew for the New Covenant.

~ The Original Order ~

In our English Bibles the 'Old Testament' contains 39 books. However, in the Hebrew *Tanakh* those 39 books are grouped into 22 books, which is the exact number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Since there are a total of 27 books in the *Brit Chadasha*, this makes an actual total of 49 books to the entire Bible instead of the 66 books commonly found in our English versions. However, none of the scriptures we commonly associate with the 'Old Testament' are missing. In other words, the Hebrew *Tanakh* contains exactly the same books as the English 'Old Testament,' but in a different order and, in some instances, combined in different ways:

◆ Torah (The Law)

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy

◆ Nevi'im (The Prophets)

- Joshua and Judges
- The Book of Kingdoms (Samuel I & II and Kings I & II)
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Ezekiel
- The Twelve (Hosea to Malachi)

◆ Kethuvim (The Writings)

- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Job
- Song of Songs
- Ruth
- Lamentations

- Ecclesiastes
- Esther
- Daniel
- Ezra-Nehemiah
- Chronicles (I and II)

If you were to purchase a Jewish version of the Scriptures, (such as the *Tanakh - The Holy Scriptures*; pub. by The Jewish Publication Society; Philadelphia - New York, 1988) this is the order which you would find.

It is interesting to note that this Hebrew grouping, when combined with the *Brit Chadasha* results in a total of 49 books (that is 7 times 7; seven being the number of spiritual perfection) which is the number of the Jubilee, when all Israelites are set free. The number 66 represents 6 times 11. Six is the number of man, while eleven is the number of disorder. Thus, man's arrangement of the scriptures results in a 'disorder.'

Which is the correct order? *Y'shua* Himself gives us the answer in the following scripture which has puzzled many people over the years:

"...from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah..."
(Matt. 23:35)

Here *Y'shua* is referring to the very first and last murders of God's prophets as recorded in the *Tanakh*. The first was recorded in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. This was when Cain murdered his brother Abel, the son of Adam and Eve. The last martyr mentioned was a prophet named Zechariah. His death is recorded in II Chron. 24:20-21 the last book in the Hebrew *Tanakh*. When we understand the original order of the Hebrew scriptures, in addition to the context of the passage, it becomes evident that *Y'shua* was also making the statement that all of the *Tanakh* (from Genesis through Chronicles) is valid scripture, and that the correct order is the one found in the Hebrew manuscripts.

~ The Brit Chadasha Builds Upon the Tanakh ~

According to David H. Stern, translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* (CJB), there are 484 passages from the *Tanakh* which are quoted a total of 695 times in the *Brit Chadasha*. Not all of these are direct quotes, many are statements in the speaker's own words which directly refer to a *Tanakh* passage. For example, Psalm 110:1 is quoted or referred to in the *Brit Chadasha* a total of seventeen times, the most of all *Tanakh* passages. Sometimes it is a direct quote such as:

**"Adonai said to my Lord,
'Sit here at my right hand until I put your enemies
under your feet.'"**
(Matt. 22:44 CJB)

Other times, it is used in a statement that refers to Psalm 110:1 along with another passage, such as this one which includes Daniel 7:13 as well:

"But I tell you that one day you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of HaG'yurah [the Power, God] and coming on the clouds of heaven."
(Matt. 26:64 CJB)

In the Oxford edition of the King James Version (KJV) there are 348 pages to the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament). This means, there is an average of two *Tanakh* (Old Testament) quotes or references per page. Putting it another way, there is an average of over 25 quotes or references to the *Tanakh* in each book of the *Brit Chadasha*. Obviously, not just *Y'shua*, but all of the writers of the Greek Scriptures used the *Tanakh* as the basis for much of their teaching.

There are only nine books in the *Tanakh* that are not referenced in the *Brit Chadasha*. They are: Joshua, Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Job, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs.

~ What is Torah? ~

The word *Torah* is used in a number of ways. In general, it can be used as a designation for the entire *Tanakh*, from Genesis through Chronicles. More specifically, it refers to the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. An even more specific definition is gained from the usual translation of the word *Torah* into the English word 'law.' This is a poor translation because of the connotations that are carried by the word law. When one thinks of 'law,' what usually comes to mind are rules, policeman, citations, arrests, jail, judges, courts, parole, etc. But what should come to mind is:

* The Torah: God's Instruction *

The Hebrew word *Torah* comes from the root word *yarah* (yah-rah') which means: "to flow as water; to lay or throw (espec. an arrow); fig. to point out; to teach." Thus, as water flows down a river, so does God's instruction flow down to us through the *Torah*. As the arrow hits its mark so we follow the instructions of God. When we miss the mark, we sin. Probably the best one word definition of *Torah* in English would be 'Instruction;' the Instruction from God to His highest form of creation, mankind. It tells us how to conduct our lives, both personally and in relationship with each other, as well as with Him, so that we can live peaceful, joyful, productive, and righteous lives in the flesh. The *Torah*, in and of itself, cannot give eternal life, (that requires God's grace (Eph. 2:8-10). However, it was intended to give us great blessings in this life.

An example of this principle is found in the story of the children of Israel and the twelve spies. From what we read, the ten spies who gave an evil report did not actually break any of the *Torah* instructions, nor did the people themselves when they moaned and groaned about wanting to return to Egypt. The problem was a total lack of faith. They did not really and truly believe that God would or could do what He said he would do for them.

* The Torah: God's Revelation *

It is through the *Torah* that God has revealed Himself to mankind. Here God tells us how He wants us to live, and in so doing reveals His very own nature toward His creation. He wants to abundantly bless His people Israel, and through them the entirety of the earth, with great peace, health, love, joy and

prosperity. If Israel had obeyed the instruction of God, as revealed in the *Torah*, they would have experienced tremendous peace and prosperity. They would have been an example to all the other nations of the world as to the proper way for people to live and for a nation to function:

"The secret things belong to the LORD [YHVH] our god, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law [Torah]." (Deut. 29:29)

"Now it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the LORD [YHVH] had given him as commandments to them." (Deut. 1:3)

** The Torah: God's Covenant **

In addition to being an instructive document on how we as individuals and as nations should live, the *Torah* is also a covenant document between God and the people that He chose to be separated from all the other people and nations of the world. While portions of the covenant are found in various places in the *Torah*, it is the book of Deuteronomy that functions as the final document written to expound upon the terms and conditions of the covenant between God and the children of Israel:

"These are the words of the covenant which the LORD [YHVH] commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb." (Deut. 29:1)

Previously, God had made a covenant with the children of Israel when He gave them the Ten Commandments at Mt. Sinai (also known as Mt. Horeb):

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

The covenant mentioned in Deuteronomy does not replace the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. Instead, it should be viewed as an addendum to all of the previous covenants that God had made with Israel, beginning with those covenants cut with their fathers; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

An excellent book dealing with the *Torah*, is entitled *Torah Rediscovered*; written by a Messianic Jewish couple, Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz. It is available from First Fruits of Zion, PO Box 649, Marshfield, MO 65706-0649. *Hebrew Roots* highly recommends this book as an aid in developing a fuller understanding of the *Torah* and its role in the lives of all Believers.

In their book, the Berkowitz's state on pages 10-11:

"...the Torah is not just a list of do's and don'ts. It is, instead, a critically important document describing the legally binding relationship between Israel and God. Furthermore, it is a document which was given by God to serve as the national constitution for the nation of Israel. ... The do's and don'ts are merely the stipulations by which

Israel, the redeemed nation, can maintain its covenant relationship before its Great King and enjoy the benefits thereof."

** The Torah: God's Ketuvah **

A third aspect of the *Torah* is that it is a marriage document between God, the husband, and Israel, the bride. In Hebrew terms, such a document is called a *Ketuvah* (Keh-too-vah'). It is a formal document that specifies all of the conditions of a marriage between a husband and wife. Especially important are the stipulations concerning what the wife is entitled to receive in case there is ever a divorce. It is important to remember that God did divorce the house of Israel, but He never divorced the house of Judah:

"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also."

"So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees."

"And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense, says the LORD [YHVH]."

"The LORD [YHVH] said to me, 'Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.'" (Jer. 3:8-11)

Why did God not divorce the house of Judah for becoming worse than her sister Israel? Because it was through Judah that the Messiah was to come who would redeem (and remarry) all of Israel:

**"The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;**

And to Him shall be the obedience of the people." (Gen. 49:10)

~ What Y'shua Said About the Torah ~

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

A close look at this passage is needed, in order to accurately reveal what *Y'shua* was saying.

First of all let us examine the word 'fulfill.' It is translated from the Greek word *pleroo* (Strong's #4137) and means: "to make full, to fill, to fill up, to fill to the full."

What is being "filled to the full?" Not just the Law (*Torah*) but also the Prophets. *Y'shua's* life did "make full" (fulfilled) the prophecies about His first coming as recorded in the *Tanakh*. But does the fulfillment of prophecy do away with those prophecies? No, the prophecies still stand, but now they stand as being accomplished or fulfilled. The same is true of the Law (*Torah*). It has finally been perfectly accomplished, something that no man has been able to do before or since. It

has been said that the first century followers of *Y'shua* referred to Him as "The Living Torah." In other words, *Y'shua* was recognized as being the one who embodied all that the *Torah* contained, by His life, His death, and His resurrection.

Y'shua does not negate the *Torah*, rather He confirms the continued existence of the Law (*Torah*) in the verses which immediately follow:

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

Here the English word 'fulfilled' is a completely different Greek word; *ginomai* (ghin'-om-ah-ee, Strong's #1096). It is defined in Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon* as:

"1. *to become*, i.e. *to come into existence, begin to be, receive being*; 2. *to become*, i.q. *to come to pass, to happen*, of events; 3. *to arise, appear* in history, come upon the stage; 4. *to be made, done, finished, to be done, executed*."

The word 'jot' refers to the Hebrew letter *yod* (yohd). It is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. The 'tittle' does not even refer to an actual letter. It is the decorations that are placed on the letters. If the 'tittles' were removed, it would in no way change the meaning of the letters or the words. To give an example, here is the letter "I" in the type style used for *Hebrew Roots*. Here is the letter "I" in a different type style. The first one has decorative lines on the top and bottom of the letter. The second one does not. The decorations do not change the meaning of the letter, or of the word "I." *Y'shua* said that even those decorations would not disappear until all "comes to pass," or is "finished." Since heaven and earth are still in existence today, we can all rest assured that not one 'jot or tittle' has, as yet, passed from the *Torah*.

Continuing on:

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

(Matt. 5:19)

Which 'commandments' is *Y'shua* referring to here? The same commandments that are referred to in the following passage:

"... But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matt. 19:17)

This verse is followed by a listing of several of the Ten Commandments plus the general command:

"He said to Him, 'Which ones?' Jesus [*Y'shua*] said, 'You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matt. 5:19)

Y'shua ends His *Sermon on the Mount* with the following statement about lawlessness:

"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."

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

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

(Matt. 7:21-23)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (I John 3:4 NKJV)

Or, as the King James Version puts it: **"... sin is the transgression of the law."**

The teaching of our Messiah, *Y'shua* is very clear. The *Torah* still stands as the standard by which people are to live their lives and by which they shall be judged:

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books." (Rev. 20:12)

~ What Does the Brit Chadasha ~

~ Say About the Torah? ~

There are several *Brit Chadasha* passages that are translated in a way that sometimes causes confusion as to their actual meaning. For example:

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross, ..." (Col. 2:13-14 KJV)

Please note, the thing which was "nailed to His cross" was something called 'ordinances.' This English word 'ordinances,' comes from the Greek word *dogma* (Strong's #1378). We are all familiar with this word because it was transferred into the English language and is in common use today. It comes from the primary root word, *dokeo* (dohk-eh'-oh) which means:

"1. *to be of opinion, think, suppose*; 2. *to seem, be accounted, reputed*; 3. *it seems to me; I think, judge; it seemed good to, pleased me; I determined*."

This is exactly what 'dogma' means today. It is an idea or practice that seems good to the leadership or people in a religious body, and therefore becomes part of the belief system of that organization. It may or may not be contrary to Scripture. Many times, dogmas become more important to the religious organization than the Word of God itself. Another term used to describe dogmas is 'Church Tradition.'

This meaning of the word is actually confirmed, in the book of Colossians, just a few verses down the page:

"Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ [*Messiah*] from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not;

handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?"

(Col. 2:20-22 KJV)

Paul definitively names the 'ordinances' he is referring to as **"... the commandments and doctrines of men."** These cannot be the commandments found in the *Torah*, for those commandments are of God, not of men. Here Paul is making a direct reference to the traditions of men, just as *Y'shua* did when He spoke against some of the traditions of the Pharisees:

"... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."

(Matt. 15:6b)

In those days, it was the traditions of the Jews that presented problems for Gentiles who wished to become a part of the Body of Messiah. Today, it is the traditions of professing Christian Church organizations, and their dogmas, which hinder Jews from becoming part of the Body of Messiah and Believers from growing in 'grace and knowledge.'

Another passage that sometimes causes confusion is:

"For Christ [*Messiah*] is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'

"But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, ... 'The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart' ... that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus [*Y'shua*] and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

(Rom. 10:4-6, 8-10)

A common teaching here is that since "Christ is the end of the law," then the law is 'done away' and salvation is entirely by grace. This is partly right and partly wrong. We are saved entirely by grace, of that there can be no doubt. But does salvation through grace require that the law (*Torah*) be eliminated? No, not at all.

The main problem in understanding this passage is the English word "end" which is the Greek word *telos* (Strong's #5056). It certainly can mean "end" or "termination." But it can also mean "the last in any succession or series; that by which a thing is finished; the end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose." Messiah (Christ) is the aim or purpose of the *Torah*. He is the one to whom the entirety of the *Torah* points. He is the 'goal' of the Law (*Torah*).

One key to understanding a scripture is to know to whom it is being addressed. The book of Romans was written to Gentile Believers, but in the above passage Paul is referring directly to those of the circumcision, the Jews. This is apparent from the preceding verses:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them [*Israel*] witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they [*Israel*] being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ [*Messiah*] is the end [*goal*] of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

(Rom. 10:1-4)

The Jews believed that salvation could only come if one kept the law scrupulously. (Not just the 'law' found in the *Torah*, but all the other 'laws' they had added through their traditions.) In other words, they wanted to 'earn' their salvation by their own righteousness or works. But no one, in their own strength, can accomplish this. Only *Y'shua* was able to keep the law perfectly, and He did not keep it by the standards set by the traditions of the Pharisees. (Remember their conflicts over what was permissible on the Sabbath?) Now that *Y'shua* has become the perfect sacrifice to end all sacrifices, our righteousness comes **"by grace ...through faith"** (Eph. 2:8). Only Messiah's blood can take away our sins (lawlessness), and redeem us from the penalty, which is death.

Y'shua's sacrifice made a way for us to become justified, to have the penalty paid, to be redeemed from sin, and to be empowered with the Holy Spirit so that we can have the ability to lead lives that are sin less, while we look forward to the reformation.

~ Positive Torah Statements in the Brit Chadasha ~

Now let us look at some of the statements that Paul and *Ya'akov* (Yah ah'-cove = Jacob or James) have made concerning the Law (*Torah*):

"For as many as have sinned without law [*Torah*] will also perish without law [*Torah*], and as many as have sinned in the law [*Torah*] will be judged by the law [*Torah*] (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified)." (Rom. 2:12-13)

"For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law [*Torah*]; but if you are a breaker of the law [*Torah*], your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law [*Torah*], will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?"

(Rom. 2:25-26)

"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law [*Torah*] is the knowledge of sin."

(Rom. 3:20)

"... for all have sinned [*transgressed the law*] and fall short of the glory of God."

(Rom. 3:23)

"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law [*Torah*]."

(Rom. 3:28)

"Do we then make void the law [*Torah*] through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law."

(Rom. 3:31)

"... where there is not law *there is no transgression.*"

(Rom. 4:15)

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin (*transgressing the law*) that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

(Rom. 6:1-2)

"Therefore do not let sin [*transgression of the law*] reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."

(Rom. 6:12)

"What then? Shall we sin [*transgress the law*] because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!"

(Rom. 6:15)

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

(Rom. 7:7)

"Therefore the law [*Torah*] is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

(Rom. 7:12)

"For we know that the law [*Torah*] is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

(Rom. 7:14)

"For I delight in the law [*Torah*] of God according to the inward man."

(Rom. 7:22)

"For what the law [*Torah*] could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin [*transgression of the law*] in the flesh."

(Rom. 8:3)

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law [*Torah*]."

"For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law [*Torah*]."

(Rom. 13:8-10)

"Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law [*Torah*] say the same also?"

(I Cor. 9:8)

"... knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law [*Torah*] 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 [*Torah*]; for by the works of the law [*Torah*] no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ [*Messiah*], we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ [*Messiah*] therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!"

"For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor [*sinner*]."

"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ [*Messiah*]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ [*Messiah*] lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

(Gal. 2:16-20)

"Is the law [*Torah*] 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."

(Gal. 3:21)

"But we know that the law [*Torah*] is good if one uses it lawfully."

(I Tim. 1:8)

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD [*YHVH*]: I will put My laws [*Torah*] in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

(Heb. 8:10)

"But he who looks into the perfect law [*Torah*] of liberty and continues *in it*, and is not a forgetful hearer but doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does."

(James 1:25)

~ The Purpose of the Torah ~

It is evident from scripture that those called of God through the Messiah, *Y'shua*, are considered to be the very children of God:

"The Spirit *himself* bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ [*Messiah*], if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together."

(Rom. 8:16-17)

Since God the Father is an all loving father, He is not going to leave us without adequate instruction on how we should live our lives. This He has done, in great detail, in a series of documents collectively called the *Torah*.

However, the *Torah* lacks something. Although it tells us how to live in order to be in agreement with the way God Himself lives, it does not give us the power to accomplish that righteous lifestyle. Try as we might, through our own good efforts and the works of the flesh, we simply cannot follow all of the instruction perfectly. Especially since *Y'shua* told us it is not only the way we act, but also the way we think that must be changed.

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment."

"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."

...

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'"

"But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

(Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28)

Now the law (*Torah*) of God has been raised to a whole new level of seriousness. *Y'shua* was not doing away with the *Torah*, He was making it even more important.

The reason there is sin in the world is not because the *Torah* is a defective law that needs replacing, rather the defect is in the heart and flesh of sinful man. Without help man simply cannot obey perfectly.

** Sin Identified **

This points up the first purpose for the *Torah*, which is to identify sin. To show us where we come short of the righteousness of God, and to cause us to understand that no matter how great our works might be, we can never (through our own power) even come close to attaining the righteousness needed to be well pleasing children of God.

However, even if we could keep the *Torah* perfectly, it was never intended to be the vehicle by which we enter into eternal life, for that is a free gift given by God to those who believe:

"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)

** A Righteous Tutor **

The *Torah* (instruction or law) was not intended to be the source of eternal life, rather it is the tutor which leads us to an understanding of Messiah and how His sacrifice is absolutely necessary for salvation. This is the second purpose for the *Torah*:

"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. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach] might be given to those who believe.

"But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law (instruction) was our tutor to bring us to Christ [Messiah], that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor."
(Gal. 3:21-25)

This passage, by itself, seems to imply that the law is no longer of any value, since faith has now come. Yet when all of the scriptures involving the Greek word *nomos* (translated law) are examined, it is absolutely clear that "sin is the transgression of the law" and that we, as Believers, are to no longer live in sin.

The main problem here is that the word 'law' in the *Brit Chadasha* is used to describe a variety of quite different portions of 'the law.' For example, the word 'law' can refer to the first five books of the Bible (*Torah*), the ten commandments, the sacrificial law, the statutes and even the judgments. One needs to have a thorough understanding of the 'laws' as given by God in the *Tanakh* before a valid judgment can be made on what Paul intended when he wrote some of these passages.

In the context of Galatians chapter three, it is important to point out that Paul is here referring specifically to the sacrificial law:

"What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator."
(Gal. 3:19)

The only law that was ever added because transgression had already taken place was the law of the sacrifices. (Remember there had to be laws already in existence in order for transgression to occur.) The sacrificial law was instituted to remind people (instruction again) of their individual and national sins, and to bring them to a state of repentance. In other words, the sacrificial law part of the *Torah* was the tutor of the children of Israel, so they would understand their sinful condition and be ready and willing to accept the ultimate sacrifice of Y'shua in place of their 'tutorial' animal sacrifices. God has never delighted in animal sacrifice but always wanted the sacrifice of a contrite heart:

**"For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it;
You do not delight in burnt offering.**

**The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart--
These, O God, You will not despise."**

(Psalm 51:16-17)

In their book, *Torah Rediscovered*, Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz make this comment about the book of Galatians:

"In Galatians, it was not Shaul's (*Paul's*) primary purpose to teach about how to apply Torah to the life of the believer. His primary purpose was to emphasize that one may not live according to Torah in order to earn, merit, or keep one's justification. The same kind of idea would also apply to Romans." (p 20).

** The Understanding of Salvation **

The third purpose of *Torah*, is to give us understanding about the true source of salvation. That true source is faith in the Messiah, Y'shua; the One who has redeemed us from our sins. Paul said:

"We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ [Y'shua HaMashiach], even we [Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus [Messiah Y'shua], that we [Jews] 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.

"But if, while we [Jews] seek to be justified by Christ [Messiah], we [Jews] ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ [Messiah] therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ [Messiah]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ [Messiah] lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ [Messiah] died in vain."
(Gal. 2:15-21)

We must get out of our minds any idea at all that keeping the law will earn us salvation. But that does not mean that we can just go along thinking good thoughts about the sacrifice of *Y'shua* and conduct our lives any way we see fit.

** God's Standard **

The fourth purpose of the *Torah* is that it provides us with a standard by which we can measure our obedience to God and His way of life. The *Brit Chadasha* is full of scriptures that teach the need for our obedience. Like all children, it would be very confusing if we were asked to obey something but did not know what was expected of us. If there is no standard by which obedience can be measured, then the possibility of becoming displeasing to our parent is greatly multiplied. Thankfully, God does not leave us in that situation. He has provided an entire Bible (both the *Tanakh* and the *Brit Chadasha*) to instruct us about what He considers to be righteous living and the standards which we should follow:

"... But if you will enter into life, keep the commandments."
(Matt. 19:17)

"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"
(I Peter 4:17)

"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men.'"
(Acts. 5:29)

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

Obedience is essential if we are to lead lives that are pleasing to God. An important point to remember is that obedience, by itself, is not complete unless it is coupled with faith:

"By faith Abraham obeyed..."
(Heb. 11:8)

By the same token, faith without obedience (works) is also incomplete:

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? ... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."
(James 2:20-21,24)

The main way in which we learn to obey the instruction of God is when we learn to truly love God and love, and forgive, our fellow man. If one truly learns how to properly love, then he will never fail in applying the instructions of the *Torah*:

"Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."
(Rom. 13:10)

** Protector **

Today, we live in a world that is fraught with dangers. It is now very difficult for people to isolate themselves from the evils of a world which is being deceived by the "god of this

world," Satan the devil. From the tender age of infancy, our children are subjected to visual and audio stimulation that teaches disobedience, disrespect for parents and all authority, incredible violence, illicit sexual activity, and the devaluation of human life. The primary source of this influence is television programming and movies.

It is no wonder that the Western world, and especially America, leads the way in lawlessness and violence. We live in a violent society, and despite a recent statistical drop in crime, our country is still out of control. But how can the *Torah* protect us from the evil influence that is all around us? We challenge you to begin to obey its precepts and find out for yourself. If every family that professes to believe in Jesus (*Y'shua*) as their Saviour, would begin to follow *Torah* as it applies to us today, the effect on this country would be enormous. God would truly honor the obedient efforts of His people by giving us the promise of His protection:

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD [YHVH] your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD [YHVH] swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."
(Deut. 30:19-20)

King David loved the *Torah* of God. He learned its precepts from his youth, being taught by his father and the community around him. We need that kind of zeal and dedication today toward the *Torah* (instruction) of God. Although David had to fight many battles during his life, God was always on his side. Over and over, David called upon God for help and protection. God became David's shield of protection. Today, we can also claim that same shield of protection:

**"Great peace have those who love Your law [Torah]
And nothing causes them to stumble."**
(Psalm 119:165)

**"Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
You, through Your commandments, make me
wiser than my enemies;
For they are ever with me."**
(Psalm 119:97-98)

~ The Status of the Torah Today ~

The *Torah* still stands as the supreme document that tells us how God wants society set up, the way in which He expects people to relate to Him, and the way they should treat one another. It is impossible to understand the mind of God unless one has a good understanding of the *Torah*.

Obviously, portions of the *Torah* have been changed now that Messiah has appeared and offered Himself as the ultimate sacrifice. The book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to explain that Messianic Believers now have a new High Priest, *Y'shua*, who is a priest after the order of Melchizadek:

"For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar." (Heb. 7:12-13)

It is clear from this passage that the *Torah* (law or instruction of God) can be changed. This is the current state of all of the instructions in the *Torah* which pertain to the Levitical priesthood. However, this does not negate the Ten Commandments, or the many other *Torah* scriptures that teach us how to worship God and how to live a life of love toward our neighbor. As an example, the Constitution of the United States of America can be amended so that a portion of the Constitution becomes changed. Such action does not eliminate the entire Constitution. If it did, then there would no longer be a 'law of the land.' The same principle holds true for the *Torah*.

According to the Jews, there are 613 commandments given in the *Torah*, however, no one person was ever required to keep all 613. Some are for the High Priest only. Some are only for women, others only for men, while others are only for the Levites. Some are laws that pertain to the nation of Israel when they live in the land. Only by studying the *Torah* can anyone ever come to a correct understanding as to which ones are applicable today in our walk of obedience.

~ The Practice of Torah Study ~

Well before the time of *Y'shua*, it was the practice of the Jewish people to read a portion of the *Torah* each Sabbath in the synagogue. It is believed this practice was begun by Ezra when the Jewish captives returned from Babylon, although no one can prove it one way or another. Different formulas have been used. During the time of *Y'shua* there was one cycle of reading that was accomplished in one years time, and another cycle that took three years to complete.

During the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Jewish people were not allowed to read the *Torah*, or circumcise their children. Anyone who did so was put to death. Many were martyred because they did circumcise their children despite the decree. However, they managed to get around the prohibition concerning *Torah* reading in a very resourceful way. They set up a cycle of readings in the *Nevi'im* (The Prophets) that reminded them in some way of the *Torah* reading that was supposed to be read that particular week. It might have been a

reference to a story found in the *Torah* portion. It could even be a single word that reminded them of that week's *Torah* passage. Then one of the men would say; "Oh, that reminds me of the story about..." and off they would go into a discussion about that week's *Torah* reading without ever having to actually read the *Torah* passage itself. These readings from the *Nevi'im* became known as the *Haftarah*, which means "other readings."

In *Y'shua's* day it was customary (even as it is today in orthodox synagogues) for both the weekly *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions of scripture to be read each Sabbath. It provided the basis for discussion by anyone who might want to comment upon it. It was also common to invite a distinguished guest to participate in the *Torah* or *Haftarah* readings and make whatever comments they deemed appropriate. This was the situation in which *Y'shua* found Himself when He visited his hometown of Nazareth, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as His custom was. (Luke 4:16). The passage He was given to read, out of the book of Isaiah, is no longer found in the *Haftarah* readings of today. This could well be because the Rabbinic Jews removed it due to the great distress and persecution they have received at the hands of the so-called followers of Jesus (the Christians) over the centuries. It is impossible for anyone to say definitively one way or the other. The point is, *Torah* and *Haftarah* reading was common practice then, and it is a tradition that continues today. *Y'shua* held to many of the traditions of the Jews which did not contradict the Scriptures. Certainly, He participated in and was a regular attendee at the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was also the Apostle Paul.

The common practice today is to read the entirety of the *Torah* and the companion *Haftarah* scriptures in a one year cycle. The cycle begins on the first Sabbath after the Festival of *Succoth* (Feast of Tabernacles) with the very first reading which begins in Genesis 1. If you are interested in beginning to study the *Torah*, the *Prophets*, and the *Brit Chadasha* (New Testament) on a regular basis, please write us for the current *Weekly Torah Reading Schedule*.

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~ The Torah of Grace ~

For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly.
Psalm 84:11



Grace and *Torah* (translated 'Law' in most English Bibles) are words that are often associated in opposition to one another. This is most unfortunate because it breeds a "law vs. grace" argument that really should not exist. In reality, *Torah* (law) and Grace work together in a magnificent way.

The Hebrew word *Torah* comes from the root word *yarah* (yah-rah') which means: "*to flow as water; to lay or throw* (espec. an arrow); *fig. to point out; to teach.*" Thus, as water flows down a river, so do God's instructions flow down to us through the *Torah*. As the arrow is aimed at its mark, so all Believers should aim to follow the teachings of God. When we miss the mark, we sin or transgress. Probably the best one word definition of *Torah* in English would be 'Instruction,' the loving Instruction from God to His highest form of creation, mankind.

The English word 'law' carries a lot of baggage with it. Usually when one thinks of 'law' the concept that comes to mind is that of rules, policemen to enforce the rules, citations, warrants, arrests, courts, lawyers, judges, juries, fines, or prison. In other words, the English word 'law' can carry a great number of negative connotations.

On the other hand, the English word 'instruction' usually has positive connotations. It most often carries the concept of assistance, helpfulness, caring, learning, growing, and loving attention. Of course, 'instruction' can be of the difficult kind as well; the so-called "school of hard knocks," but generally, it is thought of in a caring atmosphere. This is a perfect picture of God's *Torah*, His merciful instruction on the righteous and proper way we are to live our lives.

Now if the *Torah* is a handbook of 'righteous instruction,' then why not just follow all of its rules and thereby receive eternal life? After all, as the Apostle Paul said:

"... the law [*Torah*] is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." (Rom. 7:12)

The reason why we cannot receive salvation through commandment keeping is because the flesh is weak. Because of this inherent weakness we cannot keep the law perfectly:

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

This is why 'grace' is so very important:

"For what the law [*Torah*] could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin [*transgression of the law*] in the flesh." (Rom. 8:3)

Grace is another one of those religious words; along with faith, justification, salvation, sanctification, etc., that is frequently discussed but seldom defined adequately. The dictionary definition of grace contains a number of different but related concepts.

Grace - "A disposition to be generous or helpful; good will. Mercy; clemency. A favor rendered by one who need not do so; indulgence. A temporary immunity or exemption; a reprieve."

Sometimes it is helpful in understanding a word or concept to examine some of the ideas which the word does not convey. There are a number of things which Grace does not or cannot do:

- ◆ Grace does not grant a license to sin.
- ◆ Grace does not do away with the *Torah*.
- ◆ Grace does not replace obedience.
- ◆ Grace does not eliminate the need for good works.

These definitions help us to understand God's grace toward the Body of Messiah, which consists of those who have accepted *Y'shua* as the prophesied Messiah who is:

"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

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

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." (John 3:16-21)

The concept of Grace is really quite simple when it is placed in the context of a court of law. While today's court system is but a corrupt image of the heavenly court, still the principles that are supposed to govern our modern courts are really quite similar to the biblical model. Eventually, all people will be required to come before the throne of God for judgment:

"And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ [*Messiah*] was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." (Heb. 9:27-28)

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ [*Messiah*]." (Rom. 14:10b)

All mankind will be judged by the righteous Judge; the Messiah, *Y'shua*.

Since everyone must stand for judgment, there has to be some serious charges that are laid against us. The court, especially the Heavenly one, would not bring someone before it without a legitimate reason, nor without due process. We have already seen that:

"... all have sinned..." (Rom. 3:23)

In addition, if one breaks even one command they are considered to be guilty of breaking the entirety of the law:

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

Now the penalty for sin is death:

**"Behold, all souls are Mine;
The soul of the father
As well as the soul of the son is Mine;
The soul who sins shall die."** (Ezek. 18:4)

"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)

One of the points being made in the sixth chapter of Romans is that each person will be held accountable for his own sins. No individual will ever be held accountable for the sins of another person even if they be of one's own family. This is confirmed in the Hebrew Scriptures as well:

"The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall the children be put to death for their fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin." (Deut. 24:16)

All have sinned (both Jew and Gentile), therefore all are guilty of breaking the law, so all mankind is under the penalty of death if found guilty in the Heavenly Court. Many recognize this very problem. However, there are different ways in which people attempt to resolve it.

~ The Heavenly Court ~

How one approaches the Heavenly Court is just as important as how one approaches an earthly court of law. If one comes with contempt for the Court, he should expect to be treated with contempt. If one comes before the court in a respectful attitude, he will be treated with respect, although he may still be found guilty.

What are some of the attitudes that people might bring before the Heavenly Court in the Day of Judgment? Following are some possibilities.

First comes the person who knows he has committed some sins in his life but believes that his good works outweigh his evil deeds. He may come before the Heavenly Court and say; "I did break some *Torah* commandments on rare occasions, but I strictly observed all of the traditions of my church (or synagogue). Also, I gave money to various charities and I even cast out a demon in the name of *Y'shua*. Therefore, if it pleases the court, I submit to you that my good deeds and observance

of religious traditions far outweigh the transgressions that I have committed. Therefore, I feel the court should acquit my case." (This is the person who feels he can earn his salvation by his works.)

To this man the Righteous Judge, *Y'shua*, may respond; "You admit to breaking the *Torah* commandments. Did you not read, in the scripture, that all of your righteousness is as filthy rags? (Isa. 64:6). How could you ever expect that your works would be able to pay for the sins you have committed? I find you guilty as charged."

Another may come and say; "I have never broken any of the *Torah* commandments because those laws were all nailed to the cross and were thereby done away. Since there is not a single valid law on the books, other than to love God and love neighbor, I do not believe that I can be held accountable for any *Torah* transgressions. Therefore, I petition the court to dismiss my case." (This position is known as the "against the law" or antinomian position.)

To this the Righteous Judge may respond; "I did not come to destroy the law but to make it full. (Matt. 5:17). The law was never done away, therefore you stand guilty as charged."

Finally comes the man who says; "Yes, O Righteous Judge, I have sinned by breaking the commandments given in the *Torah*. I am guilty and without excuse. However, I have fully repented of my sinful actions and ask that the Court accept as full payment for my sins that which you, my Elder Brother, *Y'shua HaMashiach*, has already made to this Court in my behalf." (This is the man who truly knows from whence comes his salvation (*yeshuah*)).

To this the Righteous Judge will respond; "This Court accepts as full payment, for this man's sins, the atoning sacrifice of his Elder Brother, *Y'shua HaMashiach*. For this reason, and this reason alone, the Court extends grace (favor) to him. You are hereby released from your debt (sins) and your obligation to pay with your life. Go and sin no more."

Now that this sinner is no longer "**under the [condemnation of] law,**" is he free to go forth and sin again? Of course not. For if he sins again, he comes once again "under the law," and must face the Court yet another time. Since, in this case, the Judge is actually the one paying the penalty, it would seem to be the better part of wisdom for that person not to keep sinning and thereby repeatedly reappearing in Court asking the Judge to pay his penalty:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom. 6:1-2)

~ Grace; A Torah Teaching ~

Forgiveness is certainly a part of the teaching of the *Brit Chadasha* (Breet Khah-dah-shah' = The New Covenant), but is it also a part of the *Torah*? Yes, very much so. There is one difference however, the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible) only hints at the possibility of forgiveness extending on into salvation for all eternity. It was left to the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Prophets and the Writings) to flesh out this important understanding.

The primary expression of forgiveness in the *Torah* deals with forgiveness in the here and now. If Israel had obeyed all

of the commandments laid out in the book of the law (the *Torah*), then God would have blessed them abundantly. However, when Israel transgressed against God they were punished. The punishments began with the withholding of rain. If they did not respond positively the punishment was escalated. The final, and most extreme, punishment was to be cut off, or exiled, from the land of promise. However, God's punishments of Israel were not designed to be permanent, but rather were a means of discipline so the children of Israel would repent and return to the LORD with all their heart. If they did so, He promised to hear their prayers and restore them to peace and prosperity in their own land:

"But from there you will seek the LORD [YHVH] your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.

"When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD [YHVH] your God and obey His voice (for the LORD [YHVH] your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them." (Deut. 4:29-31)

This is Grace, pure and simple.

However, in the *Torah* there is more to Grace than just repentance; turning away from and being forgiven for one's sins, returning to a Godly lifestyle, and receiving a restoration of physical blessings. *Torah* Grace also includes freedom from all oppression. As such, Grace cannot be implemented without some form of outside intervention.

To fully understand the magnitude of forgiveness offered to Believers under the New Covenant, another important *Torah* concept about forgiveness and redemption must be considered. This is the understanding that sin creates a debt that must be paid by someone. Once this principle is understood our present relationship to *Y'shua* can be more fully appreciated.

How did God instruct the children of Israel to handle the problem of debt in their society? The answer has startling implications for Believers, as the same principle applies in a spiritual sense in the *Brit Chadasha* (New Covenant):

"And if one of your brethren who dwells by you becomes poor, and sells himself to you, you shall not compel him to serve as a slave, but as a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee." (Lev. 25:39-40)

Note that the Israelite who sold himself because of his debts, only became indebted to his brother Israelite until the Year of Jubilee, which occurs once every forty-nine years. (Some say once every fifty years. This depends on whether the Jubilee is the first year of the next forty-nine year cycle, or a fiftieth year inserted at the end of each forty-nine year cycle.) The important concept to remember is that the person is to be a servant to his Israelite brother only until the Jubilee. Once the Jubilee arrives, the servant is released from his service and, in addition to his freedom, has his family land returned to him so that he can support himself and thereby remain a free man. In other words, he becomes totally free; and if he is circumspect about his life from that point on, remains free.

It was also possible for a poor Israelite to sell himself into bondage to a rich stranger (non-Israelite). If this happened, it became necessary for a close relative to buy him back from the stranger, otherwise he would be in permanent bondage. A relative who purchased such an Israelite slave was called a 'kinsman redeemer':

"Now if a sojourner or stranger close to you becomes rich, and one of your brethren who dwells by him becomes poor, and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner close to you, or to a member of the stranger's family, after he is sold he may be redeemed again. One of his brothers may redeem him; or his uncle or his uncle's son may redeem him; or anyone who is near of kin to him in his family may redeem him; or if he is able he may redeem himself."

(Lev. 25:47-49)

Notice that the Israelite brother who redeemed a fellow kinsman was commanded not to deal harshly with his newly acquired servant:

"He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight."

(Lev. 25:53)

It did not matter whether the poor Israelite was redeemed from a stranger or whether he sold himself directly to another Israelite, the new owner was never to deal harshly with the servant:

"But as a hired servant and a sojourner he shall be with you, and shall serve you until the Year of Jubilee. ... You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your God." (Lev. 25:40, 43)

~ A Teaching for Believers ~

What does all of this have to do with Believers in the 21st century? Everything! For, as we have seen, every human being has sold himself, through the vehicle of sin, into slavery to the Adversary *HaSatan*. He is the stranger who purchased mankind through their obedience to sin. It all began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve gave up their place in paradise for a taste of the forbidden fruit.

Because of this bondage to *HaSatan*, it became absolutely necessary for *Y'shua* to come as a "Kinsman Redeemer" in order that He be in a qualifying position (that of a near relative), thereby being allowed the privilege of paying the sin debt that each Believer has incurred through submission to *HaSatan* and his way of life.

As the seed of Abraham, *Y'shua* came to set the Israelite captives free from their personal sin bondage to *HaSatan*. When *Y'shua* went to Nazareth and attended the synagogue service on the Sabbath day, He read the Haftarah reading for that week from the book of Isaiah:

**"The Spirit of the LORD [YHVH] is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel
to the poor.
He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted,
To preach deliverance to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,**

To preach the acceptable year of the LORD [YHVH]."
(Luke 4:18-19)

Y'shua then closed the book and sat down. The scriptures tell us that:

"... the eyes of all that were in the synagogue were fixed upon Him."
(Luke 4:20)

This action should not be surprising to anyone that understands the customs of the synagogue, for one stands to read and sits to teach. The members of the fellowship were merely waiting to hear what He had to say about the reading. What they heard astonished them:

"And He began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"
(Luke 4:21)

To state it simply; one of the principal reasons *Y'shua HaMashiach* came to the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was to be a Kinsman Redeemer in the full sense of the word; to redeem them and thereby release them from their bondage to the god of this world, *HaSatan*.

~ What About the Gentiles? ~

A Canaanite woman came to *Y'shua* asking that her daughter be healed of demon possession. *Y'shua* turned to her and said:

"I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
(Matt. 15:24)

Then she implored Him, and worshipped Him, and He answered her:

"It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.' And she said; 'True Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered and said to her, 'O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.' And her daughter was healed from that very hour."
(Matt. 15:26-28)

Y'shua did not come to save those who are not a part of Israel, because only Israel is sanctified ('set apart'). For about the first ten years, after the death and resurrection of *Y'shua*, the Church consisted only of Jews, Jewish proselytes, and converted Samaritans. It was not until Simon Peter was sent to the house of Cornelius that the uncircumcised Gentiles (God Fearers) were able to become a part of the fellowship.

So how does all of this square with Scripture? Quite well when one fully understands Romans 9, 10 and 11. In chapter 11 Paul goes to great lengths to explain the place of both Jews and Gentiles in the Body of Messiah. He compares Israel to an olive tree. The Jews are a natural part of the Olive Tree of Israel because of their birth lineage, their heritage, and the fact that God had never divorced the house of Judah. However, not all of the Jews accepted *Y'shua* as Messiah, while many Gentiles did. Today many people believe that God, at this point, abandoned the Jewish people and the church became the new Israel. This concept is known in theological circles as "replacement theology." Romans chapter 11 says just the

opposite. In reality, the Gentiles are grafted into the Commonwealth of Israel and become Israelites by their faith in *Y'shua*, while the unbelieving Jews are broken off. However, the Gentiles are told not to brag, because God can just as easily cut them back out and graft the unbelieving Jews back in by causing their eyes to be opened to the Messiah, *Y'shua*:

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

"... For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?"

(Rom. 11:17-18,24)

This passage does not totally exclude unbelieving Jews from continued contact with God, for they, unlike the Gentiles, continue to have that privilege as physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (as do also the descendants of the lost ten tribes of the northern House of Israel). As physical descendants of the Patriarchs, the Jews still hold a special relationship to God, even in their 'unbelief':

"Concerning the gospel they [*the Jews*] are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable."
(Rom. 11:28-19)

What are these 'irrevocable gifts and calling' of God?

"What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?"

"Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?"

"Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar."
(Rom. 3:1-4a)

Can God still save the unbelieving Jews? If He can, will He?

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

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

All Israel, ALL ISRAEL, is to be saved. Do not make the mistake of holding the Jews in contempt because they do not yet believe in Messiah *Y'shua*. It is God's doing and they are in His very capable hands.

~ Y'shua: the Kinsman Redeemer for All Mankind ~

Because of the grafting principle as described in Romans chapter 11, *Y'shua* has become a kinsman redeemer to the Gentiles as well as to all Israel, for they have all become one in the brotherhood of Israel. Now all who believe can be redeemed by the great Jewish Redeemer; whether from the house of Judah (a Jew), from the house of Israel (an Israelite), or a Gentile. All are considered to be a part of the good Olive Tree, provided they believe and are thereby grafted into the good Olive Tree of Israel. Many people believe that the Apostle Paul started a new religion which was contrary to Judaism. However, a proper understanding of Romans (chapters 9-11) does not allow for 'Christianity' to be a new religion, rather it is the 'old religion' now given proper understanding and broadened to include all peoples.

Does this mean that all Believers must become Jews? No, not at all, because Judaism, while containing the essence of true religion, had become burdened down by the traditions of man; the fences of the Pharisees. It is fine to throw out the improper application of the *Torah* and its legalistic observance but it is wrong to throw out the baby with the bath water. First century Judaism was a *Torah* based religion, that had gotten out of hand through its myriad of rules. *Y'shua* and the Apostles put it back into its proper perspective:

"Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, 'Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?'"

"So Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and your mother.'"

"And he answered and said to Him, 'Teacher, all these I have observed from my youth.'

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*], looking at him, loved him, and said to him, 'One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.'

"But he was sad at this word, and went away grieved, for he had great possessions." (Mark 10:17-22)

One is not a true follower of *Y'shua HaMashiach* unless one becomes willingly obedient to the instructions found in the *Torah*, and is ready to give up everything to follow Messiah.

~ Servants of God ~

Remember that a kinsman redeemer did not pay the debt for his relative in order that the relative could go out free. Instead, the redeemed Israelite became a servant of the one who had redeemed him. However, the kinsman redeemer was not to treat the fellow Israelite as a slave but rather as a hired servant:

"He shall be with him as a yearly hired servant, and he shall not rule with rigor over him in your sight. ... For the children of Israel are servants to Me; they are My servants

whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD [*YHVH*] your God." (Lev. 25:53, 55)

The same is true with Believers who have been redeemed through the blood of *Y'shua*:

"You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men." (I Cor. 7:23)

"... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by the tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ [*Messiah*], as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Pet. 1:18-19)

Because *Y'shua* is the kinsmen redeemer for both Jew and Gentile, those whom He has redeemed are now His servants:

"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?"

"But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ... For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ... But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life." (Rom. 6:16-18, 20, 22)

So now, we are the slaves, or servants, of God and we have life more abundantly:

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:30)

Therefore we are to praise God and serve Him continually, offering up a sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15, Rom. 12:1).

The final step of this scenario is yet to be played out. We are servants of *Y'shua* in this life, but when He returns it will be the year of the Great Jubilee. At that time, all of those who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and are servants of *YHVH*, will return to their original inheritance and be set free:

"And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family." (Lev. 25:10)

What was the original inheritance of mankind? It was the sinless state in which Adam and Eve were created. It was the Garden of Eden in which they lived.

What will be our new inheritance? It will be a world where even the nature of the carnivorous animals will be changed so that the calf can lay down with the lion and not be devoured. It will be a time when all the world will live by the instruction (*Torah*) of God.

It will be a time of complete Grace.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ The Shema ~

Jesus answered him and said,
"The first of all the commandments is:
"Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one."
Mark 12:29



When Y'shua was asked by one of the Scribes;

"which is the first commandment of all?" (Mark 12:28)

He answered in what might be considered a rather unusual way. Y'shua did not begin by repeating the first of the Ten Commandments:

"I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, ... you shall have no other gods before Me." (Ex. 20:2-3)

He did not begin by telling the Scribe to **"...love your neighbor as yourself."** He began with what every Jewish person (of that day and this) recognized as the *Shema* (Sheh-mah').

The *Shema* is not a prayer, it is a statement of faith. It is the core of Jewish belief. Every faithful Jew desires to die with the *Shema* on his lips. Except for the second sentence, the entire *Shema* is taken directly from scripture. It is common for the *Shema* to be sung rather than recited or read.

The Hebrew word *Shema* means "to hear intelligently and do." *Shema* is the very first word found in this great statement of faith, and it is quoted directly from Deut. 6:4. It is common practice for Hebrew scriptures to be named by the first word of the passage or book. In Hebrew, the *Shema* is said in the following manner: "*Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad.*" (The translation is: Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.) Thus, the title for this statement of faith is simply *Shema*.

Why would Y'shua respond to a direct question about the 'first commandment of all' with a Jewish statement of faith? Because it is not just a 'Jewish' statement of faith. Rather, it is intended to be the statement of faith for all those who believe in YHVH, (the LORD) the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since Y'shua was born into a traditional Jewish home, He too was a human descendant of those great patriarchs and a follower of their one true God. Please remember that Y'shua Himself was, in the flesh, Jewish. He had a Jewish mother and stepfather, and lived as a Jewish citizen in the Jewish area of Galilee. Although He did speak out strongly against some of the traditions of the Jews, Y'shua was fully observant of those traditions which truly had their roots in the scriptures and did not contradict the commandments of God. In that respect, Y'shua was the teacher of the true religion that God had revealed to the children of Israel after He brought them out of the land of Egypt, which had become corrupted by the traditions of men. However, to say that Y'shua followed none of the customs and traditions of the Jews is just as incorrect as to say that He observed them all. One major task for Believers

today is to discern, through study, which of those practices are truly Biblical and which are the 'traditions of men.' Be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water!

~ An Ancient Practice ~

The practice of reciting the *Shema* goes back to the time of the Temple service. Each day in the Temple, part of the opening day's ritual included the recitation, by the priests, of the Ten Commandments and the *Shema*. All three paragraphs of the *Shema* were recited aloud by the priests following the daily morning offering. The worshippers assembling at the Temple did not recite the *Shema* itself but responded only to the first sentence with:

"Baruach shem kvod malkhuto l'olam va-ed. (Blessed is the name of His Glorious Majesty forever and ever.)

After the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the reciting of the *Shema* was brought into the synagogue as a part of the worship service. At first, the Ten Commandments were also included in the synagogue service, however later on the reading of the Ten Commandments was removed from the synagogue. This was done because the 'Christians' had adopted them as a part of their worship, with some Gentile Believers claiming they were the only commandments from the *Torah* that still had relevance and needed to be obeyed.

It must be remembered that many of the customs that have become traditions in both modern Christianity and modern Rabbinic Judaism, are a result of these sects not wanting to be associated, in any way shape or form, with the other. Therefore, it behooves us to throw off all of those past prejudices and look to the scriptures (made more understandable through knowledge of the historical customs of both camps) as the final source of true religion and worship.

~ The Shema Text ~

The *Shema* can be recited in either a short form or a long form. The short form is as follows:

"Hear, O Israel, the LORD [YHVH] our God, the LORD [YHVH] is One. Blessed is the name of His Glorious Majesty forever and ever."

The first sentence of the *Shema* is a direct quote from Deuteronomy 6:4. The second sentence is not a direct quote of any scripture, however it does bear a very close resemblance to Psalm 72:19a: **"And blessed be His glorious name forever!"** According to Jewish tradition the second sentence was written by the patriarch, Ya'akov (Yah ah'-cove = Jacob) however, Moses did not include it in the Scriptures.

In the Jewish prayer book (commonly called the *siddur* = sid-dooer), the *Shema* is preceded by three Hebrew words; *El melek ne'eman*, which translated is; "God, Faithful King." The first letters of these three Hebrew words spell the Hebrew word *amen* (ah-main'), which means; "firm, faithful, truly, verily," and is used as a confirmation that one agrees with what has just been stated.

The full or long form of the *Shema* is as follows:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD [YHVH] our God, the LORD [YHVH] is one! *[Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Majesty forever and ever.]*

"You shall love the LORD [YHVH] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

"You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deut. 6:4-9)

"And it shall be that if you diligently obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD [YHVH] your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give *you* the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil.

"And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.

"Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's [YHVH's] anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD [YHVH] is giving you.

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

"You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

"And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD [YHVH] swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth." (Deut. 11:13-21)

"Again the LORD [YHVH] spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners.

"And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD [YHVH] and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.

"I am the LORD [YHVH] your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: I am the LORD [YHVH] your God." (Num. 15:37-41)

~ The Message of the Shema ~

* The Oneness of God *

The first and foremost understanding that one should receive from this beautiful statement of faith is that *YHVH* is our God and that *YHVH* is one. Today, western society is very familiar with the concept of monotheism, that there is only one God who is the Creator of all things. In Moses' day this was a highly unusual concept, for the pagan religions had whole pantheons of gods and goddesses. For the Israelites to come along and worship only one God was, in the opinion of the pagans, a very foolish thing to do. What if that God was unable to effect a desired change for the worshipper? They thought it far better to have a whole smorgasbord of gods and goddesses so one could call on the appropriate one to intervene in a particular situation. Then when the pagans learned that the Israelites were not allowed to make any kind of image of their God, they really thought it was wacko.

The first century Greeks, being more highly educated than many of their neighbors, did perceive that the universe needed some kind of "first cause," some god or power that was the creator and ruler of all the other lesser gods and goddesses. Some called this being the "Unknown God:"

"Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription:

"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

"therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.

"God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.

"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:22-31)

This "Unknown God" that Paul proclaimed to the Greeks, was the God of the Israelite patriarchs. He was not a multitude of gods, rather He was One God. He was not a god that warred with others of equal rank, He was the Creator of all things and

therefore above all things. Now, Paul proclaimed, that great God had sent His only begotten Son (the Man) to die for the sins of the world and be resurrected from the dead. And now that Father and Son are united as one:

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

The Hebrew word translated 'one' in the *Shema*, is *echad* (ekh-hahd'). Space does not permit a full exploration of this word, however, a brief reference is appropriate here:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one [*echad*] flesh." (Gen. 2:24)

This passage contains the very first use of the word *echad* in a context that does not denote a single item. Rather, the context makes it apparent that the Hebrew language allows *echad* to be used to proclaim a unity of at least two things as well as a single item.

** Love God **

The second positive declaration of the *Shema* is that a true believer is to love God. *Y'shua* confirmed this when He quoted the *Shema* to the scribe:

"Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?'"

"Jesus [*Y'shua*] answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the LORD [*YHVH*] our God, the LORD [*YHVH*] is one. And you shall love the LORD [*YHVH*] your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment." (Mark 12:28-30)

Believers are to have a deep abiding love for God that surpasses their love for anyone or anything else. God must be put first and foremost in all things. But just how does one express their love for God? Is it by saying "I love you Lord?" Certainly there is nothing wrong with saying those particular words. In fact, if you have never actually said them, you have missed a wonderful part of your relationship with your Father in heaven. However, the *Torah* is a book of instruction, so surely God must have instructed His children on the proper way in which to express their love for Him.

The text from the *Shema* says that God's people are to love Him with all of their heart, soul and might. *Y'shua* expands this instruction slightly by telling us to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

- ♦ **Heart.** The heart is the seat of all feelings and emotions. Therefore, one is to feel their love for God deeply, in an emotionally meaningful and righteous way.
- ♦ **Soul.** Scripture teaches that the soul is really life itself. Man is a living soul (Gen. 2:7), and the soul that sins will die. (Ezek. 18:4,20). Therefore, man is to love God with his entire living self. This may include (but is not limited to) his manner of speech and dress, and form of worship.

- ♦ **Mind.** One's mind must be filled with an attitude of love toward God. One way to do this is to spend as much time as possible learning about the things of God. Knowledge is a powerful tool in helping to develop a relationship with the Father, if it is used in a proper manner. However, knowledge for the sake of knowledge puffs up. Knowledge for the sake of developing a right relationship with God, edifies.

- ♦ **Strength.** All of one's actions must be directed toward God and His way of life. Man is to serve God with all of his being, and all of his strength.

Man's love for God must be absolutely unconditional. We must learn to love God so much that our love continues through both good times and bad, in times of great blessings as well as times of great suffering. Love is characterized by one great quality; the willingness of a person to sacrifice for the good of another. In terms of loving God, this manifests itself through one's willingness to sanctify the name of God no matter what the cost. Never forget that many early Believers, as well as many non-believing Jews, have gone to early graves because of their unwillingness to desecrate the name of God before those who would require them to do so.

** Teaching Others **

The third great principle taught by the *Shema* is that one is to teach the ways of God to others. We must do everything in our power to show God beloved, just, and righteous in the sight of others, whether they are Believers or not.

This begins with the teaching of our own children. The Word of God needs to be so intimately bound up in everyday life that we just cannot help but discuss these things with other people. Many of us do not have children, or our children are grown up. But all of us have contact with other people, whether within the Body of Messiah or without. If called upon would you be able to teach the ways of God to others?

"...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ [*Messiah*] may be ashamed." (I Pet. 3:15-16)

Are you ready to be a teacher? If not, why not? If you are new in the Faith that is understandable, but if you have been in the faith for a long while, isn't it time that you helped others to come to a correct knowledge of their Saviour?

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." (Heb. 5:12)

The command to teach does not give a person license to go around teaching their pet theories. People (especially those new to the Faith) need to see and learn by loving examples and right application the principles found in the instruction book of God (the *Torah*).

* God's Blessings *

The second paragraph of the *Shema* promises the blessings that will flow from God as a result of obedience. Remember that obedience is the result that should be evident in a Believer's life, upon the receipt of the earnest payment of the Holy Spirit, given to those who believe and are walking the path called salvation. It is not the other way around; salvation does not come as a result of obedience. However, there are positive results that will accrue to the Believer who chooses to obey God rather than the traditions of men. There are also negative results that will accrue to those who choose to disobey God's instructions. This is the Biblical principle of reward and punishment.

* Reminders *

The last principle taught by the *Shema* is that it is good to have physical reminders around us to help us stay on the straight path:

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt. 7:13-14)

Believers are still physical people with physical pulls. It is possible for someone who has dedicated the entirety of their adult life in the service of God, to find themselves in a seriously compromising situation. Under such circumstances a physical reminder could possibly be the trigger that awakens them to an approaching sin and thereby aid them to stand firm in the way that leads to life.

~ A Righteous Addition ~

When *Y'shua* answered the scribe He stated the first line of the *Shema* (the LORD is one) and the first principle of the *Shema* (to love God). Then He amplified the instruction to teach others into a much greater and broader principle:

"And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:31)

However, this great principle also comes directly out of the *Torah*, the instruction book from God. You will find it at the very end of a rather lengthy list of instructions concerning how to treat other people:

"You shall not take vengeance, not 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)

One cannot truly love God unless they first learn how to love their brother:

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And

this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also." (1 John 4:20-21)

This is the final test as to whether one truly loves God or if he is just paying lip service to Him. It is easy to love God when one's life is going along fairly well, but it is very difficult to love one's brother in a total and consistent manner.

~ The *Shema* Today ~

Does the *Shema* have relevance in the lives of Believers today? Is it appropriate for us to recite or sing the *Shema*? Why not just read it each morning silently? Or, better yet, why not just meditate on it? For as the scripture says:

**"Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD [YHVH],
And in His law he meditates day and night."** (Psalm 1:1-2)

These are valid questions that need to be answered by each and every Believer. One problem here concerns a correct understanding of the word 'meditate.' The current concept of that word is to sit quietly and listen to one's inner thoughts or to think deeply upon some subject, idea or emotion. However, this is not the meaning of the Hebrew word *hagah* (hah-gah'). *Hagah* means *to murmur, to mutter, to growl*. Biblical meditation is a very active response to the Scriptures. It means to recite a passage, to pray in a low voice, or to muse upon the meaning of the scripture to one's self. Singing or reciting the *Shema* is an example of this type of 'meditation.'

It is interesting to note that modern psychology has determined that if a person reads a passage aloud, even if it is in a very quiet voice, the chances of retaining and acting upon what was read is ten times greater than if they merely read the words. Apparently the physical act of moving one's lips causes a profound difference in the depth of understanding that takes place.

Now one should not jump into singing the *Shema* just because the Jews do it, even though *Y'shua* was a Jew. On the other hand, neither should one refuse to do something just because the Jews make a practice of it.

There are two extreme ways of looking at this dilemma. The first involves the 'spiritualizing' approach. It is easy to look at the passages of the *Shema* and say; "Well, these are broad spiritual principles. Therefore, I need to develop a proper sense of these principles and incorporate them into my life, but I do not need to be concerned with the details."

The second approach is the "detail method." Here is the person who learns all of the traditions that are a part of the *Shema* and then scrupulously incorporates them into a lifestyle but misses the broad principle.

There are dangers in both approaches. The first, says that physical reminders and daily remembrances of the *Shema* (in this case) are not really important. But will this individual really remember the instructions of God at a crucial time in his life if he has not reminded himself and his family of them each

and every day, by both speaking them and seeing symbols that remind him of them?

**"Now consider this, you who forget God,
Lest I tear you in pieces,
And there be none to deliver;
Whoever offers praise glorifies Me;
And to him who orders his conduct aright
I will show the salvation of God."** (Psalm 50:22-23)

The second approach runs the risk of becoming so involved in the doing of the ritual, that the person forgets to obey the very commands they are making all this effort to remember. This would be like one who failed to respond to a car accident in front of their home because it was time to recite the *Shema*.

Man is a ditch laden being. He tends to go to extremes, from one ditch to the other. Somewhere in between lies the true path. Yes, the great principles concerning loving God, teaching our children (and others) to obey the *Torah*, and loving our brother (neighbors), are the real goals that God wants His people to achieve. But it is not wrong (in fact it may be a great aid in achieving those goals) to have some physical reminders around so that we never forget what it is that God wants us to do.

What is wrong with writing something on our doorposts to remind us each time we enter that our home is dedicated to God and His way of life? What is wrong with carrying something on our person that causes us to have the instruction (*Torah*) of God always in our mind and heart? Just do not let the method become a replacement for the desired end result, and do not allow your person to become a vehicle for pagan symbols.

There is much prayer and study that needs to be done concerning these issues. Our instruction book is the Holy Scriptures. Each individual Believer needs go before God in a

proper spirit and ask Him to show them what is fitting and proper for them in this age. Only then will we "grow in grace and knowledge."

~ A Suggestion ~

A friend of ours has told us that when he and his wife began singing the *Shema* each morning and evening, it made a profound improvement in their life by giving the day a God centered focus. While *Hebrew Roots* does not intend to place itself in the position of telling people they must do something, we do ask that you consider trying this, for we believe it is scriptural and will be a benefit to each one of you if you practice it. The *Shema* says that one is to:

**"...teach them [these words or commandments] diligently
... [to] talk of them ... when you lie down, and when you rise
up."** \ (Deut. 6:7)

Jewish tradition interprets this verse to mean that one should recite the *Shema* upon rising in the morning and again upon retiring in the evening. The recitation is usually the short form and it is preferable that it be sung rather than read. Music for the *Shema* can be found in various Jewish or Messianic Jewish songbooks. Also, some Messianic Jewish singers have recorded the *Shema*. We challenge you to begin and end each day with the singing or reciting of the *Shema* and see how you are blessed as a result.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

~ A Covenant of Salt ~

All the heave offerings of the holy things,
Which the children of Israel offer to the LORD,
I have given to you and your sons and daughters
With you as an ordinance forever;
It is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD
With you and your descendants with you.
Numbers 18:19



Salt is an essential ingredient for life. Without an adequate amount of salt in the human body physical life would cease. In the modern world we take salt for granted, for it is abundant and low in cost. However, that was not always true throughout history. In ancient times, salt was such an important commodity that wars were sometimes fought over its sources. Many nations, who did not have seacoast or some type of salt mine, had to do whatever was necessary in order to obtain it. Because salt is such an essential commodity for human life, its source and storage were often controlled by the king.

The children of Israel did not have a problem obtaining salt, for God gave them a land that was abundant in it. Not only did they have a long seacoast, they also had the saltiest inland sea on earth, the Dead Sea. One source claims that 100 pounds of water from the Dead Sea yields 24 pounds of salt, while water from the Atlantic Ocean yields only about 6 pounds.

~ A Covenant Symbol ~

When one thinks of Biblical Covenants, the first thing that comes to mind is the shedding of blood. Most covenants, in some way, involved blood as a symbol of its sealing. However, Scripture also speaks of another medium for sealing a covenant, that of salt. Three places in Scripture make specific reference to a "Covenant of Salt."

The first refers back to the covenant God made with the entire nation of Israel, and how they were to constantly remember His covenant by salting all of the offerings which were brought to the Tabernacle:

"And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt." (Lev. 2:13)

In this passage, God explicitly forbids the children of Israel from bringing a *mincha* (meen-chah') or grain offering that had not been sprinkled with salt. (By the way, the *King James Version* uses the archaic term "meat," which at that time could also mean "grain," as the context of the passage shows.) Based upon the last sentence of verse 13, this passage was understood to mean that all the offerings, not just the grain offerings, were to be salted in remembrance of God's eternal "covenant of salt" with Israel.

The second usage specifies the covenant God made with the sons of *Aharon* (Ah-ha-rone' = Aaron) as a *Salt Covenant*. In this covenant, *Aharon* and his sons were promised certain portions of the offerings as a form of payment for their serving as perpetual priests in the earthly Tabernacle:

"All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you [*Aharon*] and your sons and daughters with you as an ordinance forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD [*YHVH*] with you and your descendants with you." (Num. 18:19)

The third mention of a *Salt Covenant* references the one which God made with King David; that his descendants should always be rulers in Israel:

"Then Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, and said, 'Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel: ⁵ Should you not know that the LORD [*YHVH*] God of Israel gave the dominion over Israel to David forever, to him and his sons, by a covenant of salt? 'Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord.'"

(II Chron. 13:4-6)

One thing is clear from these three references; when one makes a *Salt Covenant* it is meant to be a perpetual covenant.

~ Covenants ~

Before proceeding, it would be well to examine what it is that constitutes a covenant. Usually, when one thinks of a covenant, the first thing that comes to mind are the terms and conditions of the covenant. However, the terms and conditions are not the covenant itself, for it is possible for them to be modified. The true essence of the covenant is the binding agreement between two parties.

A covenant is exemplified by the action which seals it. In a Biblical sense, the sealing of a covenant could take place in a number of different ways. First of all, a covenant could be confirmed or sealed by an oath:

"And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, 'God is with you in all that you do. ²³ Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.'

"²⁴ And Abraham said, 'I will swear.'" (Gen. 21:22-24)

A common way to confirm a covenant was through the offering of a sacrifice:

**"He shall call to the heavens from above,
And to the earth, that He may judge His people:**

**⁵ 'Gather My saints together to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.'**

**⁶ Let the heavens declare His righteousness,
For God Himself is Judge. Selah** (Psalm 50:4-6)

Another manner in which a covenant could be sealed was through a festival meal. After Jacob had left the land of his father-in-law *Lavan* (Lah-vahn' = Laban), he was pursued until being confronted by *Lavan* and his sons, at which time they agreed to make a covenant. In this case the two parties swore an oath, offered a sacrifice, and then ate a meal together to confirm their oath:

"Then Laban said to Jacob, 'Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me. ⁵²This heap is a witness, and *this* pillar is a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us.'

"And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain." (Gen. 31:51-54)

Yet another method of covenant confirmation was to divide the sacrificial animal(s) and lay the pieces on either side of a path. Then the covenant parties would walk between the divided animal parts. The implication was that if either party were to break the bond of the covenant they should be divided into parts just as had been done to the animals. The most famous covenant that was confirmed in this manner was the one God made with *Avraham* (Ahv-rah-hahm' = Abraham):

"So He said to him, 'Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.'

¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. ... ¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. ¹⁸ On the same day the LORD [YHVH] made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates ...'"
(Gen. 15:9-10, 17-18)

Apparently, only God walked between the parts in the form of a "smoking oven and a burning torch." By sealing the covenant in that manner, God signified that it was a unilateral covenant and that the promise made to *Avraham* did not depend upon any specific action on the part of *Avraham* or his descendants in order for the terms and conditions to be fulfilled.

~ Covenant Responsibilities ~

The one thing a covenant does is bind two parties together in a permanent pact. This might be two individuals, two families, two tribes, two nations, or the binding of a person or group of persons to God. Other possible words which might describe a covenant would be: agreement, league, treaty, compact, arrangement, obligation, or promise. However, none of these alternative words have the binding force of the word covenant.

The difference between a covenant and a modern contract is that even though a covenant might be between two individuals, it is always bound before God. Therefore, the covenant becomes a 'sacred' joining of two parties rather than a mere contract bound by civil law. To break a covenant bound before God could mean giving up one's very own life. Breaking a covenant is far more serious than breaking a civil contract, which might only involve a fine or penalty.

Another difference between a covenant and a contract is that a covenant automatically binds the two parties forever (or for life if it was between two humans). In other words, it binds them together in a "life sharing" experience. Thus, marriage is a covenant, not a contract, because it binds the parties for life.

Every covenant has terms and conditions, however, the terms and conditions are subject to change upon the mutual agreement of the two parties involved. Such modification does not change the covenant itself because the covenant is the binding agreement, not the details of what each party was responsible to do.

For example, suppose two neighboring tribes bound themselves in covenant. Let us say that the original terms of the covenant specified the mutual defense of the territory which either one occupied at that time. Then, one of the tribes obtained some additional land. Since the original terms and conditions of the covenant did not cover that new piece of property, the other tribe was not obligated to help defend it. They were only committed to defend the original land. However, let us say that after due discussion both parties agreed to change the terms and conditions to state that any new territory acquired by either tribe would be automatically included under the new terms and conditions of the covenant.

In this example, the binding covenant agreement has not changed. The binding agreement between the two parties will always exist whether the terms and conditions are changed or not. Likewise, once the terms and conditions are modified by mutual agreement, that does not constitute a new covenant, but a renewal of the covenant which now includes some changes.

If the covenant is a unilateral one, then the terms and conditions can be changed unilaterally by the party which made the original agreement. However, the covenant itself cannot be broken (dissolved). Only the terms and conditions can be changed.

Thus, God has unilaterally changed the terms and conditions of the Mount Sinai covenant by adding one small requirement. That additional requirement, however, is one that God places upon Himself, not one that is placed upon His people:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD [YHVH], when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD [YHVH]. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD [YHVH]: I will put My law [Torah] in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his

brother, saying, "Know the LORD [YHVH]," for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD [YHVH]. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

(Jer. 31:31-34)

The only change to the terms and conditions of God's Mount Sinai covenant with the children of Israel are those items which have been underlined.

By combining this passage with other pertinent Scriptures, we understand that the term "New Covenant" refers to God writing the *Torah* commands on the heart of everyone who accepts *Y'shua HaMashiach* (Yeh-shoe'-ah Hah Mah-she'-ahk = Jesus the Messiah) as the promised "suffering Servant" Messiah; the One who paid the penalty for our sins. His action releases us from our iniquity, which will no longer be remembered.

In addition, we understand the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Rue-ahck' Hah Koh-dehsh' = the Holy Spirit) is a gift from the Father through *Y'shua*:

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever -- ¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)

Because of these important changes, the whole House of Israel will be saved (see Rom. 11:25-36).

~ The Salt Covenant ~

We have seen how a true covenant is a lifetime binding agreement of the parties involved. We have also seen how covenants were sealed before God; through an oath, a sacrifice, a sacred meal, or by walking between the parts of animals. However, there is no Scriptural example of the actual binding of a covenant with salt. We only have the three passages quoted at the beginning of this article which refer to covenants of salt. We are not told how they were made nor why salt was considered to be a permanent binding agent.

In order to understand the ramifications of the *Salt Covenant*, we must learn how it was used in Middle Eastern cultures apart from Israel. Considerable information on this subject is available in a book which was written in the 19th century by a Biblical scholar, H. Clay Trumbull. In his book, *The Salt Covenant*, Trumbull recounts its importance. According to Trumbull, the Arab world still has a number of ways of sealing covenants. One way is the sharing of a meal. He quotes a Dr. Hamlin on the importance of sharing a piece of meat:

"Durzee Bey, a native chieftain in Mesopotamia, having put a bit of roast meat into the mouth of Dr. Hamlin, as they sat together in his domicil, said: 'By that act I have pledged you every drop of my blood, that while you are in my territory no evil shall come to you. For that space of time we are brothers.'" (p. 22)

In the Arab tradition, the sharing of a meal means that the host will provide protection for the guest. However, a *Salt*

Covenant was considered to be far more binding. In fact it was considered to be permanent and unalterable. Usually, the *Salt Covenant* included the sharing of bread, since salt is an important ingredient of most breads. However, Trumbull says that it was the salt and not the bread which made the covenant binding. To illustrate the binding properties in the *Salt Covenant*, Trumbull relates the following story:

"John Macgregor, while on the upper Jordan in his canoe Rob Roy, was taken prisoner by the Arabs. As he parleyed with the old shaykh in his tent, Macgregor opened a box of fine salt and proffered a pinch of it to his captor. The Shaykh had never before seen salt so white and fine, and, therefore, thinking it was sugar he tasted it. Instantly Macgregor put a portion also into his own mouth, and with a loud, laughing shout he clapped the old shaykh on his back.

"The shaykh was dumbfounded. His followers wondered what had happened. "What is it?" all asked from him. "Is it sukker?" [sugar]. He answered demurely, "La, meleh!" ("No, it's salt!") Even his home secretary laughed at his chief. "We had now eaten salt together," says Macgregor, "and in his own tent, and so he was bound by the strongest tie, and he knew it." The result was that Macgregor and his canoe were carried back in triumph to the river, and speeded on their way, while the people on the banks shouted 'salaams' to their brother in the covenant of salt." (p. 29)

~ The Blood Covenant ~

To understand why salt is considered to be so binding that to mutually partake of it seals a permanent covenant between two people, requires us to look into the ancient ritual of the *Blood Covenant*.

In another book by H. Clay Trumbull, *The Blood Covenant*, he recounts a story which was told him by a Syrian man concerning his witnessing of a *Blood Covenant* between two young men:

"It was two young men, who were to enter into this covenant. ... Their relatives and neighbors were called together ... to witness the sealing compact. ... One of the friends took a sharp lancet, and opened a vein in the other's arm. Into the opening thus made, he inserted a quill, through which he sucked the living blood. The lancet-blade was carefully wiped on one of the duplicate covenant-papers, and then it was taken by the other friend, who made a like incision in its first user's arm, and drank his blood through the quill, wiping the blade on the duplicate covenant-record. The two friends declared together: 'We are brothers in a covenant made before God: who deceiveth the other, him will God deceive.'" (pp. 5-6)

Thus we see that, in the ancient cultures of the Middle East, both blood and salt were used as a witness to a permanently binding covenant between individuals.

~ Blood and Salt ~

The ancient cultures of the Middle East recognized that blood and salt were interchangeable. To the modern reader this affinity seems remote, however, in these cultures, blood was often used as a substitute when salt was not available. The reason for this practice is that fresh blood contains many salts (minerals) which the human body needs in order to survive when natural salt is not available.

Many of the early European explorers encountered this practice in a number of cultures from Asia and Africa, to the Western Hemisphere. In *The Covenant of Salt*, Trumbull says:

"... Dr. David Livingstone noted the fact that when he was among peoples who had difficulty in procuring salt, fresh-killed meat seemed to satisfy the natural craving for salt, while a vegetable diet without salt caused indigestion. In portions of China, also, where salt is not obtainable, or where it is too expensive for ordinary use, the blood of pigs or fowls is carefully preserved and eaten as if a substitute for salt." (pp. 33-34)

Another connection between blood and salt is to be found among the children of Israel. However, here the connection is just the opposite, for the Jews, even today, use salt as a means of extracting the blood from meat, for it is written:

""And whatever man of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people."" (Lev. 17:10)

The children of Israel were to be a holy (set apart) nation, they were not to be like the other nations around them. One of the ways in which they were different (set apart) was in the realm of food. Not only were the children of Israel not to eat certain kinds of animal flesh, they were never to partake of blood in any form. For this reason, the children of Israel not only fully bled the animals they slaughtered, they also packed the meat in salt so that as much blood as possible could be extracted before cooking:

""You may eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean person alike may eat it, as if it were a gazelle or a deer. ²³ Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it on the ground like water."" (Deut. 15:22-23)

Here, then, are two reasons for the connection between salt and blood. One, in the pagan world, where blood was used as a substitute for salt, and the other in the Israelite world where salt was used to extract the blood from the meat of clean animals. Since Scripture states that the life (literally the soul) is in the blood, the salt used to *kasher* (make meat kosher for consumption) actually draws the remaining life (blood) out of the meat:

""For the life [*nephesh* = soul] of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul." ¹² Therefore I said to the children of Israel, "No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any

stranger who dwells among you eat blood.""

(Lev. 17:11-12)

When God created both animal and human flesh, He placed the physical life into the blood. Because the life is in the blood, it is only by blood that atonement for sin can be made and it is through blood atonement that remission of sins comes:

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

Hence, the intimate, symbolic connection between salt and blood. Since blood equals life, and salt equals blood, the next logical step is to understand that salt (symbolically) equals life. When viewed in this manner, the *Salt Covenant* becomes a "life blood" covenant, the most binding of all covenants. Since the partaking of blood was forbidden to the children of Israel, they were able to use salt as a substitute for their most intimate of covenants. To the Israelite, the *Salt Covenant* was equivalent to a "Blood Covenant."

~ Blood and Wine ~

As Messianic Believers, we recognize the symbolic connection between blood and wine. This connection is most apparent in Scripture at the Last Supper, when *Y'shua* used wine as a symbol for the blood He was about to shed on behalf of all mankind:

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

"Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.'" (Mark 14:23-24)

The disciples should have been prepared for this ritual because of what *Y'shua* had previously taught them concerning the drinking of His blood:

"Then Jesus [*Y'shua*] said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. ⁵⁶ He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread which came down from heaven -- not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.'" (John 6:53-58)

Because of their aversion to the drinking of blood and the eating of human flesh, *Y'shua's* symbolism was more than some Jews could handle:

"From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." (John 6:66)

In the ancient cultures, salt was sometimes used as a substitute for wine since both wine and salt could be symbolically equated with blood. According to Trumbull, there were second century Christian sects who refused to partake of wine but substituted salt instead:

"In the second century there were Christian ascetics who refused to take wine in the eucharist. Among these the Elkesaites and the Ebionites employed bread and salt instead of bread and wine. There seems to have been a recognition of the fact that salt, like wine, represented blood." (p. 43)

So we see that salt was sometimes used as a symbolic replacement for blood, just as blood (in the pagan cultures) was sometimes used as a substitute for salt in their food.

~ Salt and Life ~

According to Scripture, in a literal sense Blood = Life. Since, in some cultures, blood is used as a replacement for salt, it holds that, symbolically, Salt = Blood. Since Blood = Life and Salt = Blood, therefore Salt = Life (again in a symbolic sense).

Because of its properties, salt is still used today as a food preservative, helping to retard spoilage. Therefore, salt is seen as having certain life sustaining properties. One example in Scripture was the healing of the waters of Jericho with salt:

"Then the men of the city said to Elisha, 'Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren.'

"²⁰ And he said, 'Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him. ²¹ Then he went out to the source of the water, and cast in the salt there, and said, 'Thus says the LORD [YHVH]: 'I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness.'"²² So the water remains healed to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke." (II Kings 2:19-22)

Another example of the connection between salt and life was the practice of salting a new born baby. Speaking about the evils found in Jerusalem, the prophet Ezekiel stated:

"As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths." (Ezek. 16:4)

Since salt was the symbol of life, it may have been that the practice of salting a newborn was to symbolically impart life to it. However Rashi, the famous Jewish Rabbi, said that it was done in order to "firm" the baby's flesh.

~ Y'shua and Salt ~

If Salt = Life, then some of Y'shua's references to salt come alive with more meaning. For example:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing." (Matt. 5:13)

If Salt = Life, then Believers are to be the "life" of the earth. One might say that people who have not yet received forgiveness for their sins through the shed blood (life) of Y'shua are really "walking dead men." Therefore, the only ones who truly are alive are those whose sins are forgiven:

"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)

However, if the Believer has lost his zest for eternal life and turns back to a life of iniquity, then he is like the salt that has lost its savor and is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden underfoot:

"But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'"²⁸ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out." (Luke 13:27-28)

In one other passage, Y'shua alludes to salt as being equivalent to life:

"For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." (Mark 9:49-50)

Sacrifices on the altar required the death of an animal. The salt that was included with the sacrifice was a symbolic reminder that life was being given up so that sin could be purged. By equating salt with life, verse 50 becomes more meaningful:

"Life is good, but if life loses its flavor, how will life be seasoned? Have life in yourselves, and have peace with one another."

The only way to truly have life within us is to have Y'shua living in us. Our carnal man must die so that Y'shua might live in us:

"We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus [Y'shua], so that the life of Jesus [Y'shua] may also be revealed in our body. ¹¹ For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' [Y'shua's] sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. ¹² So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you." (II Cor. 4:10-12 NIV)

Our "salt" (life) is not our own; it is the "salt" or "life" of Y'shua that propels us forward to eternal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

~ Salt and Sacrifice ~

As already mentioned, no sacrifice was to be brought to the Tabernacle altar without salt, a symbol of the lifeblood of the animal being offered. Perhaps this is one reason why God gave so much salt to the children of Israel through the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. Since salt is a preservative, its use in the offerings represented the permanence of God's covenant with Israel. By the same token, honey and leaven symbolize fermentation and decay and were forbidden to be used as part of the sacrificial system:

""No grain offering which you bring to the LORD [YHVH] shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the LORD made by fire. ¹² As for the offering of the firstfruits, you shall offer them to the LORD [YHVH], but they shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma."" (Lev. 2:11-12)

""You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leavened bread; ..."" (Ex. 23:18)

Leavened bread was offered in the Tabernacle/Temple only once a year, at the Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Shah-voo-oat' = Pentecost). In this one instance leaven was used to represent (we believe) the sinful Houses Israel and Judah bringing their Firstfruits as an offering to God:

""You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD [YHVH]."" (Lev. 23:17)

The *Encyclopedia Judaica* references the *Talmud* (Ber. 5a) concerning the meaning of salt as it was used in the sacrifices:

"Salt, an indispensable ingredient of sacrifice, was symbolic of the moral effect of suffering, which purifies men and causes sins to be forgiven." (*Encyclopedia Judaica* - CD-Rom version, article: *Sacrifice*.)

When the House of Judah returned from Babylon and rebuilt the Temple that had been destroyed, King Darius decreed that all of the sacrificial needs for the new Temple (including salt) should be provided in full measure:

""Whatever is needed-- young bulls, rams, male lambs for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, and wheat, salt, wine and oil, as requested by the priests in Jerusalem-- must be given them daily without fail, ¹⁰ so that they may offer sacrifices pleasing to the God of heaven and pray for the well-being of the king and his sons."" (Ezra 6:9-10)

Likewise, King Artaxerxes provided copious amounts of salt so that the Temple sacrifices could be properly performed:

""Now I, King Artaxerxes, order all the treasurers of Trans-Euphrates to provide with diligence whatever Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of heaven, may ask of you-- ²² up to a hundred talents of silver, a hundred cors of wheat, a hundred baths of wine, a hundred baths of olive oil, and salt without limit. ²³ Whatever the God of

heaven has prescribed, let it be done with diligence for the temple of the God of heaven."" (Ezra 7:21-23)

The prophet Ezekiel speaks about a yet future Temple in which sacrifices will again be offered. Salt is mentioned as being included in the burnt offerings on the altar:

"You are to offer them before the LORD [YHVH], and the priests are to sprinkle salt on them and sacrifice them as a burnt offering to the LORD [YHVH]." (Ezek. 43:24)

Certainly, salt and sacrifice go hand in hand. In fact, salt was such an important ingredient in the sacrificial system, there was a separate room, on the north side of the Temple, used for its storage. It was called the *Salt Chamber*.

~ Salt and Bread ~

Bread is said to be the staff of life, and it is used as a metaphor for all food. In what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer, we are instructed to ask for our daily bread:

"Give us today our daily bread." (Matt. 6:11)

Even though it is used metaphorically for all food, bread itself was the staple food in *Y'shua's* day. No meal was considered complete without bread being served. In *The Salt Covenant*, Trumbull makes the following observation concerning the symbolic meanings of bread and wine, and, by extension, to bread and salt:

"Bread is the basis of a common meal, as blood is the basis of a common life. As, in the sacrifices, the body of the animal offered in sacrifice was the basis of a covenant meal, while the blood was the basis of union with the divine; [*it was always poured out on the altar*] so in the symbolism of bread and wine, in any sacramental meal, or in any meal of sacred covenanting between two persons, the bread stood for the flesh and the wine for the blood. So, also, when the bread and salt are used together, the salt would seem to stand for blood or life, and the bread to stand for the flesh or the body." (p. 71)

It is the blood which imparts physical life to fleshly creatures. It is food (bread) which gives nutritional sustenance to the body which is then transported throughout the body via the blood stream.

When wine (the symbol for blood or life) is not available, salt (also a symbol for blood or life) can be used in its stead. When people share salt (or wine) and bread, they are sharing a common life (salt or wine) and a common growth (food or bread). In this manner, any meal can become a covenant meal between those who share a common belief in God the Father and His Son *Y'shua* the promised Messiah.

This intimate connection between salt and bread was exemplified in the practice of using salt on the *Showbread* which was placed each Sabbath in the Holy Place. The *Torah* does not explicitly say that salt was to be used in preparing the *Showbread*:

""And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it. Two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake. ⁶ You shall set them in two rows, six in a row, on the pure gold

table before the LORD [YHVH]. ⁷ And you shall put pure frankincense on *each* row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, an offering made by fire to the LORD [YHVH]. ⁸ Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD [YHVH] continually, *being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.*" (Lev. 24:5-8)

However, the *Septuagint* (Greek version of the Old Testament) adds the words "and salt" after the word "frankincense." This was definitely the practice in the Temple service and was probably based upon the command to not bring any offering to God without salt:

"With all your offerings you shall offer salt."
(Lev. 2:13)

Because of this practice of salting the bread in the Temple, observant Jews make it a practice to salt their bread before eating it. This practice is reinforced by Job's statement:

"Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?" (Job 6:6)

Here is what the book *Rite and Reason*, by Shmuel Pinchas Gelbard, has to say about placing salt on the table during meals:

"This is because one's table is compared to the altar in the *Beis ha-Mikdash* [the Tabernacle], and eating on it is analogous to offering a sacrifice. Every sacrifice prior to being burned (on the altar fire) required salting, as the verse [Leviticus 2:13] says: 'Upon all your sacrifices you shall offer salt.' (Vol. One, p. 284)

As Believers, the salting of our bread should remind us of the ultimate offering which *Y'shua* made for us:

"For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself." (Heb. 7:26-27)

~ Life or Death ~

We have seen how salt can be used as a symbol for the life blood of a sacrifice. However, salt can also be a symbol of death and desolation:

"The whole land is brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD [YHVH] overthrew in His anger and His wrath." (Deut. 29:23)

If we think of salt in terms of *Y'shua's* covenant of shed blood, then it represents life to those in whom He dwells. However, for those who are outside of the covenant, His shed blood is a symbol of death:

"For to God we are the aroma of the Messiah, both among those being saved and among those being lost; to the latter, we are the smell of death leading only to more death; but to the former, we are the sweet smell of life leading to more life. Who is equal to the task? For we are not like a

lot of folks who go about huckstering God's message for a fee; on the contrary, we speak out of a sincere heart, as people sent by God, standing in God's presence, living in union with the Messiah." (II Cor. 2:15-17 CJB)

Dr. David Stern, in the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, makes this analogy about this passage:

"The Good News is like a flower's fragrance. If a sweet-smelling flower smells bad to someone, the fault is not with the flower. Rather, there must be some disorder in the smelling apparatus. In the case of the Gospel, the disorder is called sin. So, if to God we who believe and proclaim the Good News are the sweet aroma of the Messiah, who lives in us, then among those being saved, we are the same sweet smell of life leading to more life. But among those in the process of being lost, we are the stinking smell of death, leading only to more death. Those bent on sin, those in the process of being eternally lost, cannot stand to hear the Good News and do not respond to it except with redoubled antagonism or indifference." (p. 496)

It is our Father in Heaven, through the agency of His Son *Y'shua HaMashiach*, who gives us life:

"Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD [YHVH] for His goodness,

And for His wonderful works to the children of men!

³² **Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people,**

And praise Him in the company of the elders.

³³ **He turns rivers into a wilderness,**

And the watersprings into dry ground;

³⁴ **A fruitful land into barrenness,**

For the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

³⁵ **He turns a wilderness into pools of water,**

And dry land into watersprings.

³⁶ **There He makes the hungry dwell,**

That they may establish a city for a dwelling place,

³⁷ **And sow fields and plant vineyards,**

That they may yield a fruitful harvest.

³⁸ **He also blesses them, and they multiply greatly;**

And He does not let their cattle decrease.

(Psalm 107:31-38)

May we recognize that, as Believers, we have partaken of the Covenant of Salt with our Maker and entered into a Marriage Covenant with *Y'shua*. We can celebrate His love for us each time we eat a piece of bread by adding a little salt to it, remembering what it all means, and blessing God who has redeemed us through the blood of His Lamb!

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